

**THE CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST
IN VICTORIA AND TASMANIA**

**A CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESPONSIBLE
LEADERSHIP IN PROGRAMS WITH CHILDREN**
(For use in Victoria)



**Adopted by the Vic-Tas Conference Council
22nd August, 2007**

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August, 2007

1 INTRODUCTION: A POLICY FOR SAFE CARE

1.1 Purpose of the policy

Creating a safe environment, for all involved, is important in any activity of the Churches of Christ. It is also important that the attitude and behaviour of those with authority facilitates this.

Where the activity involves children, there is added responsibility. Those in leadership are to care for the children in such a way that their total wellbeing - including emotional, physical, social and spiritual health - is protected.

Children are precious to God and serving with them is a privilege. The authority that comes with working alongside children is a great responsibility that should never be taken advantage of for personal gain or gratification.

The purpose of this policy is to describe responsible leadership of children. It does not just outline a minimum legal standard but provides a structure to help the Conference, its churches and other organisations offer the best protection and nurture for children.

1.2 Authority

This is a policy of The Conference of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania, adopted by the Conference Council on 1st July, 2006 for use in Victoria.

Each church and other organisation affiliated with Conference in Victoria, needs to ratify their acceptance of this policy. There are different accountability and decision making structures throughout the Conference so each local setting will need to find their most effective way to ratify and implement this policy.

1.2.1 Decision Making Structures

Example One: In our church, a board of Elders has oversight of the church. They ratify this policy and ask our Children's Minister and our Youth Minister to ensure we implement the policy in all our programs with children.

Example Two: In our church the paid minister makes governance decisions. The minister adopts this policy and uses it to select people for our Families Ministry Group. The coordinators on our Families Ministry Group take responsibility for implementing this policy with their leaders in each area they supervise.

Example Three: *The Conference Council has already adopted this policy. For Youth Vision, we use this policy to train potential leaders. For any youth camp, we select a suitable directing team who will implement the policy on the camp.*

1.3 Availability

A copy of this policy must be made available to each person appointed as a leader of children. Other copies of this policy should be available upon request from the local church and Conference.

1.4 Review

The Conference Council will review this policy at least every two years, to ensure it continues to fulfil its purposes. The review will include feedback from local settings about the policy's effectiveness.

2 LEADERS: PROVIDING RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP

2.1 Suitable leaders

A leader is an adult who is trusted with *ongoing responsibility* for children in a program. It is expected that a person suitable for such leadership would have demonstrated:

- support for the values and mission of our movement;
- personal integrity and discipline;
- respect for the dignity of each person;
- skills to relate to and care for children;
- maturity in relating with people of all ages;
- an ability to provide appropriate supervision and direction to helpers as necessary;
- a willingness to be accountable to other leaders in the local setting;
- and
- awareness of this policy.

A leader responsible for discipling children is also expected to have demonstrated:

- a genuine Christian faith;
- active involvement in the worship and ministry of a local church;

A person would not be suitable for leading children if they:

- were not willing to operate within this policy;
- were found to be in serious breach of this policy;
- had been guilty of an offence relating to the abuse of children; or
- had shown they were unable or unwilling to adequately care for children.

2.1.1 Leaders

Example One: *Our weekly youth group includes youth and young adults. Because some of the teenagers are under 18 we follow this policy and select suitable leaders to be responsible for this program.*

Example Two: *We have a fortnightly Children's Church – a worshiping congregation catering especially for children. Under this policy we need suitable leaders to be responsible for this program.*

Example Three: *When we provide a crèche and other activities for older children at our Conference Convention, we need to select suitable leaders to coordinate and supervise it.*

2.2 Selecting Leaders

In each local setting, those responsible to appoint leaders in programs with children must be confident they can trust the potential leader with this responsibility.

Consequently, they will consider the potential leader's skills, attributes and background. If a person is not well known, inquiries must be made. The extent of these inquiries will depend on the degree to which the person is already known within the church community but could include references from:

- their local church;
- any previously attended churches; and
- other appropriate organisations - especially where the potential leader has related with children.

A person wanting to be selected as a leader should be given a description outlining the ministry role they are interested in fulfilling (Examples in Appendix 1). If they believe they can meet these requirements, they should complete an application form for that role (Example in Appendix 2). We recommend that every church or agency that runs programs with children should have at least two people who would meet the criteria required for leaders as outlined in this policy.

Before 30th June 2008, it is mandatory to obtain a recent Police Record National Name check before appointing a leader, *unless* that leader has already obtained a Working With Children (WWC) Check Card.

Ministers, leaders and those responsible for programmes with children in churches and agencies should familiarise themselves with the requirements of the WWC Check.

- The website of the Victorian Department of Justice is:
<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren>
- The *WWC Check Application Guide and Form* is available at participating Australian Post outlets.
- The WWC Check Information Line is 1300 652 879

All leaders who have ongoing responsibility for children in a program must have obtained a WWC Check Card by 30th June 2008.

Some leaders, who are involved in certain types of programs with children, are required to have applied for a WWC Check by 30th June 2007. This includes leaders in programs that include overnight activities or camps; certain types of child care services, and regular ministry in schools (see the *Child-related Occupational Fields and Phasing Plan Table* on the website and in the *Application Guide* for more details).

It is the responsibility of each church or organisation affiliated with Conference to ensure that all employees or volunteers who are required to get a WWC Check do so, including anyone who supervises others who are helping care for children.

The WWCC is free for all leaders who serve as volunteers in programmes with children. There is a fee for those who are employed by any church or organisation affiliated with Conference to work with children.

While the WWC Check legislation allows some exemptions, it is our policy that no leader be granted an exemption. All leaders in programs with children must have obtained a WWC Check Card.

While the WWC Check legislation allows individuals to work with children from when they *apply* for the WWC Check, it is our policy that all leaders must have *passed* a WWC Check and *obtained* a WWC Check Card to work in a program with children.

The WWC Check Card must be sighted. It must also be confirmed as valid by completing a WWC Check Online Status Enquiry. This can be done at the following website: <https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwc/wwc-online-check>. Details of the WWC Card (including the WWC Check Number and the expiry date) and the Status Enquiry must be recorded, dated and signed. *It is not appropriate for anyone to do this for his or her own WWC Card.* We recommend that a WWC Check Online Status Enquiry be completed at least annually on all leaders in programs with children or at any other time if there is a reason for concern. WWC Check Cards are valid for 5 years, after which it is necessary to apply for a new one. It is recommended that leadership roles with children be reviewed at least every second year.

No person is to be appointed or to continue as a leader in a program with children if the Online Status Enquiry reveals that their WWC Check Card is not valid or if they have been issued with either an Interim Negative Notice or a Negative Notice.

2.3 Other Helpers

Other people who assist in some way in church activities involving children are considered 'Helpers'. *All such helpers must work under the supervision of an appointed leader.* At a minimum these helpers will have demonstrated:

- respect for the dignity of each person;
- some skills to relate to and care for children;
- some maturity in relating with people; and
- a willingness to be accountable to leaders in the local setting.

Helpers are expected to operate within the guidelines of this policy, under the direction of an appointed leader. Leaders need to satisfy themselves that helpers are always behaving responsibly while with children. Ideally such helpers will be known to leaders of the program and where appropriate, may be asked to follow the same selection process as leaders.

2.3.1 Other Helpers

Example One: *At our Kids Club we encourage some teenagers to come and help the younger kids with activities. They go through a similar application process to leaders and carry out their ministry under the supervision of adult leaders.*

Example Two: *Our youth group leaders have a list of trusted parents they know, who they can call upon to help with transport when they need it for an outing.*

Example Three: *Our camping program is supplemented by people with specific skills who come to help with adventure activities. Our own leaders always accompany children while at the activity.*



2.4 Parental Authority

Children can best be cared for when all those with responsibility for them are able to cooperate. Leaders should encourage a constructive partnership with and respect the authority of parents or other caregivers. This includes a natural parent, de facto parent, step-parent, foster parent, legal guardian or any other person with responsibility for the day-to-day life of the child.

At an appropriate time, leaders will ask a parent or other caregiver to complete an information and consent form (Example in Appendix 3). These forms will ask for information to help leaders provide safe care. Leaders will protect the privacy of confidential information. Leaders should keep parents and other caregivers well informed about issues affecting the ongoing welfare of their children.

When a children's program includes an extraordinary activity such as an overnight camp, specific consent will be required for that activity.

2.4.1 Information and Consent

Example One: A child brings a friend to Sunday School. They are welcomed and included in the program. If their involvement continues we will contact the child's parents to tell them more about our church, encourage their involvement in the church community, inform them of this policy and ask them to fill in an information and consent form to help us care for their child.

Example Two: The Men's Ministry Unit organises a father and son camp. Registration for the camp will include all the information required on an information and consent form.

Example Three: To implement this policy we ran a special information night, where we asked all the parents of people under 18 who regularly participate in our monthly youth services, to fill in an information and consent form. When we take the same young people to State Youth Games, we require special consent for that extraordinary activity.

3 ENVIRONMENT: CREATING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

3.1 Supervision

Leaders need to create an environment that protects the total wellbeing of children. To do this, children need adequate supervision. At any children's activity there needs to be at least one appointed leader. If there are not enough designated leaders available other helpers can supplement this to bring about the appropriate ratio of carers to children.

There will be a minimum of two carers at any children's program. In mixed groups, it is advisable to have at least one carer of each gender.

For preschool children (under 5) the minimum advisable ratio is one carer to six children.

For primary school aged children (5-12) the minimum advisable ratio is one carer to ten children.

For teenage children, the appropriate ratio and level of supervision will vary according to the activity and environment.

At all times, leaders must be satisfied that the ratio and skill mix of carers is appropriate for the children, the activity and venue. Some activities may require a higher ratio of carers to children.

3.2 Venues

Leaders need to satisfy themselves that any venue they use is safe for children. Attention will be given to minimise the risk of any potential hazards such as electrical equipment, poisons, matches and play equipment.

At all venues used for regular programs with children, there needs to be access to a phone and relevant phone numbers (Example in Appendix 6). There should also be a first aid kit that is checked at least annually. When going on an outing, leaders should consider taking a first aid kit, a mobile phone and relevant phone numbers with them, if there is not a reasonable expectation these services would be available at the particular venue.

Leaders and other helpers need to be familiar with the layout and evacuation plan of any venue they are using, in case there is a fire or other emergency. If the venue is used regularly, the evacuation plan needs to be practiced from time to time.

3.3 Activities

All activities need to be appropriate for the age and sensitivity of the children. Aggressive, threatening, abusive or offensive activities are not appropriate. When using media, leaders need to follow the appropriate classification guidelines. Information forms (Examples in Appendix 3) can be used to consult parents when using media classified PG with very young children or classified M with children under 15.

3.4 Transport

Leaders need to ensure any transport used in activities with children is safe. When private motor vehicles are used, leaders need to satisfy themselves that:

- the driver meets the minimum criteria of a helper;
- the driver is over 18 and is either fully licensed for the kind of vehicle they are driving, or has held a probationary licence for at least 12 months.
- the driver has relevant experience for the conditions;
- the driver will exercise care on the road, including observing speed and blood alcohol and drug limits and ensuring passengers wear seat belts; and
- the vehicle is roadworthy and registered.

Driver application forms (Example in Appendix 2) can be used to help ensure safe transport.

It is recommended that a driver who does not meet these requirements not transport children to or from an activity without specific consent from all parents concerned.

When using other forms of transport, vehicles must be registered and operators licensed, as required. Children need to observe normal safety procedures and use appropriate safety equipment such as flotation devices, helmets or seat belts.

3.5 Accidents and Emergencies

Leaders should be able to offer appropriate care for a child in a minor incident. Leaders should be aware of the risk of infection from diseases borne in bodily fluids, such as blood, and take appropriate precautions against this risk. Children should not be administered any medications that the parent or other caregiver has not approved.

If a child becomes sick or is injured, necessitating medical attention, leaders will take appropriate steps to contact the child's parent or caregiver. The leader can either return the child to the parent, or seek medical attention for the child, as the circumstances may dictate. If medical attention is needed urgently, this would be done in accordance with the permission given on the information and consent form used for the activity. In such cases, the leader should contact a parent or caregiver as soon as possible afterwards. Depending on the severity of the injury, the leader will also need to report it to the appropriate person in the local setting.

Whenever possible, a leader would accompany a child going to hospital. Where this adversely affects the level of supervision and other supervisors are not available quickly, the leaders and any other helpers would normally end the activity. A helper should not be left in charge of a program.

For any serious accident, or other emergency that occurs, such as one requiring medical treatment or notification of parents, the leader will complete an incident report form (Example in Appendix 4).

3.5.1 Accidents and Emergencies

Example One: Playing competition basketball with a church team, a child is hit in the face with a ball and has a blood nose. A leader sits with the child and using gloves from the portable first aid kit, helps pinch the nose to stop the bleeding. The child is shaken up by the incident, so the leader rings the step-parent who collects the child. The leader fills in an incident report form and informs the sports ministry coordinator more gloves are needed in the first aid kit.

Example Two: At State Youth Games, a child sprains their ankle and is brought by the local church's leader to the attending first aid nurse. The nurse straps the ankle, does not administer any drugs without specific permission from the parents and gives instructions to see a doctor if pain persists. The nurse writes an incident report for Youth Vision and the leader takes a copy for the church. The child feels ok. That evening, the leader calls the parent to explain what happened and passes on the nurse's instructions.

Example Three: A stack of chairs falls over and apparently breaks a child's arm. One helper supervises the kids in another room away from the chairs, and a second helper comforts the injured child. The only leader unsuccessfully tries to call the parents and the emergency contact from the child's information form. The leader rings for an

ambulance and because the program needs to finish early, calls another leader to immediately come and supervise returning all the children to their parents' care. When the ambulance arrives the leader goes with the child to hospital. The leader successfully contacts the parents an hour later from the hospital. The leader fills in an incident report form, and the organisation changes the way it stacks chairs.

4 CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR: RESPONSIBLY GUIDING AND CORRECTING CHILDREN

4.1 Expectations of Behaviour

Responsible leadership in programs with children includes guiding and sometimes correcting their behaviour. Leaders need a shared understanding of what is expected of children and how they will help them meet these expectations. Children should not be restricted with too many rules. However, boundaries appropriate to the age and development of the children need to be clearly defined and consistently applied. It would be appropriate to describe these in writing and make them available to the children and parents (Examples in Appendix 5).

4.2 Guiding Children

For the safety and wellbeing of each child, and the cohesion of the whole group, leaders should expect children to:

- give of their best;
- care for others; and
- behave in a way that pleases God.

Any abuse, bullying or ostracism of others is not acceptable.

Guidance can be provided by:

- the exemplary attitude and behaviour of leaders and other helpers;
- clearly communicating expectations;
- affirming and encouraging appropriate behaviour;
- adequate levels of supervision; and
- careful organisation of the program.

4.3 Correcting Children

When correction is needed, leaders should choose the appropriate level of intervention, taking into account the effect of the child's behaviour, and the ability of the child to understand why they are being disciplined. Explaining the reason for the discipline will help children take responsibility for their actions and remind them about appropriate behaviour. Options can include:

- redirection – if the safety of the child and others in the group permits, sometimes (especially with younger children) it is enough to simply redirect the child with a positive instruction, for example, “Joanne, how about you try using your own pencils?”
- incentives – sometimes redirection is more effective if there is an added incentive to change the behaviour, for example, “I will be watching for two of the best encouragers and they can go first in the next game.”
- reminder – give the child a verbal reminder of the rules, for example, “Remember Jose, we agreed not to stand on the chairs unless we had removed our shoes.”

- warning – warn the child by naming the behaviour, and the management that will follow if the behaviour continues, for example, “John, it is time to listen. If you keep talking to your partner I will ask you to move.”
- removing privileges – knowing the consequences of their actions can help children make better choices, for example, “We cannot have cake until all the books have been put back.”
- reflection - helping the child understand why the behaviour is unacceptable and why they are being disciplined, for example, “I am really disappointed you ignored Jack. How do you think he feels? I would like to see you apologise and include him more in the group.”
- isolation - still in a safe place and supervised, for example, “I want you to move away, Jess. Sit there where I can see you, and think about how you should talk to leaders.”
- seek help - if you are finding a child’s behaviour too difficult to manage refer to another leader for help, for example, “I can’t continue with your interruptions, Julie, so I have asked the other leader if you can be in their group. You need to quietly stand up and go and join them.”
- removing the child - if the behaviour is unmanageable, return the child to the parent or caregiver with an adequate explanation, for example, “That is not how we behave in this group. I am taking you back to your grandparents and we will tell them why you are being removed.”
- careful physical restraint – sometimes the welfare of the child or others in the group may require immediate intervention. Use only the minimum restraint required as a last resort to prevent injury, for example, holding back a child that is attempting to kick another.

Children should not be disciplined in a way that threatens their emotional, physical, social or spiritual wellbeing. It is not appropriate for a leader to discipline a child in a program by:

- belittling or publicly shaming the child;
- using excessive force or restraint; or
- smacking or striking the child, including with any kind of implement.

5 LEADERS’ BEHAVIOUR: BEING RESPONSIBLE AND RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

5.1 High Expectations

Everyone is entitled to have high expectations of children’s leaders and other helpers. They need to be accountable, for the sake of their growth and discipleship. The whole church community also has a responsibility to guide and support leaders by:

- affirming and encouraging responsible leadership;
- ensuring appropriate levels of support; and
- adequately resourcing this ministry area.

5.2 Relationships

Leaders and other helpers need to ensure their relationships with children are beyond reproach. Carers must always respect the right of the child to establish their own boundaries over their body and feelings. They must never use their position in any way that could exploit

or abuse a child, emotionally, physically, sexually or spiritually. A leader or other helper must not develop a romantic or sexual relationship with a child in their care.

To maintain a safe relationship, all leaders and other helpers should:

- guard against any action that could be interpreted as romantic or sexual, including inappropriate physical contact;
- avoid any physical contact with which the child is uncomfortable; and
- be sensible in any one-on-one situations that may arise, especially emotionally charged ones such as deep personal conversations. Ideally the leader would be the same gender as the child, and be observable or interruptible by others.

5.2.1 Relationships

Example One: At a junior youth group pool party, a teenager, 15, keeps asking a male helper, 17, to give her a massage. He gives her the same foot rub he has offered the others but turns down repeated requests for more attention. When she persists, a female leader takes her aside to reflect with her on the inappropriateness of her behaviour. The leader later praises the helper for his maturity.

Example Two: An elder wants to organise a time for baptism preparation class with a 16-year-old. Attempts to organise a meeting at the teenager's home when the parents will be there fail, so they agree to meet at the church building, when the secretary will also be working there and they use a room with windows.

Example Three: Two children are enjoying a friendly tickle with a leader at a Women's Ministry Unit event. They are not alone and the leader starts to tickle a third child to include them. The leader notices this child does not seem to appreciate it, so immediately stops.

5.3 Responding to Concerns

Responding to a concern with an appropriate process can help reach a just outcome, contribute to healing and help resolve the issue for all concerned. Such a process should consider the welfare of the child as paramount, taking all reasonable steps to ensure any imminent danger to a child is averted, and be fair to the rights of everyone involved.

When a concern requires attention, the level of intervention will depend on the severity of the issue:

- **Minor matter** - where the welfare of a child is not at serious risk. These concerns are usually best directed to the leader in charge of that program. The leader needs to listen to the concern and enter into a constructive conversation about the issue. If the matter is not resolved the leader should offer to take the concern to the relevant person in that setting such as the minister or program coordinator.
- **Significant concern** - such as an inappropriate leader, an unsafe practice or an unresolved issue with a leader. These can be brought to the attention of the relevant person in the setting such as the minister or program coordinator. They may consult with others, such as the leadership in the local setting, to investigate the concern and decide an appropriate response.

- **Serious breach** - where there has been, or is likely to have been, a serious breach of this policy. As soon as possible, the leadership of the local setting should be informed and they must contact the Conference (See Appendix 7). Conference has a responsibility to supervise responses to such breaches. It can help protect the welfare of the child, advise local churches or other affiliated organisations, investigate the concern and take appropriate actions. If the breach involves abuse or another crime, the leadership in that setting or Conference will need to report to the relevant civil authorities.

6 ABUSE AND OTHER CRIMES: RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE OR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

6.1 Abuse and other Crimes

Any person aware of a serious threat to a child, possibly involving abuse, exploitation or other crime, has a responsibility to protect the child. Abuse includes physical assault, sexual assault, emotional abuse, neglect, or any combination of these in a single incident or over a period of time. Whether or not the alleged abuse was in connection with a church or Conference program, we want to cooperate with other resources in the community to offer the best care and make the most adequate response.

6.2 Disclosure or allegation of abuse

If a child discloses or alleges an abuse, the person receiving this information needs to stay calm, listen and offer careful support. The child is likely to have strong emotions such as guilt, fear or confusion. Responding out of a natural sense of shock, revulsion, curiosity or disbelief, can place additional burdens on the child and move the focus from the needs of the child to those of the listener. Appropriate support for the listener should be sought at a later time, so they can express their own feelings.

Initial disclosure is not an investigation moment. The listener should not ask more questions than are necessary to establish that an allegation of abuse is being made and to begin implementing a process for protecting the child. Other people will take any actual investigation further. The listener should keep any questions they do ask open ended, for example “Can you tell me more about what happened? It’s ok to go slowly. Take your time.” and not closed questions, for example, “Did John do this to you? Did it happen often?”

When a person receives a disclosure or allegation, it will usually help to:

- proceed slowly, working hard to be an active listener;
- respond in a caring, ‘matter of fact’ way;
- accept what the child says;
- assure the child that what they are revealing is not their fault;
- tell the child other children have experienced things like this before;
- say there are special people who can help work out what to do next; and
- assure the child that, whatever the consequences, they have done the right thing in telling somebody.

It is not helpful to:

- make any promises that cannot be kept;

- ask for details to satisfy curiosity; or
- tell them ‘everything will be ok.’

Where the child discloses or alleges an abuse, the listener should not promise a confidentiality that would not be in the child’s interest. No one needs a victim’s permission to report a crime, however some children may be empowered to participate in reporting the incident to authorities.

6.3 Reporting Abuse and other Crimes

Anyone who has received a disclosure, an allegation or has any other reasonable suspicion that a child in a program is being abused in any context needs to report this. In each setting the person that needs to be notified may differ, but in a church this would normally be a minister, member of the church’s leadership group or preferably both.

The leadership that has been notified are the ones to make the decision about which other specialists need to be informed. They should seek advice from civil authorities: a health care professional, the Department of Human Services, Gatehouse Centre at the Royal Children’s Hospital, or the Police - as the circumstances may dictate. It is important that the leadership act promptly and responsibly.

If the alleged abuse has occurred in connection with a program or by a member of the church community or by a member of the paid ministry team, the leadership must also alert the Conference, which can give advice on how to proceed. The Conference has an established policy for investigating allegations concerning ministers. The leadership in the local setting will complete an incident report form, which will help in any subsequent investigation.

6.3.1 Reporting Abuse

Example One: A member of a missional order is told in confidence that a girl in the mission’s youth group has been raped by her boyfriend from school. The member reports this to the Chapter Leader. The Chapter Leader tells the girl they need to speak to her parents about the issue to ensure she is cared for appropriately, then contacts the parents and advises them to go to the Gatehouse Centre at the Royal Children’s Hospital. The Chapter Leader offers to accompany the girl and the parents as they notify the authorities, which they accept. An incident report form is completed and appropriate care is offered to the girl.

Example Two: A parent reports that a leader at the church’s kids club lost their temper and severely hit a child, causing bruises. The minister listens carefully and recommends the parent take the child to see a doctor. The minister informs the chair of the Church Board, rings the Conference and fills in an incident report form. Conference initiates an appropriate response to care for the child and prevent any potential repeat of the alleged behaviour ahead of an investigation. Conference may report the matter to the Police and will keep appropriate records of their actions.

Example Three: A pregnant teenager tells the church’s only elder that her father, who is also in the church, impregnated her. There is currently no other leadership in the church, so before the teenager goes home, the elder calls the Department of Human Services for immediate care for the teenager and contacts Conference. The Mission and Ministry Team Director gives some initial advice to suspend the father from any

leadership role in the church ahead of an investigation. The Director visits as soon as possible to initiate an ongoing response and help the elder write an incident report.

Example Four: On a KidsMin camp, a boy tearfully discloses he was sexually molested at a different camp a few years back. The leader listens to his story, thanks him for telling it and says there are others who can help. Together, they go to the camp director, who contacts the Conference Executive Officer. The CEO contacts the boy's parents, organises some ongoing care for the boy and notifies the Police.

7 CLOSING COMMENT: CHILDREN BELONG WITHIN GOD'S REIGN

7.1 Using this Policy

This policy has been produced with three main groups in mind:

- the children with whom it is our privilege and responsibility to minister - the goal is to create and maintain a safe environment for them;
- the adult leaders and other helpers who carry out this ministry with children - the goal is to equip and encourage them; and
- the Churches of Christ in Victoria, who together have a responsibility for the nurture and wellbeing of children – the goal is to foster an ethos that supports the special value and place of children.

Ongoing training and supplementary materials will help the Conference, local churches and other organisations implement this policy. Local settings should be proactive in using training opportunities and further materials as they become available.

7.2 Jesus and Children

Jesus has a very high regard for children. In Mark 10:13-15, he teaches that children already belong within the Kingdom of God. He then challenges adults that they will not enter God's Reign unless they receive it like children.

People were bringing little children to Jesus in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.'

The children among us should not be neglected. They are a vital part of the church.

Appendices

These appendices give examples of the kind of information that needs to be included on these forms. Where suitable, they may be reproduced and used exactly as they are; otherwise feel free to modify them to create something specifically appropriate for your local setting.

- 1. Ministry Role Description – Example**
- 2. Application Forms**
- 3. Working With Children Check – RecordIng Form**
- 4. Information Forms**
- 5. Incident Report Form – Example**
- 6. Expectations of Children’s Behaviour -Examples**
- 7. Relevant Phone Numbers**
- 8. Contacting Conference**
- 9. Responding to Significant Concerns**
- 10. Responding to Serious Breaches**

1 MINISTRY ROLE DESCRIPTION

Ministry Role:

Name:

Term:

Accountability:

Review: All leadership roles with children in our church are reviewed at least every two years.

Expectations: All our ministry with children needs to be carried out in the way described in our *Responsible Leadership* policy. You will be expected to demonstrate:

- a genuine Christian faith;
- active involvement in the worship and ministry of the church;
- support for its values and mission;
- personal integrity and discipline;
- respect for the dignity of each person;
- skills to relate to and care for children;
- maturity in relating with people of all ages;
- an ability to provide appropriate supervision and direction to helpers as necessary;
- accountability to other leaders in the church;
- compliance with our Responsible Leadership policy;
-
-
-

Role Description: To serve in this role you need to be committed to:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Support for Role: The expectations and commitments above are also designed to nurture you personally and in your ministry role. To further support you in this role and adequately resource this ministry area, the church will:

- affirm and encourage responsible leadership;
- be proactive in promoting training opportunities;
-
-

1.1 Ministry Role Description – Example

Ministry Role: Youth Group Coordinator, Smallville Church of Christ

Name: Jo Bloggs

Term: 2003 - 2005

Accountability: Families Ministry Committee, Minister Kel Smith

Review: All leadership roles with children in our church are reviewed at least every two years. With input from the Families Ministry Committee, the minister will review your role with you after the first year, and before any reappointment.

Expectations: All ministry with children at our church needs to be carried out in accordance with our Responsible Leadership and Healthy Ministry policies. You will be expected to demonstrate:

- a genuine Christian faith;
- support for our vision and mission strategy;
- regular attendance at a worship service and whole church events;
- participation in a small group;
- personal integrity and discipline;
- respect for the dignity of each person;
- skills to relate to and care for children and other leaders;
- maturity in relating with people of all ages;
- an ability to provide appropriate supervision and direction to helpers as necessary;
- accountability to other leaders in the church;
- loyalty to others in the Families Ministry Committee; and
- compliance with our Responsible Leadership and Healthy Ministry policies;

Role Description: To serve in this role you need to:

- develop discipling relationships with young people (ongoing)
- develop discipling relationship with fellow leaders (ongoing)
- supervise and develop leaders and other helpers (ongoing)
- plan, prepare for and lead Youth Group (weekly)
- train a new youth worship coordinator, hand over this role and then oversee these services in conjunction with the minister (monthly)
- chair youth leaders team meetings (bi-monthly or quarterly)
- participate in Families Ministry Committee (quarterly)
- initiate a new youth outreach for Smallville Community Festival (annually)
- take opportunities to improve your youth ministry skills (ad hoc)

Support for Role: The expectations and commitments above are also designed to nurture you personally and in your ministry role. To further support you in this role and adequately resource this ministry area, the church will:

- **affirm and encourage responsible leadership;**
- **offer ongoing support through the Families Ministry Committee and minister;**
- **invite a submission to our church budget process; and**

- *subsidise your attendance at two training programs, annually.*

2 APPLICATION FORMS

2.1 Leadership Application

All ministries with children need to be carried out in the way described in our **Responsible Leadership** policy. This information will form the basis of a conversation with you to help us decide if you are able to fulfil this role at this stage. Please ask the program coordinator or responsible minister if you have any questions about this application.

Ministry Role: _____

Personal Information

Full name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Home address: _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

Email: _____

Proof of identity (if required): _____

(Sighted on: _____ by: _____)

Referees

Please give details of two people we can contact, who can comment on your suitability for this role. Ideally these would be people who have seen you fulfil a similar role in a church or other organisation and have known you for more than five years.

Name: _____

Role and church/organisation: _____

Address: _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

(Contacted on: _____ by: _____)

Name: _____

Role and church/organisation: _____

Address: _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

(Contacted on: _____ by: _____)

Faith, Church Life and Ministry Skills

Briefly describe your Christian faith and involvement in the church:

Briefly describe the skills you think will help you fulfil this ministry role:

Ability to Care for Children

Have you read our <i>Responsible Leadership</i> policy?	Y	N
Have you ever been in serious breach of our <i>Responsible Leadership</i> policy?	Y	N
Have you ever been accused of an offence relating to the neglect or abuse of a child? N		Y
Have you had someone express concerns about your behaviour towards a child?	Y	N
Have you ever had an <i>Interim Negative Notice</i> or a <i>Negative Notice</i> in connection with the <i>Working With Children Check</i> ?	Y	N
Do you have a current <i>Working With Children Check Card</i> ?	Y	N
When does your <i>Working With Children Check Card</i> expire?		_____
What is your <i>Working With Children Check Number</i> ?		_____
Do you have a medical condition that could prevent you fulfilling this role?	Y	N

Consent

The information I have given on this form is correct. I consent to a National Police Record Check, if this is necessary according to the *Responsible Leadership* policy, and the release to the church and Conference of any matters deemed to be relevant which are recorded against my name.

Applicants Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

2.2 Driver Application

All ministries with children need to be carried out in the way described in our **Responsible Leadership** policy. This information will help us decide if you are able to fulfil this role of a driver at this stage. Please ask a program leader, the program coordinator or responsible minister if you have any questions about this application.

Personal Information

Full name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Home address: _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

Care for Children and Safe Driving

All drivers need to operate within the guidelines of our *Responsible Leadership* policy, under the supervision of an appointed leader and demonstrate:

- respect for the dignity of each person;
- some skills to relate to and care for children;
- some maturity in relating with people; and
- a willingness to be accountable to leaders in the local setting.

Any transport used in activities with children needs to be safe.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| • Are you over 18? | Y | N |
| • Are you fully licensed for the kind of vehicle they are driving, or have held a probationary licence for at least 12 months? | Y | N |
| • Do you have appropriate experience for the conditions in which you will be driving? | Y | N |
| • Will you exercise care on the road, including observing speed and blood alcohol and drug limits and ensuring passengers wear seat belts? | Y | N |
| • Is the vehicle roadworthy and registered? | Y | N |
| • Have you ever been accused of an offence relating to the neglect or abuse of a child? | Y | N |
| • Do you have a medical condition that could prevent you fulfilling this role? | Y | N |

Consent

The information I have given on this form is correct.

Applicants Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

3 WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK – RECORDING FORM

Leader's Name	WWCC Card - Sighted	WWCC Card Number	WWCC Card Expiry Date	WWCC Card Valid – Online Status Enquiry	Date of Online Status Enquiry	Confirming Signature
Jane Citizen	Yes	123456789	20.08.2011	Yes	20.09.2011	<i>A Person</i>

4 INFORMATION FORMS

4.1 *Preschool and Primary Aged Children*

The following information will help us offer responsible care for your child. Please provide any information that will help leaders ensure the safety of your child. Please notify us of any changes.

Personal Information

Full name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Home address: _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

Email: _____

School: _____ Year level: _____

Parent/Care-Giver Information

Mother's/Care-Giver's name: _____

Address (if different): _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

Father's/Care-Giver's name: _____

Address (if different): _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

Any court order, custodial or care issues we need to be aware of: _____

Other Emergency Contact Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

Relationship to child: _____

Media Classification

If we used media classified PG in an activity of the church: (circle one)

Yes - I am happy for this child to view it.

No - I would like to be asked specifically first.

Health/Medical Information

Family doctor/medical service: _____

Doctor/medical service phone number: _____

Medicare number: _____

Private health policy number: _____

Date of latest tetanus immunisation: _____

Does your child have any medical conditions that we need to be aware of:

Asthma	Y	N
Allergy/Sensitivity		Y N
Diabetes		Y N
Epilepsy		Y N
Heart condition	Y	N
Infectious disease		Y N
Other: _____	Y	N

If yes, please provide details of symptoms and management procedures:

Please attach any other information you would like us to know, to help care for you child.

Consent

I/We consent to this child participating in the activities of the church. I/we consent to the leaders acquiring for this child medical services necessary in the event of an emergency; and agree to pay all associated medical expenses incurred on behalf of this child.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

4.2 Secondary Aged Children

The following information will help us offer responsible care for your child. Please provide any information that will help leaders ensure the safety of your child. Please notify us of any changes.

Personal Information

Full name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Home address: _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

Email: _____

School: _____ Year level: _____

Parent/Care-Giver Information

Mother's/Care-Giver's name: _____

Address (if different): _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

Father's/Care-Giver's name: _____

Address (if different): _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

Any court order, custodial or care issues we need to be aware of: _____

Other Emergency Contact Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone H: _____ W: _____ M: _____

Relationship to child: _____

Media Classification

If we used media classified M in an activity of the church: (circle one)

Yes - I am happy for this child to view it.

No - I would like to be asked specifically first.

Health/Medical Information

Family doctor/medical service: _____

Doctor/medical service phone number: _____

Medicare number: _____

Private health policy number: _____

Date of latest tetanus immunisation: _____

Does your child have any medical conditions that we need to be aware of:

Asthma	Y	N	
Allergy/Sensitivity		Y	N
Diabetes		Y	N
Epilepsy		Y	N
Heart condition	Y	N	
Infectious disease		Y	N
Other: _____		Y	N

If yes, please provide details of symptoms and management procedures:

Please attach any other information you would like us to know, to help care for you child.

Consent

I/We consent to this child participating in the activities of the church. I/we consent to the leaders acquiring for this child medical services necessary in the event of an emergency; and agree to pay all associated medical expenses incurred on behalf of this child.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

5 INCIDENT REPORT FORM

This form is used to report on a range of significant incidents. This information can help our church respond to any concerns arising from the incident, so please be thorough in recording the relevant information. If you need more space attach more paper.

Date of Incident: _____ **Date of this Report:** _____

Children involved in incident:

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Adults involved in incident:

Name: _____ ÿ Leader ÿ Helper ÿ Other: _____

Name: _____ ÿ Leader ÿ Helper ÿ Other: _____

Name: _____ ÿ Leader ÿ Helper ÿ Other: _____

Adults responsible for activity/program:

Name: _____ Position: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

Describe the incident:

(eg What was the incident? How did the injury occur? What was disclosed or alleged?)

Describe the response:

(eg How have those involved been cared for? Who was notified? What follow up is planned?)

Authorities Contacted:

(eg Health professional or Emergency service)

Name: _____ Organisation: _____

Contact details: _____

Name: _____ Organisation: _____

Contact details: _____

Any further action recommended:

(eg Can safety be improved? Who else needs to know? Might someone need counselling?)

Completed by

Name: _____

Contact Details: _____

5.1 INCIDENT REPORT FORM – EXAMPLE

This form is used to report on a range of significant incidents. This information can help our church respond to any concerns arising from the incident, so please be thorough in recording the relevant information. If you need more space attach more paper.

Date of Incident: January 26, 2003 **Date of this Report:** January 27, 2003

Children involved in incident:

Name: _____ Sam Grey

Name: _____ Lee White

Name: _____

Adults involved in incident:

Name: _____ Gabriel Brown Leader Helper Other: _____

Name: _____ Leader Helper Other: _____

Name: _____ Leader Helper Other: _____

Adults responsible for activity/program:

Name: Gabriel Brown Position: Leader / Coordinator

Name: Kim Black Position: Children's Minister

Describe the incident:

(eg What was the incident? How did the injury occur? What was disclosed or alleged?)

At our Australia Day family picnic, Sam and Lee started fighting. Gabriel who was the closest leader at the time called for them to stop. They both paused but then Lee started kicking Sam, so Gabriel grabbed Lee around the waist and pulled the kid away. Lee burst into tears, accused Gabriel of unfairly taking sides, then ran out of the park and home, directly across the street, only narrowly missing a car.

Describe the response:

(eg How have those involved been cared for? Who was notified? What follow is planned?)

Kim left Gabriel and the other leaders with the kids and went to Lee's house. Lee's mother was angry. Kim explained that all the leaders were sad about what had just happened and would follow up later what started the fight. After Lee had calmed down, Kim expressed that leaving the picnic like that was dangerous, and showed disrespect to the others in the group. Lee's mum agreed and said Lee could not come back for the lunch. Kim supported that decision. Gabriel had asked Sam about the fight. He was not hurt but Gabriel still did not know what started the fight. Gabriel gave Sam timeout.

Authorities Contacted:

(eg Health professional or Emergency service)

Name: _____ Organisation: _____

Contact details: _____

Name: _____ Organisation: _____

Contact details: _____

Any further action recommended:

(eg Can safety be improved? Who else needs to know? Might someone need counselling?)

Kim to phone Sam's parents to tell what happened. Next week we will sit both kids down together to try to mediate the conflict. If it happens again we will discuss a specific plan such as separating them. Gabriel will remind all kids about staying inside the fence at the park.

Completed by

Name: Kim Black

Contact Details: 12 Victoria Rd, Smallville (02) 5550 1234

6 EXPECTATIONS OF CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR - EXAMPLES

Our Code at Children's Church:

1. **Please God:** Do things that make God happy.
2. **Do your Best:** Join in and give your best effort.
3. **Care for Others:** Look after each other, we are all friends.
4. **Listen to Leaders:** Respect and obey the leaders who help us.

Agreed operating procedures for youth group:

We agree to make our youth group a success we need to:

- Accept everyone as special and encourage them
- Respect each other here and outside youth group
- In group discussions let one person talk at a time
- Not do or say things that will hurt or unnecessarily offend others
- Respect the property we use and share with others
- Find ways to serve each other

We agree that breaching this agreement disrupts youth group and disadvantages all of us, so:

- first time we breach this agreement we can expect to be warned
- second time in a row we can expect to be excluded from an activity
- third time in a row we can expect to have a conversation about our ongoing involvement with a leader and parent.

To help repair any damage to people or property we can:

- apologise to those people we have hurt
- offer to do something to set things right
- change the way we behave.

7 RELEVANT PHONE NUMBERS

Role / Name	Phone
Local Setting	
Program Coordinators (eg Club Leaders, Camp Directors, Youth Leaders)	
Person responsible for this Ministry (eg Children's Minister, Youth Worker)	
Local Setting Leadership (eg Elder, Ministry Team Leader, Unit Director)	
Other	
Churches of Christ Conference Office (See Conference Handbook for more numbers)	9488 8800
Working With Children Check Information Line	1300 652 879
Emergencies	
Life-threatening Emergency (Ambulance, Fire, Police)	000
Victorian Police	9247 6666
Victorian Department of Human Services	131 278
Gatehouse Centre at Royal Children's Hospital	9345 6391 (After hours 9345 5522)
Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA)	9344 2210 (After hours 9349 1766)
Poison Information Centre	131 126
Kids Help Line	1800 55 1800
Suicide Help Line	1300 651 251

8 CONTACTING CONFERENCE

Where there has been, or is likely to have been, a serious breach of this policy, such as one possibly involving the abuse of a child or other crime, the leadership of the local setting should be informed as soon as possible, and they must contact the Conference.

They should call the Conference office on **9488 8800** to speak to someone serving in one of the following roles:

Conference Executive Officer: Paul Cameron 9488 8800

Director of Mission and Ministry: John Gilmore 9488 8800

Director of Church Resources: Mark Dainton 9488 8800

If none of these can be contacted, someone serving in one of the following roles can help refer the matter:

Conference Council Chair C/- Conference 9488 8800

Conference President C/- Conference 9488 8800

Where a minor matter or significant concern that is not a serious breach of this policy occurs in a conference setting, such as in Kids Min or Youth Vision, you can refer to the current Conference Handbook or call the Conference office on **9488 8800** to contact the appropriate leadership in that specific ministry area.

The Ministry Professional Standards Committee (MPSC) in Victoria and Tasmania will follow through matters of complaint referred to the Conference Office.

Conference may seek advice from its lawyers and insurers regarding a complaint and seek their advice.

9 RESPONDING TO SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS

Using the principles in the policy, here is a step-by-step procedure to help respond to a significant concern.

A person with or receiving a report of a significant concern such as inappropriate disciplinary action or unsafe practices needs to:

- consult with other leaders to ensure any inappropriate or unsafe practices are stopped and children are removed from any unsafe environments; and
- notify the person responsible for the program in the local setting.

The person responsible for the program needs to:

- take whatever steps are necessary to prevent such a situation occurring again; and
- judge if the matter has then been dealt with adequately or, if serious enough, to be referred to the leadership in the local setting, for further action.

If serious enough, the leadership in the local setting (such as the minister or governing body) needs to:

- refer the matter to the relevant civil authorities and inform the Conference contact person if they reasonably suspect a criminal offence has occurred;
- investigate the situation to decide if anyone should be counselled, reprimanded, sanctioned, suspended or dismissed;
- if the decision is made to sanction, suspend or dismiss someone, a letter detailing this should be sent to that person, the leader of the program, the leadership in the local setting and, if appropriate, the Conference contact person; and
- ensure an incident report form is completed.

10 RESPONDING TO SERIOUS BREACHES

Using the principles in the policy, here is a step-by-step procedure to help respond to a potential serious breach such as a disclosure or allegation of a physical or sexual assault.

The first priority for a person aware of a potential serious breach is to address the safety of the child. Normally, this is best done by the responsible leader in the local setting consulting the parents of the child. However the child should not be returned to a situation of risk and an alleged offender should not be involved in providing care.

- If the child requires medical attention, encourage the parents to coordinate this with the Police, Department of Human Service workers or the Gatehouse Centre at the Royal Children's Hospital who are trained in care and forensic issues. Only in extreme circumstances would the leader arrange medical attention for the child.
- If others are in danger, either as a result of the disclosure or ongoing actions of the alleged offender, take steps to protect any other potential victims.
- If the child requires emotional support, take steps to ensure this is provided.

Any person receiving a disclosure or allegation also needs to:

- Refer the issue to the leadership in the local setting.

The leadership in the local setting (such as the minister or governing body) needs to:

- Immediately suspend from all roles involving the care of children and possibly all leadership roles in the church, anyone suspected of a serious breach, pending an investigation. A person suspended should not have any contact with children who have disclosed or alleged abuse.
- Refer any suspected crime to the relevant civil authority and follow their advice.
- Inform the appropriate Conference contact and follow their advice on investigating the situation.
- If the investigation upholds a complaint, the leader will be suspended or dismissed from all leadership involving children, and possibly all leadership in the church. If the complaint is not upheld as a result of the investigation, or the matter is not proven, the leadership in the local setting, in consultation with the Conference, will decide on the terms of the reappointment of the leader to leadership involving children.
- Notice in writing of the final outcome should be sent to the person, the Conference contact person, the leadership in the local setting and if appropriate the coordinator of the program. Ensure an incident report form is completed.