

New Life Baptist Church Safe Church Policy

Policy Statement

This document represents the official safe church policy for New Life Baptist Church. The Church is committed to protecting the safety of all people within its programs, ministries and events. All people, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, disability and family or social background have equal rights to this protection. All people (including children) have the right to be respected and valued as well as feel emotionally, physically and spiritually safe at all times.

Our policy has been developed to uphold this commitment to safeguarding and to adhere to National and State legislation.

General Principles

This Policy applies to all staff, including senior leadership, coordinators, paid staff, volunteers, students or anyone working on behalf of New Life Baptist Church.

The purpose of this Policy:

- To protect children and young people and vulnerable adults who receive services from New Life Baptist Church.
- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guides our approach to child protection.
- New Life Baptist Church believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

Our Policy aims to:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of positional power.
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly.
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe.
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

Scope:

The Safe Church Policy covers all New Life Baptist Church leadership, staff, and volunteers as well as all people involved in or attending the church and its programs (ministries).

Definitions

Abuse: Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Family Violence
- Sexual Abuse
- Grooming
- Neglect

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years (eg: The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012, Victoria).

Disclosure: a disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in authority/leadership (or a trusted adult) within the Faith Community that they have been subject to abuse or knows of abuse. A disclosure may or may not be an allegation or a notifiable circumstance, but it is the responsibility of the person in authority to investigate and take any appropriate action.

Child Safe Environment: discharges duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including e.g. spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.

Child Safe Leader: has been through a recruitment process, understands responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team player.

Child Safe Program: all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned.

Vulnerable Person: a person who may be considered to be susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (physical or mental), age, grief, previous experience of abuse, social isolation or financial hardship. In this sense vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

New Life Baptist Church is committed to children, young people and vulnerable adults by providing an environment that is physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

New Life Baptist Church is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people and will endeavour to provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people by the following safeguarding measures: Recruitment processes (screening, selection, interviews etc.), WWCC, Training, Induction, Supervision and Reviews.

The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to promoting within New Life Baptist Church; Due diligence, Integrity, Duty of Care, Transparency, Inclusivity, Teamwork.

Legal Framework

This Policy reflects legislation and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

National Legislation

- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children "Protecting Children is Everyone's Business" 2009 – 2020 (Commonwealth of Australia)

State Legislation

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021

Working With Children Checks

- Working With Children Act 2005 (Vic.)
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount, and is everyone's responsibility as outlined in the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other organisations/agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We commit to:

a. Safe recruitment of leaders: We will screen all prospective leaders in our programs, before they are appointed. (i.e. relevant Working with Children's Check/police check).

b. Adequate training of leaders: We require that all leaders attend a Child Safe training workshop before commencing in their role and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years. We require all leaders to attend additional specific training as required.

c. Have a clear Code of Conduct: We will adopt and implement a Code of Conduct for all leaders and volunteers, including boundaries of behaviour and expectations of interactions with children. All leaders will sign an agreement to follow the Code of Conduct.

d. Continued supervision of leaders: We commit to ongoing training, supervision and support for leaders.

e. Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious misconduct: All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to our procedure. We will listen to and believe children who raise concerns.

We will ensure that procedures are clear and appropriate in responding to allegations of abuse.

Where an allegation of misconduct is made against a person in the organisation in relation to a child, we will prioritise support to the child. We will seek appropriate support for the person implicated to protect the safety of the child as the paramount consideration.

f. Responding to other disclosures of abuse: We will understand the processes of responding to disclosures of abuse and harm including self-harm and suicide ideation.

We will ensure that appropriate training takes place to recognise and respond to indicators of abuse and neglect and receive support for all involved in the disclosure (including the leaders/volunteers).

We understand that responding to abuse is not limited to children, but also includes adults within our programs who may be vulnerable at any given time where abuse could be present and that everyone understands the most appropriate steps to take in supporting our vulnerable people within our community.

We will ensure that appropriate and expedient responses to all incidents, accidents, child protection and/or safe church concerns will occur.

g. Provide an open safe environment: We will afford participants a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation. We will be accountable and transparent.

We will create a child-friendly environment, allowing people to raise their concerns in an appropriate manner. We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.

h. Understand and value diversity: We will be mindful in our approach for all programs to be inclusive for all people. This includes adapting programs for anyone with a disability to receive access to various programs, as well as provide adequate training for leaders.

We will be sensitive to those from 'Culturally and Linguistic Diverse' (CALD) backgrounds and those within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with our programs, information, support and services. As well as upholding respect to all cultures and encourage the participation of all people and recognise their unique contribution to our community.

We will encourage and support children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights

i. Holding leaders and volunteers accountable: Deliberate or continued failure to abide by approved church policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from a held employment or volunteer position

We are committed to reviewing this policy annually at a minimum.

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