

# Safe Ministry Policy

Westminster  
Presbyterian  
Church  
Bullcreek Inc.  
2022



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Policy Statement

The Organisation is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its employees, participants, visitors, volunteers and particularly to Children, Older Persons and other Vulnerable Adults.

The Organisation's Safe Ministry Policy aims to minimise the risk of Abuse occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should Abuse occur.

### 1.2 Scope

This Safe Ministry Policy applies to and includes:

All Employees, Leaders & Volunteers within or engaged by the Organisation.

### 1.3 Authority

This Safe Ministry Policy was adopted for use by the Organisation's Session on 5 August 2014 (formerly named as Client Protection Policy)

The Organisation's Session is committed to implementing the Safe Ministry Policy and to training our Employees, Leaders and Volunteers in its content and application.

### 1.4 Definitions

**1.4.1 Abuse** can consist of one or more of but is not restricted to the following:

**Older Person Abuse**, any act, occurring in a relationship which can reasonably be construed to cause harm or distress to an Older Person.

**Emotional Abuse**, the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person, or the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a person's self-esteem and social confidence over time.

**Financial Abuse**, is unauthorised control or use of another person's funds.

**Physical Abuse**, any non-accidental, non-consensual physical touching that may result in injury.

**Sexual Abuse**, any assault or abuse of a sexual nature, sexual molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation and the exposure to or displaying of sexually explicit publications or material.

- 1.4.2 Child or Children** is any person(s) under the age of 18.
- 1.4.3 Participant** is any person, including Children, who works for or who attends or participates in activities of the Organisation.
- 1.4.4 Contractor** is a person who is a service provider to the Organisation.
- 1.4.5 Committee** is 2 Church Officers (either 2 Elders or 2 Deacons or one Elder and one Deacon) and 1 Administration Employee who meet to review, maintain and update the Safe Ministry Policy on an annual basis or as when required.
- 1.4.6 Elder** is elected by members of the Organisation and is responsible for governing the Organisation.
- 1.4.7 Deacon** is elected by members of the Organisation to collect and distribute funds to those in need and to assist the Elders in guiding the members.
- 1.4.8 Employee** is any person employed by the Organisation.
- 1.4.9 Leader** is any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of participants placed in their care whilst holding a formal position at the Organisation. A leader could include but is not limited to:
- Church Officer (Elder or Deacon)
  - Activity Coordinators,
  - Ministry Leaders
  - Small group Leaders,
  - Music, drama or other Leaders,
  - Youth Leaders,
  - Teachers,
  - Sports Coaches and Organisers.
- 1.4.10 Older Person** is any person aged 65 or older
- 1.4.11 Vulnerable Adult** is any person who is in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illnesses or may be unable to take care of him or herself or be unable to protect him or herself against harm or exploitation by another person
- 1.4.12 Session** is the ruling body of Westminster Presbyterian Church Bullcreek Inc. comprising of Elders of the Organisation elected by members of the Organisation.
- 1.4.13 Organisation** is Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC) Bullcreek Inc, located at 32 Bull Creek Drive, Bull Creek, 6149.
- 1.4.14 Volunteer** is any unpaid person over the age of 18 who is invited to assist in activities at which Children or Vulnerable Adults attend.

## 2. Policy Review



This Safe Ministry Policy will be reviewed annually by the Committee and be approved by the Session annually.

### **3. Obligations**

#### **3.1 Responsibility**

The Organisation is responsible to treat all people with fairness and dignity and to care and protect the vulnerable.

#### **3.2 Legal**

The Organisation is committed to adhering to all relevant legislation.

#### **3.3 Ethical**

Some actions may not be regarded as Abuse, but are unacceptable behaviour for the Organisation.

These include:

- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature.
- Suggestive gestures or remarks.
- Inappropriate literature
- Recording or filming without prior consent.

Session seeks to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

Each Participant of the Organisation has the right:

- To full and effective use of his or her personal, civil, and legal rights.
- To be treated with dignity and respect.
- To have their personal details kept confidential unless permission is obtained to release them.

### **4. Selection & Screening**

**4.1 Committee**, the establishment of the Committee is for the review process of the Safe Ministry Policy. The role of the Committee is to meet annually for review of the Safe Ministry Policy, and online training and refresher courses. The Committee is available to meet with Leaders and to assist and develop strategies for compliance with the Safe Ministry Policy.

**4.2 Employees, Leaders, Volunteers and Contractors**, involved in all activities or programs with Children or other Vulnerable Adults must be carefully selected and screened by Session or an authorized delegate of Session prior to commencing services. The following precautions will be taken:

All Leaders who are working with children or vulnerable adults must have attended WPC Bullcreek services or the ministry they are involved in regularly and/or have been a member for at least 6 months.

- All Leaders who are responsible for children or vulnerable adults must complete an online application at Safe Ministry Check which includes

previous experience, acceptance to comply with the Code of Conduct and names of 2 referees. Both referees will be contacted by email.

- All short-listed candidates must be interviewed by the Ministry Leader and the interview must include an analysis of past experience working with Children and other vulnerable adults.
- A Police and/or Community Services check which complies with the legislative requirements of Western Australia will be requested and received prior to the Employee, Leader, Contractor or Volunteer commencing their proposed role.
- The check must show that the individual is not precluded from working in childcare or aged care.
- Where the Organisation has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence, they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for employment or engagement with the Organisation
- A Contractor in Child related ministry, ie; leading a Children's program on a camp must be approved by Session and have read and signed the Safe Ministry Policy prior to providing services.

## **5. Training**

All new Employees, Leaders and Volunteers who are responsible for children and vulnerable adults will be issued with a copy of this policy and will be required to complete online training with Safe Ministry Check before they can commence in their ministry. Safe Ministry Policy Refresher online training courses will be required to be completed by all Employees, Leaders and Volunteers who are responsible for children and vulnerable adults on an annual basis.

## **6. A Safe Environment**

Incidents of Abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, working in pairs is preferable.

- Participants are expected to respect each other's privacy during times that require changing of clothes. Employees, Leaders and Volunteers will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No Employees, Leaders or Volunteers will be alone in a room with a Child or a Vulnerable Adult while any/either is changing.
- Activities and program related to Children and Vulnerable Adults will be open to observation by family, friends or guardians.

## **7. Disciplining Children**

Is not the responsibility of WPC Bullcreek Employees, Leaders or Volunteers to discipline a child. If a Child does not abide by the rules set down or behaviour expectations of the Organisation, or becomes an obstruction to the care of other Participants, and may cause



harm, then the Child's behaviour will be addressed with the Child in the first instance if the Child continues to behave in a way that may cause obstruction to the care of other Participants or harm the Child will be removed and referred to their parent or guardian.

## 8. Reporting Procedures

The Organisation requires reporting of all Abuse as soon as practicable. The Organisation is committed to building an environment where either a victim or Employee, Volunteer, Leader, Contractor and Participant is able to report such abuse.

Employees, Leaders, Contractors and Volunteers must report reasonable suspicions of Abuse to an Elder on Session.

Reasonable Suspicion means fair and practical reason to believe an incident involving Abuse has occurred.

All reports of Abuse will be reported to Session who will formulate the appropriate response and process.

The details of those reporting Abuse will be kept private and confidential.

The escalating procedures will be as follows:

- All reports of Abuse or alleged Abuse will be reported to an Elder or WPC Bullcreek Safe Ministry Committee.
- The Session or Safe Ministry Committee will determine what course of immediate action should be taken and this may include automatic suspension of duties.
- If there is reasonable suspicion that a Participant has been or is suffering Abuse, the Police and the Organisation's Insurer will be contacted immediately.
- The phone number for the Police is: **131444**
- The phone number for the Organisation is: **9332 6300**
- The Police will also be notified if a member discloses an incident of Abuse that has occurred somewhere other than the Organisation's premises, (e.g. an outing).

In addressing reporting the following approach should be adopted:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim.
- Assuring the Participant that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Be cautious about making contact. If the Employee, Volunteer or Leader is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it may be advisable for another person to assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation.
- Maintaining confidentiality. Any disclosures by a Participant, reports of suspected abuse



and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly. Such documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur and the register maintained by the Committee.

## **9. Alcohol & Drugs**

The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on the Organisation's premises and grounds or during an activity is not to be allowed or condoned by any employee, leader or volunteer. Any participant found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counselled and, where appropriate, a family member is to be contacted.

Any underage participant required to take prescription medication administered by an Employee, Volunteer or Leader, will provide a letter of consent to the Organisation, signed by their parent or guardian.