

Safe Ministry Policy

Grace Christian Community

1. Background & Governance

This policy outlines the underlying principles that direct our approach to safeguarding vulnerable people involved with Grace Christian Community. It applies to all staff, leaders, helpers, pastors, coordinators, trainees and anyone working on behalf of Grace Christian Community (see “Relevant Leaders”). This policy applies to all ministries authorised by or under the control of Grace Christian Community, including those ministries undertaken at the church’s premises or away from the church’s premises.

The Admin Committee of Grace Christian Community takes accountability for ensuring these principles are reviewed every two years and embedded in the organisation culture at all levels.^{1 2} Two Safe Ministry officers appointed by the Admin Committee have the responsibility for practically implementing this policy across the church. Grace Christian community subscribes to the Safe Ministry Check Service to ensure leader screening and safe ministry training can be managed efficiently.

2. Commitment to Safeguard Vulnerable People

We are committed to the Biblical call to care for the vulnerable by actively preventing harm and abuse, and by seeking to provide safe programs.³ We are also responsible and accountable for fulfilling our obligations under State and Federal law to protect children and vulnerable people.

We are committed to ensuring that all vulnerable people (including children, families, the disabled and elderly) are informed and involved in decisions that considerably affect them. We recognise the diverse needs of vulnerable people (both children and adults) should be taken into account and that their concerns be taken seriously.⁴ We are committed to embedding this care into all levels of our leadership and culture.

¹ This policy is in accordance with the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 No 157

² As per Point 1 of the National Statement of Principles for Child Safe Organisations

³ Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Matthew 18:1-6; Mark 10:13-16

⁴ As per Points 2, 3 & 4 of the National Statement of Principles for Child Safe Organisations

3. Screening and Training Relevant Leaders

On behalf of the Admin Committee, the Safe Ministry Officers will ensure all Relevant Leaders are screened, appropriately supported and trained **before** commencing their role through the process outlined below.⁵

Relevant Leaders refers to paid staff (Eg: Pastors, Apprentices, Student Ministers), Elders, Admin Committee members, Safe Ministry Officers, Purpose Team Leaders, Connect Group Coordinators, Connect Group Leaders & Helpers, Front of House Team, Music Leaders, Care team leaders, Youth Group Leaders, Kids Church Coordinators and Kids Church Leaders & Helpers.

1. All Relevant leaders must be regular participants at Grace Christian Community and have been attending for at least 6 months. They will have their potential roles and responsibilities clearly outlined for them as they start their role,
2. All Relevant Leaders must provide referees who can confirm the proposed leader is suitable to work with vulnerable people and that there is no reason the proposed leader should not be appointed in such a role. At least one referee must be outside Grace Christian Community.
3. All Relevant Leaders must disclose past experiences and positions held and confirm they have had no previous accusations made against them related to safety of vulnerable people.
4. All Relevant leaders must complete an Ansvar approved Safe Ministry Training Course (e.g. www.SafeMinistryTraining.com.au) which outlines appropriate behaviour including how to minimise the chances of harm and abuse, as well as training in how to identify and report cases of abuse,
5. Relevant leaders must commit to the FIEC Code of Conduct, Safe Ministry Leader Commitment and behave as followers of Jesus and be willing to be held accountable for their behaviour.
6. All “Relevant Leaders” who are working with Children and Youth must have their State “Working With Children Check” verified. No-one with a criminal record of child abuse, molestation or similar offences is allowed to be involved in children's or youth ministry or leading vulnerable adults at Grace Christian Community.
7. If a Relevant Leader is a paid staff member or a board level leader, they must complete a Police Check.
8. All Relevant Leaders will renew their Safe Ministry Checks every year and commit to the Safe Ministry Leader Commitment including the FIEC Code of Conduct every year.

The Supervisors or leaders of leaders must keep the members of their Elvanto leader group up to date at all times so the right list of leaders is synchronised with the Safe Ministry Check service.

⁵ As per Point 5, 7 & 8 of the National Statement of Principles for Child Safe Organisations

3.1 Safe Ministry Training for Relevant Leaders

The below table outlines which training is relevant for different types of leaders. The list of relevant leaders reflects a point in time view of applicable roles. If a new role is created, the Safe Ministry Officer must be contacted by the role creator for guidance on appropriate Safe Training.

Category	Required Training Courses	Relevant Leaders	Working with Childrens Check	Police Check
LEADERS who serve other members	Member Awareness Leaders Training	Kids Church Leaders & Helpers Connect Group Leaders & Helpers Music Leaders Front of House Team Youth Group Leaders Care Team Leaders Book Club Leader	Kids Church Leaders & Helpers Youth Leaders Youth Group Leaders Connect Group Leaders & Helpers	
SUPERVISORS who lead other leaders / Those who run events & programs	Member Awareness Leaders Training Supervisors Training	Connect Group Coordinators Kids Church Coordinators Purpose Team Leaders Roster Leaders	Kids Church Coordinators	
BOARD - Leaders of the church organisation as a whole/ those overseeing safe ministry	Member Awareness Leaders Training Supervisors Training Staff & Board Members Training	Pastors Elders Admin Committee Safe Ministry Officers Other paid staff	Pastors Safe Ministry Officers	Pastors Elders Admin Committee Safe Ministry Officers Other paid staff

Note 1: If an individual fits multiple categories, the higher category of training will be applicable.

Note 2: This policy is not directly applicable to leaders who may serve as part of programs outside of those authorised by or under the control of Grace Christian Community. It is expected that the organisation running such ministries would ensure its leaders abide by their Safe Policies.

3. Commitment to Providing Safe and Accessible Programs

We are committed to ensuring that our programs and events are safe and appropriate for those attending. Careful consideration must be given to the activities chosen, the venue, safe ratios of supervision, appropriate toileting practices, transportation, work health and safety, parental or guardian permission and confidentiality of records kept.

To help maintain appropriate standards, we will give all relevant leaders access to ongoing training through Safe Ministry Check and adequate supervision in their roles and responsibilities.

4. Commitment to Appropriately Respond to Concerns and Complaints

We are committed to creating a culture where people feel safe to speak out about inappropriate behaviour without fear of being rejected or ridiculed. We are committed to listening and responding appropriately to concerns and complaints about behaviour and safety at Grace Christian Community. Throughout this process we are committed to protecting the confidentiality, dignity, health and well-being of all individuals involved. Any child-related issues will be managed with a focus on the interest of the child and will be reported to the relevant State Child Protection body.⁶

It is the responsibility of all Relevant Leaders to report reasonable suspicion of any kind of abuse to the Safe Ministry Officer. The details of anyone who reports such abuse will be kept private and confidential.

All reports will be managed by the Grace Christian Community Safe Ministry Officers:

John Diacos 0403 074 755 jdiacos@gmail.com
Tamara Wilson 0401441806 tamara.k.wils@gmail.com

The Safe Ministry Officers will follow a **Safe Ministry Issue Management Process**.⁷ This includes reporting any criminal activity to Police, and the possibility of reporting allegations of abuse to the State Ombudsman and the insurer of Grace Christian Community. In certain incidents (as outlined in the Issue Management Process) the Safe Ministry Supervisors will appoint an Independent Ministry Investigator to investigate allegations of inappropriate behaviour.

5. Special Guidelines for Child Protection

As minors, there are special guidelines that must be followed when working with children:

1. Two leaders will always be present when working with or supervising children.
2. Leaders will not visit children in their homes unless a parent is present or another leader accompanies them.
3. When transporting children, leaders should never be alone with a child in a car. Where this is not practical, leaders will take children directly to and from arranged venues and will not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements.
4. All personal counselling is to be carried out within sight of another leader.
5. Leaders will respect a member's feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact of any kind.

⁶ As per Point 6 of the National Statement of Principles for Child Safe Organisations

⁷ As per Point 10 of the National Statement of Principles for Child Safe Organisations

6. Adults and children are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Leaders will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No leader will be alone in a room with a child while either is changing.
7. Initiations and secret ceremonies are prohibited. All aspects of every child-related program will be open to observation by parents/guardians.
8. Leaders have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at child related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.
9. It is not the responsibility of the church or its leaders to discipline a child. If a child does not abide by the rules set down by the leader, or is an obstruction to the care of other children or may cause harm to other children, the child will be removed and referred back to their parent or guardian. At no time will a Leader administer any form of physical, emotional or mental discipline.
10. Any child required to take prescription medication will provide a letter from their parents/guardians to the ministry leader.
11. Any child found to be under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs is to be counselled and the parents/guardians contacted so the child can be returned home immediately.

6. Administering the Safe Ministry Policy

The Admin Committee has overall accountability for ensuring the Safe Ministry Policy is up to date embedded in the church. But the policy is implemented by the Safe Ministry Officer in collaboration with the Supervisor Leaders and the Elvanto Administrator whose roles and responsibilities are outlined below.

6.1 Safe Ministry Officers

As Grace Christian Community is committed to creating a safe culture and appropriately responding to incidents, two Safe Ministry Officers are appointed by the Admin Committee.

They must meet the following prerequisites:

- Must be pre-screened as a "Relevant Leader" and meet all the relevant criteria of Section 2.
- Must not have any past criminal convictions of abuse (adults or children)
- Must have genuine concern to care for vulnerable people of all ages.
- Have an understanding of Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Safe Ministry Officers will fulfill the following responsibilities in collaboration with the Elvanto Administrator and the leaders of teams:

1. Ensuring all "Relevant Leaders" are up to date with the appropriate types of Safe Ministry Training and Screenings as outlined in the policy using the Safe Ministry Portal.
2. Ensuring all "Relevant Leaders" have completed their Referee Checks and WWC Compliance and ensuring WWC are up to date.

3. Cleaning up records of people who are no longer “Relevant Leaders” or are no longer attending Grace Christian Community.
4. Providing guidance to members and relevant leaders related to the Safe Ministry Policy.
5. Hearing and assessing Safe Ministry concerns/incidents by following the incident management process.

6.2 Supervisor Leaders

It's the responsibility of the supervisor leaders or leaders of leaders to ensure the list of leaders in their teams is maintained in their Elvanto group. Those who are no longer serving in a leadership capacity must be removed from the group. They must ensure that leaders only commence serving after they have completed their Safe Ministry Accreditation.

6.3 Elvanto Administrator

It is the responsibility of the Elvanto Administrator to ensure the leader records are synced with Safe Ministry Check and administrate the three Safe Ministry Category Groups.

7. Definitions

Child - Any person under the age of 18.

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

- Physical abuse– Any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as: Hitting, punching, kicking (marks from belt buckles, fingers), shaking (particularly babies), burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair. Alcohol or other drug administration.
- Sexual abuse - Any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.
- 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 child's development, self esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child's presence.
- Neglect - Characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's development.

Helpers - Any unpaid person over the age of 16 who is invited by a leader to assist them in their ministry. A helper has the same obligations as a leader when it comes to safe ministry.

Relevant Leader - Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of members placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a recognised ministry of the church. A leader could include but is not limited to: Religious practitioner, Connect group leaders, Music

leaders, Counsellors, Youth leaders, Kids Church Coordinators, Teachers, Kid's club leaders, Scripture teachers, Sports coaches and organisers.

Members – Any person, including children, who attends or participates in church ministries.

Ministry - Any organised activity that is authorised by the church.

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