



Christian Bible Fellowship

Child Safe Policy

WORKING DOCUMENT

Endorsed CBF Business Meeting 9 July 2020

1. Introduction

Christian Bible Fellowship, Creswick, (CBF) acknowledges and desires that everyone, regardless of age, gender, race, cultural background, and ability has the right to feel safe and protected.

CBF believes that **children/young** people should never experience **abuse** of any kind, and are committed to operating in a way that aims to protect them.

Within this context, CBF is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of **children/ young** people within its sphere of influence. To this end CBF will make all reasonable attempts to ensure that everyone acting on it's behalf is aware of the contents of this policy and does their best to implement it.

2. The purpose of this Policy:

This policy has been developed to:

- Document CBF's commitment to the safety of everyone within its sphere of influence, including those who attend our worship services, programs, events and other activities.
- Minimise, as far as is practicable, the likelihood of any form of child **abuse** occurring within these worship services, programs, events or other activities.
- Provide those who act on behalf of CBF with overarching principles supported by specific implementation actions designed to expedite child protection and safety.
- Provide guidance to those acting on CBF's behalf regarding the actions to be taken where they suspect **abuse** may have occurred, or is suspected of still occurring, towards a child within or outside of the organisation.

3. Scope

This policy and supporting procedures apply to any person acting on behalf of CBF at their worship services, programs, events, and other activities.

4. Policy Statement

CBF has a zero tolerance of any form of **abuse**.

CBF is committed to providing to the best of our ability, a safe environment where children/ young people are safe, and feel safe. To achieve this, CBF will endeavour to:

- provide a physically safe and emotionally supportive environment for children and young people by adopting standards for personal checks, training, supervision, and , reporting requirements (if required), for those acting on CBF's behalf; and
- ensure that any social media interaction with CBF is likewise compliant with legal and "media site" requirements, CBF's Social Media guidelines (*currently in draft*), age-appropriate, and emotionally safe. This specifically includes freedom from cyberbullying, any form of image misuse, and inappropriate language.

5. Implementation Actions

CBF Elders shall:

1. Familiarise themselves with, and take all reasonable steps to have the **CBF Community** and **volunteers** comply with, child safety legislation (In Vic. - Children, Youth and Families Act 2005);
2. Consider themselves to be mandatory reporters for the purposes of the above Act;
3. Ensure that appropriate training is provided to **Endorsed CBF Leaders** regarding their obligations in relation to the above Act, this Policy, and subordinate documentation.
4. Provide support as appropriate to those involved in reporting abuse within the scope of this policy.

The **CBF Community** including **Oversight, Endorsed CBF Leaders**, and **volunteers** share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child **abuse** and are expected to:

5. Ensure that child safety is a priority at all times.
6. Operate in accordance with CBF's Child Safe Code of Conduct, and comply with all requirements;

CBF Community and **volunteers** who are not **Endorsed CBF Leaders** are required to:

7. Immediately report any disclosure or suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their **Endorsed CBF Leader** immediately; or, if their **Endorsed CBF Leader** is involved in the suspicion, to a **CBF Elder**.
8. Inform any individual wishing to make a disclosure that, depending on its content, you may be required to pass this information on to others who might become involved in their situation.

Endorsed CBF Leaders are required to:

9. Immediately report any disclosure or suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to a **CBF Elder** (provided they are not involved in the disclosure or suspicion); and
10. As soon as possible, complete a **Child Safety Incident Report** regarding the disclosure or suspicion and forward it to the **CBF Elder**.

CBF Elders are required to:

11. Respond in accordance with s184 of the Children, Youth, and Families Act 2005 as mandatory reporters to any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk by reporting this belief to the relevant authorities¹.
12. Ensure that a **Child Safety Incident Report** has been completed for the incident and referred to DHHS as appropriate.

6. Non-compliance with this Policy

Observed instances of non compliance with this policy and /or the subordinate Code of Conduct will be brought to the attention of the relevant **Endorsed CBF leader** who will respond to the matter as part of their normal leadership role.

If there is a 3rd-party report (ie from outside of CBF) or a written/alleged/suspected report of a more serious nature, the relevant **Endorsed CBF leader**, in consultation with CBF Oversight, will investigate and review the reported incident and recommend a response to CBF Oversight for decision. This will, where possible, include the completion of a **Child Safety Incident Report**.

If it is alleged that one or more of the **CBF Elders** has been involved in non-compliance with this policy and/or subordinate **Code of Conduct**, the **CBF Oversight Group** will offer to meet with the reportees in the first instance in an effort to resolve any possible misunderstanding. If meeting is not possible or the matter is not able to be resolved between those involved, the matter must be referred to the appropriate authorities.

¹ Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Western Region **1800 000 551** – *In the first instance, but if not successful go to the following After-Hours number – or to report immediate safety concerns directly:*
Child Protection Crisis Line (24hrs): **13 12 78**

Definitions

Abuse

Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to:

1. **Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons (such as, belts).

2. **Emotional and Psychological Abuse:** emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence.

It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired.

Emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

3. **Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse occurs when a person involves a child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development.

Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.

4. **Grooming:** Grooming refers to actions deliberately undertaken to befriend and influence a child (and, in some circumstances, members of the child's family) with the intention of achieving a criminal objective of sexual activity with children.

Grooming can occur in person or online (e.g. via Facebook) and is designed to help the perpetrator establish an emotional connection in order to lower the child's inhibitions.

5. **Neglect:** Neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised.

Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life-threatening situations.

6. **Disclosure**

A disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in authority/leadership (or a trusted adult) 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.

CBF Child Safe Code of Conduct

Document prepared by CBF consistent with this policy with which all CBF Community and volunteers are required to be familiar and implement at all times when acting on behalf of CBF.

CBF Elder

An individual from the CBF Community who has been endorsed in accordance with agreed CBF processes for the role of “Elder”

CBF Community

All individuals who consider themselves regular attenders of the “Church Body” known as Christian Bible Fellowship, Creswick

CBF Oversight Group

The collective group of CBF Elders and Deacons.

Child Safety Incident Report

CBF form used to report and record details of a suspected child safety concern or disclosure.

Child / Young Person

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

Endorsed CBF Leader

An individual who has been accepted or appointed by the CBF Elders AND a CBF Business Meeting for the leadership role they occupy.

Volunteer

For the purposes of this document, any authorised person who is giving their time to help out at Christian Bible Fellowship programs, ministries or events. A volunteer could be performing duties which include: activity co-ordinator or organiser, small group leader, music or drama leader, youth leader, or generally assisting delivering of a program, ministry or event.

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