

NZ Child Safe Policy

Guidelines for Child Safety in New Zealand

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to promote and maintain a safe environment within our Ministry and Fellowship to ensure that children and young people are protected from sexual, physical and emotional abuse, and neglect. This policy is specifically focused on the safety and wellbeing of children who come into contact with, or engage with our fellowship. It sets clear expectations about child safe practices for our Ministry, Elders and the broader fellowship.

All members of the Ministry and Fellowship share a common faith in Jesus Christ and endeavour to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. Those serving in the Ministry (referred to as “Gospel workers” or “Workers”) have responded to a calling from God to preach the gospel and minister to members of the fellowship. Members of the fellowship support the Ministry in various ways, including hosting them for short periods of time as they move and live among the fellowship.

Gospel workers and members of the fellowship regularly gather in small groups in a home setting for fellowship and Bible study. The Ministry organises annual 4 day conventions throughout the country as well as mid-year meetings for members of the fellowship. Gospel meetings, typically held twice per week, are open to both those of the fellowship and the public. These are organised and hosted by the Ministry in hired public venues.

This policy affirms our commitment to the safety of children and to our objective of zero incidents of child sexual abuse in the future.

SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

Everybody has a responsibility to keep children safe.

This policy applies to;

- Any active member of the Ministry - including Overseers, Gospel Workers and visiting Gospel Workers from overseas.
- Elders of Sunday morning fellowship meetings.
- All other members of the Fellowship while attending activities and events organised by the Ministry

DISTRIBUTION

This policy will be made available to all members of the fellowship, and specifically provided to;

- All Gospel Workers and Elders
- Visiting Gospel Workers from overseas
- To all members of the Fellowship 16 years and over.
- Any other person/entity who requests it for a purpose related to the Fellowship.

CHILD SAFE STATEMENT

All children have a right to feel safe. The safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child is extremely important and we believe that a child should never experience abuse. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, honesty and fairness.

We recognise child abuse has ongoing impacts. As a Fellowship we are committed to fostering an environment that is not only safe but where every child and young person feels equally supported, valued and cared for.

All members of our Fellowship (Workers, Elders and others) share the responsibility for child safety. Harm and abuse of children and young people will not be tolerated. This means we will;

- not tolerate sexual abuse or harassment of children
- not tolerate misconduct towards children
- not tolerate exploitation of children
- take appropriate action when made aware of sexual abuse, misconduct or exploitation of children
- address known child safety risks
- not minimise the impact child sexual abuse has on victims/survivors
- not cover up incidents of child sexual abuse, and
- be supportive of those who raise complaints of abuse or report as a witness.

As a Fellowship, including the Ministry, we are committed to and will:

- conduct ourselves in a way that protects and safeguards ALL children and young people from any possible harm, risk of harm and abuse, at all times;
- engage respectfully and compassionately with survivors of harm and abuse;
- comply with reporting requirements of any abuse, suspicion of abuse to the appropriate authorities;
- create a safe environment for children and young people engaging with our Fellowship
- comply with all legal requirements.

DEFINITIONS:

“We” means the inclusion of both Workers (members of the Ministry) and Friends (members of this fellowship) who are part of this voluntary fellowship.

“Child” or **“Children”** refers to any person or persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

“Member/Members” refers to those who attend and participate in Ministry organised events activities.

“Gospel Workers / Workers” refers to those serving in the Ministry who preach the gospel and minister to members of the fellowship.

“Parent” or **“Parental”** is meant to be inclusive of both the parents as well as legal or appointed guardians of any child.

“Elder” refers to a member of the fellowship appointed by the Ministry with responsibility for facilitating a weekly Sunday morning fellowship meeting and providing pastoral care to attendees.

“Fellowship” refers collectively to the group of people who form our church

“Child Abuse” can involve ongoing, repeated, or persistent abuse, or may arise from a single incident. Abuse may take many forms, but it can be categorised into four different types:

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect

“Physical Abuse” is a non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse also involves the fabrication or inducing of illness.

“Sexual Abuse” is an act or acts that result in the sexual exploitation of a child.

“Emotional Abuse” is any act or omission that results in impaired psychological, social, intellectual, and/or emotional functioning and development of a child.

“Neglect” is characterised as the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological need. This can occur through direct and deliberate action or by omission or deliberate inaction to care for and/or protect the child. It may also include neglect of a child’s basic or emotional needs.

“Designated Person for Child Safety” is a person, or persons, who is responsible to ensure that the needs and rights of children are met, in regards to the handling of reported child safety concerns by making the safety and wellbeing of each child the paramount consideration.

“Grooming” is predatory conduct and can include, but is not limited to, befriending, or establishing an emotional relationship, or other emotional connection, with a child, (and can extend to members of the child’s family), for the purpose of lowering the child’s inhibitions and with the objective of sexual abuse.

“Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children” formally known as Child Youth and Family Services (“CYFS”). Oranga Tamariki is a government ministry dedicated to supporting children in New Zealand whose wellbeing is at significant risk of harm now, or in the future.

“Overseers” are one or two experienced gospel workers acting as representatives of the Ministry.

Designated Person/s for Child Safety

The role of the Designated Person/s for Child Safety is to:

- Ensure that the needs and rights of children are met, in regards to the handling of reported child safety concerns by making the safety and wellbeing of each child the paramount consideration.
- Receive and respond to information that suggests a potential or actual risk of harm to a child in contact with our Fellowship, irrespective of whether the alleged abuse is current, past, or likely to occur.
- Provide advice and support to Gospel Workers in relation to child safety and, where appropriate, make any referrals to Oranga Tamariki and/or the New Zealand Police.
- Keep clear, confidential and detailed records on all child safety cases. These should contain all available information relating to the cause for concern and any subsequent action taken, including when it has been decided not to make a notification to Oranga Tamariki or the New Zealand Police.
- Liaise with the Overseer to ensure that all Gospel Workers are aware of, and have access to, full copies of the procedures for reporting child abuse
- Establish close links with the relevant local agencies to ensure clear and effective communication and be a recognised contact within our Fellowship for agencies to contact regarding child safety concerns.

The Designated Person/s for Child Safety may engage experienced/specialist/professional support when and where required to obtain advice, support decision making and assist with trauma informed engagement

The contact details of the Designated Person(s) for Child Protection can be found on www.ausnzinfo.com/nz.

This information is also available from any NZ Gospel Workers or Elders.

NZ MINISTRY RESPONSIBILITY

All Gospel workers are responsible for being aware of and supporting the necessary steps being taken to ensure a child safe environment. The Ministry can support the safety, protection and wellbeing of children by recognising children have the right to feel safe at all times.

The Ministry is responsible for;

- Organising and arranging
 - Sunday morning fellowship meetings
 - Bible study meetings
- Arranging and hosting
 - Gospel Meetings
 - Mid Year regional meetings
- Organising and Coordinating annual preparations and conventions

When arranging any other activities such as sings/picnics/hikes etc all attending children must be accompanied by a parent/guardian responsible for their safety.

Training

All Gospel Workers will undertake the recommended child-safe training every 2 years. For people entering the Ministry as a Gospel Worker they are to complete this training prior to commencement. The recommended training for NZ Gospel Workers can be found at ausnzinfo.com/nz.

Police checks

Police checks for Gospel workers will be undertaken prior to commencing in the Ministry and at least every 2 years thereafter. The information obtained will only be used for the purpose of child safety.

Code of Conduct for Gospel Workers (Code of Conduct)

The Code of Conduct outlines the expectation of a Gospel Workers' behaviour and conduct, supporting our commitment to Child Safety. It applies to all members of the NZ Ministry (Gospel Workers) as well as Workers visiting New Zealand from overseas. All workers are required to read and acknowledge that they understand and accept these standards of conduct.

Breaches of this Code of Conduct may result in one or more of the following:

- Additional training on child safety
- A warning or reprimand
- Being asked to stand down from responsibility;
- Investigation where concern of abuse or suspected abuse of a child is identified and reports being made to authorities where appropriate.

ELDER RESPONSIBILITY

Elders are responsible for upholding and applying the principles of this Policy to ensure child safety at their Sunday morning fellowship meetings.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Open conversation and education within families around child safety is encouraged, and parents are responsible for setting and communicating clear boundaries to maintain child safety

Parents should familiarise themselves with this Policy and the Code of Conduct for Gospel Workers. Parents play an important role in supporting the Gospel Workers, by helping them to avoid situations that could make it difficult to comply with the Code of Conduct.

Parents should share all child safe information with people in their family over the age of 16 years, and educate younger children on relevant and appropriate content.

Parents are responsible for their child's safety and should accompany their children to all activities within the Fellowship. Alternatively responsibility can be assigned to another adult.

RAISING CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS

All concerns relating to child safety, including breaches of Code of Conduct for Gospel Workers, are to be reported to the Designated Person/s for Child Safety. All reports will be taken seriously, documented and responded to.

Note: A child safety concern implicating a Designated Person for Child Safety, should be raised directly with the Overseer/s and Oranga Tamariki.

REPORTING ABUSE AND SUSPECTED ABUSE OF A CHILD

All allegations of Child Abuse should be immediately reported to the NZ Police - this includes allegations of historic abuse.

When abuse or suspected abuse of a child is raised it should promptly report to the Designated Person/s for Child Safety in order to assess child safety risks and take appropriate actions. Note: Abuse or suspected abuse implicating a Designated Person for Child Safety, should be raised directly with the Overseer and NZ Police and/or Oranga Tamariki as applicable to ensure prompt and appropriate actions are taken.

In the following situations involving a Child immediate reporting to the Authorities is critical;

- **A Child in immediate danger** - The NZ **Police** are the agency responsible for responding to situations or concerns that a child is in immediate danger and can be contacted on 111.
- **Suspected abuse of a Child** - The agency responsible for receiving and responding to notifications of suspected child abuse and neglect across New Zealand is **New Zealand Oranga Tamariki**. Where a person is concerned about the wellbeing of a child, young person, parent or family they can contact Oranga Tamariki 0508 326 459.

Wherever possible the family should be kept informed of what information has been shared and to which agency, and for what purpose.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

We take the security of your personal information very seriously. We may collect your personal information in relation to our NZ Child Safe Policy and associated processes, practices and procedures. You are not required to provide us with your personal information. However, exclusion of some information may mean that we are unable to provide the support outlined in the Policy. We apply a strict 'need to know' rule when collecting, sharing and storing your information.

All information relating to Child Safety will be recorded factually and held confidentially in the Child Safety File, which is to be overseen and managed by the Designated Persons for Child Safety.

The safety of a child is paramount and those responsible for Child Safety have a responsibility to know when and how to share appropriate information with external agencies to protect the safety and wellbeing of children.

Those responsible for child safety are required to adhere to the Privacy Act 2020 and the Information Sharing Provisions under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 and the Family Violence Act 1989. What this means is that;

- Under the Privacy Act 2020, the giving of information to protect a child or young person is not a breach of confidentiality. Principle 11 of the Privacy Act 2020, states that the sharing of personal information is allowed if “disclosure of the information is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious threat”. Wherever possible the family or whānau should be kept informed of what information has been shared and to which agency, and for what purpose.
- The Oranga Tamariki Act and the Family Violence Act place the wellbeing and best interests of a child as the first and paramount consideration when it comes to the sharing of information. This principle takes precedence over any duty of confidentiality that is owed to the child or their family or whānau, or any person with whom the child is in a domestic relationship with.
- Under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, and the Family Violence Act 1989, if anyone raises a legitimate concern in good faith about suspected child abuse, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

For our full Privacy Policy refer to www.ausnzinfo.com.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

Relating to a Child who is currently under 18 years of age

If a child is in immediate danger;

1. Where possible take prompt action to prioritise the best interests of the child or young person to ensure they are safe.
2. Notify the NZ Police on 111 as soon as possible.
3. Notify Oranga Tamaki on 0508 326 459 as soon as possible.
4. Notify the Designated Person for Child Safety. This will enable internal child safety measures to be put in place. (Alternatively, If the incident occurs during a convention, please notify the Convention Coordinator or Convention Child Safe contact, who will notify the Designated Person for Child Safety).

When a child is not in immediate danger;

Abuse or Suspected Abuse

- a) Report directly to Oranga Tamaki on 0508 326 459 and then notify the Designated Person/s for Child Safety to ensure that Child Safety risks are assessed and appropriate actions taken.

Alternatively,

- b) Notify the Designated Person for Child Safety who will ensure prompt and appropriate actions are taken including reporting to relevant authorities and assessing child safety risks.

Raising a Concern about the wellbeing of a child, young person, parent or family.

Contact Oranga Tamariki 0508 326 459.

Allegation of Historical Child Abuse, where the child is now over 18 years of age.

1. You are encouraged to Report to NZ Police.
2. Notify the Designated Person for Child Safety to ensure child safety risks are assessed and appropriate actions taken.

Raising a child safety issue or concern

Notify the Designated Person/s for Child Safety. They will assess child safety risks and take appropriate actions.

Reporting Concerning Behaviour or Conduct

Notify the Designated Person/s for Child Safety. They will assess child safety risks and take appropriate actions.

Notes:

- Respect the privacy of the child or young person and their family by keeping all personal information confidential, unless disclosure is required to support the safety of a child or young person - Refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Section above.
- Keep the name of the alleged offender confidential from non-concerned parties, as mandated by NZ Law to protect their privacy and prevent potential defamation of character.
- If a direct report has been made to Police or Oranga Tamariki please remember to also notify the Designated Person/s for Child Safety to enable internal child safety measures to be put in place.

DOCUMENTS

- NZ Child Safety: Code of Conduct for Gospel Workers
- NZ Child Safety: Privacy Policy
- NZ Child Safety: Allegation Management Guidelines (*under development*)

These documents are available on ausnzinfo.com/NZ

GOVERNANCE

This policy shall be reviewed at least every 3 years.

Next review due 31st July 2028. Review by the Overseer and Designated Person/s for Child Safety.