

Procedure – Safe Environments

The Safe Ministry Framework Procedure for safe environments relates to the implementation of the following Policy statement:

We commit to the welfare of all people through the implementation and ongoing improvement of our Safe Ministry Framework which includes: safe and friendly environments where people are listened to, feel safe, accept challenges, develop faith and grow in connection with God and others.

Safe environments are transparent and accountable in relation to both procedures and relationships.

The spiritual, physical and emotional environments are safe, and safe practices are in place to run the program, where all foreseeable risks and hazards are identified, assessed and managed.

In implementing procedures, acknowledging the fact that some activities or situations present more inherent risks than others, consideration should be given to the participants' ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds.

- a. Risk assessment and safety management practices are embedded in our procedures prior to each program, event or activity taking place. We use these practices to inform our planning and operating of all our programs, events or activities. Risk management applies to common law duty of care, Work Health & Safety and specifically to the minimising of safety risks for all people who are in our care.
- b. The Governance Board will delegate the task of management of site and program risks to the relevant workers responsible for risk management (safe environments) *<insert relevant risk management person/s or group e.g. Management Group / Work Health & Safety Officer>*
- c. The *<insert relevant risk management person/s or group e.g. Management Group / Work Health & Safety Officer>* is responsible for the identification, assessment and management of all site and program risks, and the reporting and addressing of incidents.

- d. Physically safe environments: The <insert relevant risk management person/s or group e.g. Work Health & Safety Officer> will
 - i. Conduct WHS site inspection of the area to be used for a program
 - ii. Apply hierarchy of control measures where hazards are identified, and communicate control measures with all worker and program participants.

Our Safe Ministry Framework procedures for safe environments (herein) form part of our overall site safety procedures as found in our <insert the name of your Church's document in which WHS, risk management and site safety procedures are found>.

Our church has the following safe environments procedures to ensure the physical safety of all persons associated with our church:

<insert a list of your procedures for site safety as found in your operation manual: e.g. supervision numbers, first aid, transport, food, age specific issues, safe manual handling, visual and auditory practices, ministry finances & WHS >

Sample procedures [Note: the following are sample procedures in four common areas of risk, note this is not an exhaustive list. This section will need to be customised to ensure all programs, events and activities are risk managed adequately]

a. First aid

- i. All paid workers will hold current first aid training, e.g. St John Ambulance, and there will be a suitably qualified first aid person on site at all programs, events and activities.
- ii. A suitable, up-to-date, stocked and accessible first aid kit is to be available at all times.
- iii. A record should be kept of any treatment given.
- iv. Analgesics should not form part of your first aid kit.

b. Transportation

- i. We will only provide responsible transportation (road rule-abiding, in a registered vehicle, with an appropriately screened and licenced driver).
- ii. None of our workers will be in a car with a child alone.
- iii. At no time will there be more passengers in a car than the number of seat belts that are in working order and available for use.
- iv. If a child is travelling in a vehicle driven by a worker who possesses a provisional licence, prior written consent will, wherever possible, be given by a parent/guardian, except in the case of emergencies.

c. Food

- i. Food safety & storage guidelines will be followed. These will be available on our website and posted on the wall in our kitchen or food preparation area.
- ii. We have will enquire of our local council to ensure we meet local requirements in relation to food handling.

d. Supervision of children

- i. To properly exercise our duty of care we will have the right kind of workers as well as adequate numbers of to supervise program participants.
- ii. Precise numbers of workers required for the supervision of a program, event or activity will be determined by taking into account the size of the group, age of participants, and the level of physical and or emotional risk inherent in the activity. For example: Programs aimed at younger and/or disabled children require more supervision due to the increased level of risk involved. We will need many more workers when operating high-risk activities such as

taking children or young people off-site, swimming, bushwalks, games nights or the like, or if the group is large.

- iii. As a minimum number there will be 4 adult workers (over 18 years) present (on-site) for all programs, with a minimum of 1:8 ratio workers to participants for low risk activities, and as high as 1:2 for activities deemed to be high risk.
- iv. We make the distinction between those adults who are part of the team and junior workers (under 18 years) who are not counted in supervision numbers.
- v. We practice a team/buddy system where no worker will be alone, one-on-one, with a child. One adult with a small group is fine as long as there are other adults on-site.
- vi. All co-ed programs will have both male and female workers to provide support for both males and females.

2.6.1 Spiritually and emotionally safe environments

We have identified the following areas as having unique “risks” in relation to the spiritual and emotional environment for all people who participate in our programs and as such procedures to ensure safe and friendly environment for all people.

a. Spiritual safety

- i. Use of the Bible: The Bible will not be used to emotionally or spiritually bully or manipulate people. The Bible will be used to teach all people about the love of God, God’s interactions with people, and to encourage their faith journey.
- ii. Role of the church in spiritual development: We acknowledge the primary role of parents and caregivers in the spiritual development of children. We will clearly advertise and communicate with parents and caregivers the aims and practices of each program in terms of what children will be invited to participate in, in relation to spiritual activities, e.g. prayer, Bible

study, Bible talks, spiritual direction, participation in quiet times, or group discussions.

- iii. Right of all people to choose what to participate in spiritually: We will invite, not demand or coerce, people to engage in activities of a public/group spiritual nature, e.g. Bible reading, praying aloud, answering group discussion questions.
- iv. Exercise safe practices when praying specifically for an individual person:
 - a) Advise ministry program participants that prayer will be available
 - b) Respond only to the prayer request of the participant
 - c) Where a person requests that they do not want to participate in individual prayer, it will be respected.
 - d) In the case of prayer for children, parents are to be made aware that prayer will be available during a program. If parents indicate that they do not want their child to be prayed for, it will be respected
 - e) Follow your organisation's guidelines for prayer for healing

b. Emotional safety

i. Handling private information appropriately:

- a) We collect, and store program participants' personal information in line with the National Privacy Act i.e: private information is only collected if necessary; individuals concerned are advised of its intended use; personal information collected is stored securely and not divulged to others without the consent of the individual involved; any personal information the church is holding which is no longer required, is out of date or incorrect, is either destroyed or amended to be accurate.
- b) We collect all relevant personal, medical and other relevant personal information of program participants to ensure their safety (see Part 4 Information Form).

ii. Respecting the needs of the individual

- a) We will take into consideration individuals' needs and make appropriate and reasonable modifications to cater for these as far as is practicable, including ensuring the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with culturally diverse backgrounds and any person with a disability. This includes consideration of activities that may cause a problem culturally for those involved. When our Management Group suspects an activity could be a problem they will consult the affected program participant or their family, prior to asking them to take part.

iii. Communication

- a) Workers have a responsibility to ensure that their conversations are not abusive or offensive within the normal range of these terms. As a general principle all workers will consider the impact of their words and actions before they speak or act.
- b) If it is necessary to speak to a program participant privately, workers will inform their supervisor of the intention to do so, and the conversation will occur in the sight of other workers.
- c) Workers will consider the impact of distance and personal space in front or behind participants when communicating. Workers are to consider the distances they stand or sit from the people they are leading and determine if they may be making the person uncomfortable because they are operating within an inappropriate space for an interaction.
- d) We acknowledge that the use of electronic media for communication is part of everyday life, however, we need to be mindful of the position of trust and power we have been entrusted with as leaders. As such our workers will:

- I. as far as it is practical, interact electronically with all people as a team, not as individuals, e.g. group emails or SMS;
 - II. seek parental permission before communicating with a child electronically, and only do so with the parent's full knowledge;
 - III. not transmit, retrieve or store any communication that is: discriminatory or harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic, defamatory, threatening, for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to the relevant code of conduct;
 - IV. do not send any electronic communication that attempts to hide the identity of or represent the sender as someone else.
- iv. Boundary setting (establishment of program 'Rules') & discipline
- a) Program Director/leaders will communicate, prior to the program or event, the expectations in relation to behaviour of participants.
 - b) Program Director/leaders will engage participants in a time of establishing boundaries in relation to acceptable behaviours for the program/event.
 - c) Workers will not engage in physical discipline of a child.

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SMR can also provide customisation of the **Safe Ministry Framework** for your church or denomination.

Disclaimer: This publication is not legal advice. The ideas and procedures herein are based on nationally recognised good practice advice for Safe Ministry and have been written with due regard to Australian legislation March 2020.

Legal advice may need to be sought when responding to individual incidents.