

Yarra Valley Vineyard Christian Fellowship



Child Safe Policy

Updated 21st August, 2018

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The Child Safe Standards

The child safe standards are as follows:

In complying with the child safe standards must include the following principles as part of their response to each standard:

- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety of children with a disability.

STANDARD 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of Child Safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

STANDARD 2: A Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

STANDARD 3: A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

STANDARD 4: Screening, Supervisions, Training and other Human Resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

STANDARD 5: Process for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

STANDARD 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

STANDARD 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

STANDARD 1

Strategies to embed an organisational culture of Child Safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

- We acknowledge and accept the trust granted to us by those who are taking part in church activities, their families, and the wider community. We therefore commit ourselves to striving to ensure that all our actions are morally upright.
- We are committed to establishing a process that strives for truth and confidentiality. We will ensure as far as possible that a compassionate response is the first priority in all allegations, even at a time when it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate, through offering assistance, protection and care without passing judgment or prejudicing the rights of the alleged offender.
- We acknowledge the personal and public difficulties that a false or misconceived allegation can cause for the person accused. We will take whatever steps are possible to address these difficulties.
- We will strive to be aware of our legal responsibilities and obligations in relation to prevention, reporting and processing requirements and seek to meet them at all times, including in the Failure to Protect legislation (2015), the Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act (2017), and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (2018).
- We will ensure as far as possible that all people in positions of authority within the church and/or working with children and young people are aware of the appropriate standard of conduct and boundaries. We require those who work on behalf of the church to indicate their agreement with this policy statement and work towards providing an environment that prevents abuse.
- We believe that churches ought to be places of safety and refuge for children, young people and others, where they should be and feel safe from any threat when on church property or involved in activities operated by the church, or accessing services provided by the church. We believe that the church should be a place where people can disclose abuse and have it dealt with effectively.
- We will establish a prevention strategy that includes screening, sound recruitment and selection procedures, clear boundaries, risk identification and management, education, support, supervision and training.
- All allegations will be notified to the appropriate external authorities, investigated thoroughly and determined as described in our *Child Safe Policy*.

STANDARD 2

A Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

YVV CHILD SAFE STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Children and young people have the right to be safe at all times. This Child Safe Statement that follows has been developed for the protection of children and young people involved in the church community.

This Child Safe Statement provides information, procedures and conduct policies that YVV believes are essential in protecting children and young people.

Our statement clearly affirms our commitment to:

- Have zero tolerance towards child abuse
- Actively work to listen to and empower children and young people
- Have systems to protect children from abuse, and take all allegations and concerns very seriously. We will respond to them consistently in line with YVV Child Safe Policy and Procedures.
- Commit to promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to provide a safe environment for children with a disability.

This Child Safe Statement of Commitment will be displayed publically on our website, Sunday Morning Information Table and in our Church Welcome Packs.

This Child Safe Policy was developed in collaboration with staff, elders, and volunteers. It applies to all staff, volunteers, children and individuals involved in our organisation.

COMMUNICATING THIS POLICY

This Policy will be displayed and available for everyone to access it. Copies will be available on the Information Table onsite during Sunday Church Services and for all major events and on the YVV Website. This policy will be reviewed annually and we undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers.

STANDARD 3

A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour by adults towards children and young people.

All staff and volunteers are responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children by:

- Adhering to our Child Safe Policy and Procedures.
- Taking all responsible steps to protect children from abuse.
- Treating everyone with respect, including and valuing other people's ideas and opinions.
- Welcoming all children and their families and carers and being inclusive.
- Respecting cultural, religious and political difference.
- Listening to children and responding to them appropriately.
- Reporting and acting on any breaches of this Code of Conduct, complaints or concerns.
- Complying with our guidelines on physical contact with children.
- Working with children in an open and transparent way.
- Respecting the privacy of children and their families.
- Reading, understanding and agreeing to abide by our Child Safe Policy.

YVV Staff and Volunteers must not:

- Ignore or disregard any suspicious or disclosure of child abuse.
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or language with children.
- Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality.
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children.
- Develop inappropriate relationships with individual children or show favouritism over a consistent period of time.
- Exchange personal contact details or unauthorized contact with children, on line or by phone without parents' consent.
- Initiate physical or corporal punishment for children.
- Discuss with, or introduce children or young people to age inappropriate material, or that which is especially personal, or adult in nature.

STANDARD 4

Screening, Supervisions, Training and other Human Resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

- We will provide clear job descriptions for all staff and volunteers supervising children and young people.
- Promote Child Safety with all staff and volunteer advertisements i.e. we are a ‘Child Safe employer or church’. This may discourage unsuitable people from applying.
- All volunteer applicants in child related work must be known to Coordinators for at least 6 months before being identified as a person with potential to volunteer with children or youth and must attend our screening, recruitment and training process.
- Co-ordinators of each area (children and youth ministries) directly supervising children and young people will hold a face-to-face interview with an applicant to determine their suitability to become involved in any child related work within our organisation. At such time they will be informed of our Child Safe Policy and given the code of conduct and application forms to be filled out and handed back before referees are called.
- The relevant Co-ordinators of each area (children and youth ministries) will review the information provided and check referees before making a determination of the applicant’s suitability. All of the applicant’s information will be held in strictest confidence.
- A register of all applications will be securely stored on church premises or offices along with copies of the applicants’ WWCC or VIT (along with photo identification) and their signed declaration forms (*Working with Children Check, 2006*). If any concerns are identified the coordinator/s will liaise with the Child Safe Officer who has access to the information.
- A register of WWCCs and VIT (along with photo identification) will be kept and regularly checked. If an applicant does not pass a WWCC or is issued a Suspension/Negative Notice or Revocation from the Department of Justice or the VIT this applicant will not be successful in their application and if already working with children will be stopped immediately.

TRAINING, SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

- YVV will facilitate Child Safe training for staff, elders and volunteers supervising children and young people to ensure compliance with this Policy.
- All staff, elders and volunteers are accountable to the Coordinators of each area (children and youth ministries) directly working with children and young people to ensure they comply with this Policy. Coordinators are accountable to the Lead Pastor and Elders. Coordinators will provide ongoing supervision and support of all volunteers in their area.
- YVV will facilitate a training session annually for all elders, staff and volunteers. This session for all staff and elders will include this Child Safe Policy. The session for all elders, staff and volunteers **in direct contact** with children & youth will include this Child Safe Policy and the Procedures. Any new staff, elders and volunteers will be expected to complete a training session.
- Coordinators of each area directly working with children will observe new and ongoing volunteers on a regular basis to ensure accountability.
- Coordinators of each area directly working with children will meet regularly with their volunteers to establish open communication and provide a safe space for any concerns, questions or support needed.
- All staff, volunteers and coordinators will be treated with respect.
- Coordinators of each area (children and youth ministries) directly working with children will assess YVV Child Safety training needs, through inviting feedback from parents and volunteers. Annual feedback sheets will be given to all volunteers directly involved in child related work to identify any concerns that are not being met.
- Our gatherings at MECS are being held on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people and we wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners.

STANDARD 5

Process for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

YVV HAS CLEAR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE:

- A supportive environment for children/young people, personnel or families who report allegations of abuse or Child Safety concerns.
- Staff, volunteers, families and children know how to report abuse allegations, and feel comfortable doing so
- Clear policies and procedures for notifying authorities, including the police, of suspected child abuse that complies with all legal requirements.
- In all our policies and procedures, recognition of particular needs of Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

A. REPORTING OF ANY SUSPECTED ABUSE

Any suspected abuse will be taken seriously and reported promptly to the appropriate authorities.

We will:

- Comply with all legal requirements to report child abuse to appropriate authorities, including the police by calling 000 when it is suspected that a child's safety is at immediate risk.
- Ensure processes for reporting suspected child abuses are appropriate and clear, and that children and families feel comfortable following them.
- Support the child and their family
- Report suspected abuse promptly to the appropriate authorities.
- Notify the Commission for Children and Young People when there is suspected reportable conduct by a staff member or volunteer, as per the Commission for Children and Young People's Reportable Conduct Scheme (2018)¹.

These processes include:

- Step by step guides to staff outlining when and to whom a report must be made. Child Safe officer will document all communication in discussion with Lead Pastor and prepare a written report to be kept onsite at the church offices. (**See attached flowcharts**)
- Requirements for accurate recording of relevant information and actions taken.
- Clear criteria for assessing how and when to report to leadership and authorities (the Police and/or Child Protection), which comply with all legal requirements.
- Instituting strategies to ensure people feel safe and comfortable reporting suspected abuse, for example appointing a person such as a Child Safety Officer, for staff, children and young people to contact and discuss a suspected abuse or Child Safety concern.
- Publicise avenues for reporting incidents or concerns.
- Train relevant staff and volunteers in how to report suspected child abuse, and ensure they can identify signs of children and young people at risk of abuse.
- Institute a feedback process for staff, volunteers, children and families on organizational policies and procedures for reporting abuse
- Establish and provide information on policies and procedures in relevant community languages, including Aboriginal languages, where relevant.
- Ensure reporting policies and procedures are accessible to children with a disability and/or their families where necessary, such as providing information on policies and procedures in relevant modalities, such as braille and assistive technologies.
- Utilize inclusive language, photography and/or artwork in communications about reporting processes.

¹ <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme>

B. RESPONDING TO ANY SUSPECTED ABUSE

We will:

- Ensure children are safe, and that procedures for responding to alleged abuse are fair and focus on Child Safety. For example, by suspending the alleged perpetrator or providing them with alternate non-child related duties pending investigation.
- Each child will be listened to, taken seriously, and have a response and action on the disclosure according to the steps within our Reporting Procedures.
- Provide support to a child reporting abuse and safety concerns, never blame or interrogate a child.
- Contact parents/carers as appropriate.
- Ensure processes for responding to suspected child abuse explicitly include culturally appropriate responses where suspected abuse involves an Aboriginal child.
- Provide ongoing support, or make referrals for support to alleged victims, their families and affected staff, as required.
- Provide contact details for internal and/or external expertise so that staff have access to advise when managing Child Safety incidents, including expertise relating to culturally and/or linguistically diverse children, and children with a disability.
- Undertake timely reviews of organizational Child Safe Policies and Procedures.
- Review organizational responses following an incident to help drive continuous improvement.

C. SAFETY AND CARE LEGALITIES

Sharing of concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children and young people will be proactively encouraged.

Staff, volunteers, children and young people are encouraged to speak up when they are uncomfortable or concerned. All staff and volunteers will have access to, and be trained to use YVV's clear Reporting process and policy.

Staff and volunteers will be made aware of their duty of care to children and young people and of their legal responsibilities.

Physical or sexual abuse of children and young people is a crime and must be reported to the police.

Information will be shared appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is at risk (i.e. Mandatory Reporting)

Staff and volunteers will be made aware, and responsive, regarding criminal offenses that help protect children and young people from harm.

- **Grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 years (Crimes Amendment, 2014)**
- **Failure to disclose (2014)** legislative obligations apply to all adults in Victoria
- **Failure to protect (2015)** legislative obligations apply to people in authority within any organization that exercises care, supervision or authority over children and young people, whether as part of its primary function or otherwise.

D. RECORDING ANY SUSPECTED ABUSE

YVV will keep accurate and secure records.

We will record:

- Any Child Safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Code of Conduct and store the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements.
- Action taken, any internal investigations and any report made to statutory authorities or professional bodies.
- Everyone, including children, will be made aware of the need to report serious matters involving child protection to external authorities, and that it will be recorded.
- Confidentiality will not be promised in these matters; there will be an assurance of privacy in handling the matter and that only those who need to know will be advised.

Successful implementation at YVV will result in:

- All legal requirements for reporting suspected child abuse are complied with.
- Staff and volunteers are aware of actions they should take in the event of an incident or allegation, including the type of contact that should be reported, who are responsible for reporting and to whom the report should be made.
- Allegations of abuse and safety concerns are appropriately recorded and stored securely to protect privacy.
- Disciplinary processes, that are clearly defined and understood by all staff and volunteers, are adhered to when necessary.
- Adequate and suitable steps are taken to ensure children are safe if an allegation of child abuse is reported.
- Children reporting an allegation of abuse or safety concern are provided with support and comfort.
- Culturally safe practices are applied if an Aboriginal child is involved in an allegation of abuse.
- If an allegation of abuse involves a child from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, the required steps are taken to ensure the child and child's family are supported to understand the situation, including the use for an interpreter if required.
- Where an allegation of abuse involves a child with a disability, steps are taken to ensure the child and their family understand the situation and are supported.

E. We are compliant with Commission for Children and Young People's Reportable Conduct Scheme, which came into effect for Yarra Valley Vineyard Christian Fellowship on 1st January 2018.

Reporting Flow Chart

Concerns not relating to YVV staff members or volunteers

Who can report?

Parent

Child

Elder, Staff, Volunteer

Anyone and Everyone

What to report?

Any Child Safety concerns, including:

- Disclosure of abuse or harm
- Allegation, suspicion or observation
- Breach of Code of Conduct
- Environmental safety issues

Call 000 if a child is in immediate danger

How?

Face to face verbal report, letter, email, telephone call or meeting

Who to?

Child Safety Officer, Coordinators of Children & Youth Ministries, and Lead Pastor from church. You can also contact;

- **Child FIRST- 1300 721 383**
- **The Department of Human Services- Child Protection- 1300 360 391, (AH- 13 12 78)**
- **Child Wise- National Child Abuse Prevention Hotline 1800 99 10 99**

What happens next?

The Child Safety Person, Coordinator, Lead Pastor will:

- **Offer support to the child, the parents, the person who reports & the accused**
- **Initiate internal processes to ensure the safety of the child, and clarify the nature of the complaint**
 - **Decide, in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should/must be reported & make report as soon as possible.**

Outcome

Investigation; outcome decided: relevant staff, volunteers, parent and child notified of outcome of investigation; policies, procedures updated where necessary.

Reporting Flow Chart II

Reporting concerns about YVV staff members or volunteers

Who can report?

Parent

Elder, Staff, Volunteer

Anyone and Everyone

What to report?

Any Child Safety concerns, including:

- Disclosure of abuse or harm
- Allegation, suspicion or observation
- Breach of Code of Conduct
- Environmental safety issues

Call 000 if a child is in immediate danger

How?

Face to face verbal report, letter, email, telephone call or meeting

Who to?

Child Safety Officer, Coordinators of Children & Youth Ministries, and Lead Pastor from church. You can also contact;

- Your local Victoria Police station
- Child Wise National Child Abuse Prevention Hotline 1800 99 10 99

What happens next?

The Child Safety Person, Coordinator, Lead Pastor will:

- Offer support to the child, the parents, the person who reports & the accused
- Initiate internal processes to ensure the safety of the child, clarify the nature of the complaint and commence disciplinary process (if required)
 - Decide, in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should/must be reported & make report as soon as possible.

Outcome

Investigation; outcome decided: relevant staff, volunteers, parent and child notified of outcome of investigation; policies, procedures updated where necessary.

DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE

What is child abuse?

The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations. Under the Act, child abuse includes five categories of abuse as outlined below.²

While the standards apply specifically to child abuse, organisations should look to promote children's health and wellbeing in a broader sense.

Physical violence

Physical violence 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 and paddles).

Possible physical indicators:

- Unexplained bruises
- Burns and/or fractured bones

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- Fear of specific people
- Academic problems

Sexual offences

Sexual offences occur when a person involves the 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.³ It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.

Possible physical indicators:

- Presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy
- Vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for the child's age
- Being withdrawn
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains
- Fear of specific people

Domestic violence

Domestic violence is violence, abuse and intimidator behaviour perpetrated by one person against another in a personal, intimate relationship. Domestic violence has a profound effect on children and constitutes a form of abuse. Children can be affected by being exposed to violence in the parental relationship, by becoming victims of violence, or a combination of the two.

- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Displaying aggressive behaviour

² These definitions are based on the Victorian [Child Protection Practice Manual](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1008-abuse-and-harm-legal-and-practice-definitions): <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1008-abuse-and-harm-legal-and-practice-definitions>

³ A new grooming offence commenced in Victoria on 9 April 2014. Further information is available on the [Department of Justice website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence>

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious 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. Serious 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.

Possible physical indicators:

- Delays in emotional, mental, or even physical development
- Physical signs of self-harming

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Exhibiting low self-esteem
- Exhibiting high anxiety
- Displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour
- Self-harming

Serious neglect

Serious 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.

Possible physical indicators:

- Frequent hunger
- Malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Stealing food
- Aggressive behaviour
- Misusing alcohol or drugs
- Academic issues

*The presence of indicators such as those described may alert us to the possibility that a child is being abused. It is important that anyone who has concerns that a child or young person is in need of protection contacts a local Child Protection Service for assistance and advice. **Call the police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a child's safety.***

These definitions are based on the Victorian [Child Protection Practice Manual: <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1008-abuse-and-harm-legal-and-practice-definitions>](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1008-abuse-and-harm-legal-and-practice-definitions)

STANDARD 6

Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

Child Safe Officer will work with Coordinators to adopt a Risk Management Plan approach and to develop a plan in all areas.

YVV staff and volunteers are responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- In all areas we will take a preventative approach by adopting a Risk Management Plan in all areas.
- Having a clear process for evaluating Key risks either at current venue or others.
- Knowing the process in which communication takes place either for a risk or a potential risk
- Having training, staff and volunteers can be clued into signs of abuse
- Following the correct supervision guidelines according to YVV Child Safe Procedure.
- Reviewing annually the approaches and processes.
- Recognizing and adapting to needs of children. i.e. staff/volunteer ratio due to disability or certain needs.
- Coordinators will hold all sensitive information and when necessary will follow the flowchart on Reporting Abuse.
- Recognizing and addressing particular children and communities including aboriginal and or cultural diverse children including disability.

CYBER, ONLINE AND MOBILE PHONE SAFETY

There are many technologies used for communication and they are evolving all the time. Children move to new and emerging technology quickly and can be a step ahead of their parents, carers and organizations. New technologies include:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| ■□□Text or SMS messaging | ■□□Facebook | ■□□Instagram |
| ■□□Snap chat | ■□□Twitter | ■□□Smartphone applications. |

CYBER BULLING

Cyber bullying is using an Internet service or mobile technologies with the intention of harming another person. Cyber bullying includes:

- Abusive texts and emails
- Hurtful messages, images or videos
- Imitating others online
- Excluding others online
- Nasty online gossip and chat.

ONLINE GROOMING

Online grooming of children is the illegal act of an adult or adults making online contact with a child under the age of 16 with the intention of facilitating a sexual relationship.

Online grooming includes:

- Asking a child inappropriate or personal questions
- Sending a child offensive, confronting or obscene content
- Asking a child to send intimate pictures or do things online that make them feel uncomfortable
- Singling a child out for a 'special' relationship.

GROOMING

A child and young person is under the age of 16. The word grooming refers to the actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and influencing a child, and in some circumstances, member of the child/young person's family. As a church we have a duty of care and this will be taking very seriously.

Grooming behaviours:

- Spending inappropriate special time with a child/young person
- Inappropriately buying and giving gifts
- Inappropriately showing special favours to a child/young person.

Reason

- A safe environment to protect children and young people from harm and prevent leaders from abusing authority and trust.
- Grooming is a serious offence, be self aware of obligations and responsibilities.
- Staff and volunteers will be made aware of what grooming is and procedures put in place to prevent it.

STANDARD 7

Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

This policy ensures that there are strategies in place so that children and young people involved in any activity at YVV will feel safe and empowered.

- We will provide children and young people including those with disabilities and of Aboriginal descent with age appropriate and easily understood information.
- We will ask and listen to children as they explain what it would mean for them to be safe.
- We will ensure that all children, including those with disabilities or of Aboriginal descent, are able to understand the processes and procedures to follow when they want to report a situation that is “not safe” for them.
- We will be culturally sensitive as these processes and procedures are designed and implemented.
- We will arrange activities that are age / culturally appropriate in order to receive feedback from the children and young people about processes and procedures when reporting a “not safe”/abuse situation.
- We will include activities annually that invite children’s feedback for feeling safe.
- We will alleviate those fears by showing them the processes in place and the people designated who will always listen to them.
- We will give children an opportunity to contribute their ideas to the processes and procedures.
- We will ensure that all YVV Staff and Volunteers understand how to empower children and encourage participation.