



CHRISTIAN REFORMED
CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

SAFE CHURCH HEALTH CHECK

AUGUST 2020



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Dear Church Leader,



Thank you for considering this Safe Church Health Check.

We recognise that the growing number of recommendations and legal requirements may leave you feeling apprehensive or overwhelmed. We are confident, however, that the Safe Church Health Check will support you as you navigate these challenges. Our heart is to equip and support local churches for ministry and so we have sought to provide suggested structures and resources to reduce the burden on you as much as possible. However, your local church leadership will need to take some steps to implement these Safe Church practices as appropriate to your local church context. We encourage each local church to delegate this important task to appropriate individuals. The church pastor is not necessarily required to undertake these tasks themselves.

Christian Reformed Churches of Australia are committed to modelling the love of Christ by promoting physical, emotional and spiritual safety in all that we do. As part of this commitment, we have prepared this Safe Church Package to assist your church in becoming a place that promotes the wellbeing of all people. We strongly encourage you to consider the contents of this Package and to use the material provided to prepare your church for the Safe Church Health Check.

In 2013, the Australian Government authorised a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (**Royal Commission**) in response to community concern about widespread reports of cases where Australian institutions failed to protect children from child sexual abuse. The work of this Royal Commission has emphasised that members of the public, children, young people, parents, carers, families and communities should be confident that organisations working with children provide safe environments.

The Royal Commission recommended 10 Child Safe Standards. The Child Safe Standards collectively show that a child safe organisation is one that creates a culture, adopts strategies and takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people. In February 2019, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to endorse National Principles based on the Child Safe Standards.

The 10 National Principles were developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission and are the same as the 10 Standards from the Royal Commission, with one exception. The Royal Commission focused on sexual abuse, while the AHRC broadened this into the National Principles by including the other forms of abuse including, Physical and Emotional Abuse and Neglect. This Health Check embraces the National Principles.

All State governments have indicated that compliance with the Child Safe Standards will soon become mandatory for all organisations that provide services to children, including churches. Some states like Victoria and Queensland already have standards in place. They have indicated that they will map the 10 standards to their existing standards. Accordingly, the Safe Church Health Check has been designed to assist churches to meet the Child Safe Standards.

In addition to potential legislative implementation of the Child Safe Standards, churches have existing legal obligations when it comes to providing activities and services to children and young people, including:

- Common law and statutory duties to take reasonable precautions to prevent child abuse
- Requirement to ensure that people doing certain defined work hold relevant clearance checks;
- Reporting to government authorities in accordance with their obligations, if any, under:
 - Mandatory Reporting Legislation
 - Reportable Conduct Legislation (Vic, NSW, ACT)
 - Criminal Legislation
 - WWCC Legislation in NSW, Vic, WA, SA
 - WWVP Legislation in ACT, Tas
 - Blue Card Legislation in QLD

The Safe Church Health Check is a comprehensive review tool which will assess your church's Safe Church Practices against identified minimum standards for compliance with these various legal duties. Of course, mere legal compliance is not our aim, rather we hope to promote a culture that reflects the love of Christ, loves and protects individuals, and fosters missional engagement with local communities.

There are a range of resources relating to the Safe Church Health Check available on our Safe Church webpage. www.safechurchcrca.org.au (this website will be available late 2020).

If you have any questions, please contact the Safe Church Facilitator xxxx on 9999 999 999 or at safechurch@crca.org.au. If you have any questions before the 2021 Synod, please contact the National ChildSafe Administrator John Van Dijk on 0419 330 003 or childsafe@crca.org.au

*The CRCA wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT and in particular, its permission to use throughout this Health Check material taken from their Safe Church Health Check as well as their Safe Church policies and practice. The original resources from the Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT can be found here: <https://creatingsafespaces.org.au/resources/>
For more copyright information please see page 32*

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10 Child Safe Standards¹

1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
5. People working with children are suitable and supported
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child-focused
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

¹ For more information see the Office of the Children’s Guardian (NSW) <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/child-safe-standards> or Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Abuse <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/making-institutions-child-safe>

How the Safe Church Health Check works

The Safe Church Health Check has been designed to assist your church to meet legal obligations regarding child safety. It will also assist your church to adhere to the Child Safe Standards as recommended by the Royal Commission. All State Governments will soon make compliance with the Child Safe Standards mandatory for all organisations that provide services to children and young people.

Participation in the Safe Church Health Check is also recommended by the CRCA Insurance Broker as a means of ensuring that your church is well equipped to make the declaration regarding child safe policy and practice required to maintain continued insurance coverage for sexual molestation claims.

There are 10 sections of the Safe Church Health Check. Each section addresses one of the Child Safe Standards and adopts the following structure:

- the Standard and core components identified by the Royal Commission;
- Some indicators for identifying the standard in practice

Standard 1

Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.

- The institution publicly commits to child safety and leaders champion a child safe culture.
- Child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels of the institution.
- Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children.
- Staff and volunteers comply with a code of conduct that sets clear behavioural standards towards children.
- Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.

What might this look like

Leaders:

- Make a public commitment to child safety and wellbeing
- Inform themselves about child safety and wellbeing
- Encourage all staff and volunteers of the organisation to value and ensure child safety and wellbeing
- Are open to suggestions and complaints

In the church:

- Safe Church Practices are integrated into everyday work practices and everyone understands what they need to do
- There are named people to discuss practices and concerns with
- Responsibilities of all staff and volunteers are reflected in position descriptions
- All staff take responsibility for their actions to ensure child safe practices

The Royal Commission explains: A child safe institution is committed to child safety. This commitment should be supported at all levels of the institution and be embedded in an institution's leadership, governance and culture, and all aspects of the institution's business and practice. Institutional culture consists of the collective values and practices that guide the attitudes and behaviour of staff and volunteers. It guides the way things are done and the way issues are managed, dealt with and responded to. A positive, child-focused culture could help to protect children from sexual abuse and facilitate the identification of and proper response to child sexual abuse.

Please note:
A sample Safe Church Policy is included in the Safe Church Package. If your church chooses to adopt the sample Policy, please ensure that your church name is inserted where necessary and the date of adoption by the governance body is noted on the front of the document. A sample role description for the Safe Church team leader is also included in the Safe Church Package.

- Further information regarding the Standard and how it might be met.

- a series of questions asking you to set out how your church meets the Standard; and

Please circle Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church, including the Pastors, staff and governance body, commit to upholding the Child Safe Standards and promoting child safety and wellbeing?	Yes / No
2. Does your church have a Safe Church Policy?	Yes / No
3. Is your Safe Church Policy publicly available and current?	Yes / No
4. Explain how your commitment to child safety is publicised, including how your Safe Church Policy is made available. <i>For example, signage in the church, information available on the church website, mention in the weekly newsletter, copies of policy available at information desk and/or sign-in desk.</i> [text box]	
5. Is your Safe Church Policy written in language that is easily understood by church members, attenders and the wider community?	Yes / No
6. Does your Safe Church Team have at least one male and one female member?	Yes / No
7. Safe Church Team Safe Church Team Leader: _____ Contact Details (phone) _____ (email) _____ Other members of Safe Church Team _____	

Please attach the following documents:

- Safe Church Policy

- if required, a request for appropriate supporting documentation

All the information you need to complete your Safe Church Health Check is included in this Safe Church Package. This includes:

- Model Child Safe Policy
- Model Code of Conduct
- Model Procedures and Practices
- Code of Ethics for Office Bearers
- Abuse by Office Bearers – “Healing a Broken Trust”
- Guidelines for Persons of concern
- Guidelines to Grooming
- Other Model documents to help you implement the Policy and Procedures

Your church is encouraged to adopt and implement the provided model *Child Safe Church Policy* and associated documents. (Many CRCA churches already use the GJIC supplied document). This means that your Church Council will need to consider and formally adopt the policy, noting the date of adoption on the cover of the policy document. Space is also provided to add your church logo.

It is not mandatory to adopt the provided model Policy and Procedures. If your church already has comprehensive policies in place, you may choose to retain these. Alternatively, your church may choose to amend the model documents to suit your local context. However, if you make any changes to model documents you will be asked to provide an explanation.

In order to comply with the standards set out in the Safe Church Health Check, you will need to:

- Answer 'Yes' to each of the questions;
- Provide comments or explanations where required;
- Attach the appropriate supporting documentation; and

You can submit your church's Safe Church Health Check

- post a copy of the completed form and documents to
Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
P.O. Box 2135
Wellington Point QLD 4160

For CRCA churches, there is no cost for participation in the Safe Church Health Check.

After your Safe Church Health Check documentation has been reviewed and considered to be satisfactory, a certificate will be issued to your church. The certificate lasts for two years. At the end of the two-year period, you will be asked to apply for a new Safe Church Audit (which will be in place by then). We recommend displaying the Safe Church Health Check certificate on your church noticeboard. You will also have permission to use the Safe Church Health Check logo on your church website and/or printed materials for the duration of the certificate.

If there are any areas considered not to be satisfactory in your Safe Church Health Check application, we will provide feedback to assist your church in making the necessary changes or improvements and invite you to resubmit the relevant documents.

Please address any questions to John Van Dijk (National ChildSafe Administrator)
childsafecrca@crca.org.au
0419 330 003

Please note that participation before Synod 2021 is not essential. It is open to any CRCA church that is concerned about ensuring compliance to the 10 Standards, or that wants to enhance their culture of Child Safety. Early participation in preparing your church to be compliant also demonstrates to your local community that you take children and vulnerable people very seriously and that you are keen to promote safe places, where safe people run safe programs.

Where do I start?

If you are a church leader or church administrator, the first step is to have the church council appoint a **Safe Church Team**.

The Safe Church Team may include paid staff and/or volunteers, we have provided a Model Role Description to outline their responsibilities. It is an especially important role which will report directly to the Pastor and church council. It is important that the Safe Church Team has at least one male and at least one female. We recommend that the Team includes the Child Safe (Safe Church) Coordinator and an elder. If you have an appointed Child Protection Officer, that person would make an excellent candidate.

The Safe Church Team may go through the process of identifying policies and amending procedures for your church context but it is important to understand that the Senior Pastor and Church Council will still have legal responsibility for ensuring that reasonable precautions are taken within the church context.

If you have been appointed as part of a Safe Church Team, then your church has already understood the importance of addressing these issues in a comprehensive and compassionate way. You may like to begin by gathering any existing policies or information used in your church. This will help you to identify which areas might require more attention.

Once you have the existing documents together, meet with the Safe Church Team to consider these and consider the model *(Child) Safe Church Policy* and Procedures provided as part of this Safe Church Package. The Safe Church Health Check will ask you to attach your policy and procedure documents. These documents will need to be marked with the date they were formally adopted by the Church Council. This is important as it ensures that the Church Council is aware of the contents of the documents, provides formal authority for the documents and indicates how recently any document was amended.

The Safe Church Health Check will also ask for details of the Work, Health and Safety Team (Committee of Management in most churches), as their responsibilities address issues related to physical environments.

Once you have these preliminary steps in place, you are ready to begin working through the Safe Church Health Check. As you answer the questions, be aware that arrangements may differ significantly from church to church – particularly according to church size and resources. We have provided some ideas and examples for any question where details are requested. However, you may have alternative ideas, or in some instances, you may have reasons to suggest that a particular item is not relevant or necessary in your context. If that is the case, please just provide a brief explanation of those reasons.

The Safe Church Health Check is designed to provide assistance for churches as they address various obligations. We are here to help! If you have any questions, please contact us.

Standard 1

Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.

- a. The institution publicly commits to child safety and leaders champion a child safe culture.
- b. Child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels of the institution.
- c. Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children.
- d. Staff and volunteers comply with a code of conduct that sets clear behavioural standards towards children.
- e. Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.

What this might look like

- Leaders inform themselves about child safety and wellbeing
- Child Safety is addressed at each Church Council meeting
- Staff and volunteers of the organisation are encouraged to value and ensure child safety and wellbeing
- Safe Church Procedures are integrated into church culture and everyday practices.
- There are named people with whom to discuss practices and concerns.
- Responsibilities of all staff and volunteers are reflected in position descriptions
- All staff take active steps to ensure child safe practices

The Royal Commission explains: A child safe institution is committed to child safety. This commitment should be supported at all levels of the institution and be embedded in an institution's leadership, governance and culture, and all aspects of the institution's business and practice. Institutional culture consists of the collective values and practices that guide the attitudes and behaviour of staff and volunteers. It guides the way things are done and the way issues are managed, dealt with and responded to. A positive, child-focused culture could help to protect children from sexual abuse and facilitate the identification of and proper response to child sexual abuse.

(Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report Volume 6 'Making Institutions Child Safe' Appendix A p413 available at <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>)

Included in this package:

A Model Safe Church Policy and model role description for the Safe Church Team is included in the Safe Church Package. If your church chooses to adopt the model Safe Church Policy, please ensure that your church name and/or logo is inserted where necessary and the date of adoption by the Church Council is noted on the front of the document.

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church, including the Pastor(s), staff and Church Council, commit to upholding the Child Safe Standards and promoting child safety and wellbeing? Yes No

2. Does your church have a *Child Safe Church Policy*? Yes No

3. Is your Child Safe Church Policy publicly available and current? Yes No

4. Explain how your commitment to child safety is publicised, including how your *Child Safe Church Policy* is made available.
For example, signage in the church, information available on the church website, mention in the weekly newsletter, copies of policy available at the information desk and/or sign-in desk.

5. Is your *Child Safe Church Policy* written in language that is easily understood by church members, attendees and the wider community? Yes No

6. Does your Safe Church Team have at least one male and one female member? Yes No

7. Safe Church Team (add more names if necessary).

Person 1: Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Person 2: Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Person 3: Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____



Please attach the following document/s:

- Safe Church Policy

Standard 2

Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

- a. Children can express their views and are provided opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- b. The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, helping children feel safe and be less isolated.
- c. Children can access sexual abuse prevention programs and information.
- d. Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns.

What this might look like

- Children and young people can recognise safe environments and know how to seek help or raise concerns if they feel unsafe
- Staff and volunteers put children's best interests first
- Staff and volunteers take children seriously when they communicate about their feelings, needs and concerns
- Children and young people are supported and encouraged to take part in various ministry areas in the life of the church (as appropriate)
- There are regular opportunities for children and young people to communicate their ideas and opinions and to contribute to the plans and vision of the church.

Additional Resources:

The Institute of Child Protection Studies has produced a short (10 Minutes) video summarising their research in the Children's Safety Study listening to children and young people. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaxjSu4UGlw&feature=youtu.be>

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Is your church friendly and welcoming for children and young people? Yes No
Explain how your church is friendly and welcoming for children and young people.
For example, by the inclusion of children and young people in church services, consideration of children's and young people's needs when planning programs, child-friendly facilities.

2. Are children and young people listened to and is their input and feedback encouraged in the groups or ministries that they are directly involved in (for example, Sunday Kids Programs, Kids Club, Youth Group)? Yes No
Please comment on how this occurs in your church.
For example, via suggestion box, feedback forms, informal discussions

3. Do children and young people have a say in planning and is their input and feedback encouraged, in the activities and ministries of the wider church? Yes No
Please comment on how this occurs in your church.
For example, via suggestion box, feedback forms, informal discussions

4. Does your church value children and young people and demonstrate this attitude by supporting positive peer relationships and providing support as appropriate? Yes No
Please comment on how this occurs in your church.
For example, modelling communication strategies, displaying child safe hotline number, discussing friendship.

Standard 3

Families and communities are informed and involved.

- a. Families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child and participate in decisions affecting their child.
- b. The institution engages in open, two-way communication with families and communities about its child safety approach and relevant information is accessible.
- c. Families and communities have a say in the institution's policies and practices.
- d. Families and communities are informed about the institution's operations and governance.

What this might look like

- Families and communities are aware of the church's *Child Safe Church Policy* and associated Procedures
- The Church and ministry leaders actively seek feedback from families and communities
- Ministry leaders consult with parents and carers about their children
- Parents and carers are encouraged and supported to talk to their children about safety and wellbeing.

For churches with significant culturally and linguistically diverse communities, we recommend developing translations of the *Child Safe Church Policy* and information about where to go to lodge a complaint or report a child protection concern. If there are staff and volunteers for whom English is not their first language, we recommend providing translations of the *Code of Conduct* and *Screening Questionnaires*.

Additional Resources

The Australian Human Rights Commission has produced information on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisation (which are based on the Royal Commission's Child Safe Standards) in various community languages. <https://pmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/national-office-child-safety/national-principles-child-safe-organisations>

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Is your church's *Child Safe Church Policy* and associated Procedures available to families and communities? Yes No
Please comment on how your church makes these documents available to families and communities.
For example, via handouts, posters, available on the church website.

2. Is your church's *Child Safe Church Policy* and associated Procedures provided in a format and language that is accessible to families and communities? Yes No
Please comment on how your church ensures that relevant documents are accessible to families and communities.
For example, they are available online and in hard copy, produced in appropriate languages for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds etc.

3. Are families encouraged to be involved in decisions affecting their child? Yes No
Please provide an explanation of how your church includes families in decisions, planning and policies affecting their child.
For example, parent information nights, parent, informal discussions with leaders... 'Is Johnny enjoying Cadets? Is there anything you'd like to talk to us about?', use parental involvement as leaders/helpers, family social events to build connection.

4. Are families able to provide feedback to the church regarding issues concerning their child, programs and child safety practices? Yes No
Please comment on how this occurs in your church.

Standard 4

Equity is upheld and diverse needs taken into account

- a. The institution actively anticipates children's diverse circumstances and backgrounds and responds effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities.
- b. All children have access to information, support and complaints processes.
- c. The institution pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

What this might look like

- Physical accessibility is considered in building design and renovation
- The church actively seeks to consider the needs of people with diverse needs
- Ministry leaders intentionally seek to create spaces that are welcoming, safe and culturally respectful.
- Staff and volunteers consider how safety and wellbeing, communication and participation might differ for children and young people with diverse needs.

The focus of this standard is that we do not treat all people and all children equally, but ensure we treat each person according to their needs. Our programs may need to be adjusted to ensure that each participant can actively engage in the program. A child in a wheelchair cannot participate in running race.

**For more information and ideas please contact CRCA Safe Church Unit (when available).
In the meantime – please contact John Van Dijk – National ChildSafe Administrator.**

www.safechurchcrca.org.au
childsafecrca@crca.org.au

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church support children and young people with diverse needs? Yes No

Please describe how your church caters for children and young people with diverse needs

For example, written material in languages other than English, facilities for children and young people with a disability, culturally appropriate programs, artwork on display, programs and activities celebrating diversity.

Standard 5

People working with children are suitable and supported

- a. Recruitment, including advertising and screening, emphasises child safety.
- b. Relevant staff and volunteers have Working With Children Checks.
- c. All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their child safety responsibilities, including reporting obligations.
- d. Supervision and people management have a child safety focus.

What this might look like

- Child safety and wellbeing is emphasised in advertising, referee checks, pre-employment screening and supervision for staff and volunteers
- Church leaders assess the values, motives and attitudes of applicants to ensure a culture of child safety and wellbeing
- The church delivers or provides access to regular training and/or information sessions regarding child safety
- The church actively communicates internal and external supports that are available
- Ministry leaders ensure everyone is informed about policies and procedures and knows how to enact them

More information about legal requirements for screening

A Working With Children's Check is required for Staff and volunteers who serve:

- as a religious leader or spiritual officer (e.g. pastor, regular preacher, worship leader)
- in a governance role (e.g. elder, deacon, council member)
- in child-related work (e.g. children's ministry, creche, youth ministry)
- as leader of a ministry with children or young people in their team (e.g. café, cleaning roster)
- In ACT and Tasmania: in ministry with vulnerable adults (e.g. seniors, persons with disabilities)
- it is a legal requirement to both record and verify the WWCC number for anyone engaged in child-related work.

The Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse concluded that the *'lack of control over who is able to represent themselves as a pastor'* constitutes *'a weakness in the necessary safety controls [churches] should have in place to protect children'* (See page 88 of Case Study 18 of the Final Report). The CRCA is cognizant of this issue and through its ordination selection and training process ensures all ordained office bearers are suitable and accountable. It is recommended that church councils ensure that all ordained office bearers receive church safe training to provide proper oversight of the requirements of Standard 5, as well as mutual accountability.

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church have a *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*? Yes No
2. Have all staff and volunteers completed the *Screening Check Questionnaire*? Yes No
3. Do you have a role description for all staff and volunteer roles? Yes No
4. Are all staff and volunteers aware of the role description for their role(s)? Yes No
5. Do all staff and volunteers undergo a documented induction process? Yes No
6. Does your church have a *Code of Conduct* for Staff and Volunteers? Yes No
7. Have all staff and volunteers signed the *Child Safe Church Policy* and *Code of Conduct*? Yes No
8. Do all the church's staff and volunteers who are regularly engaged in Child-related Work have a valid and current WWCC
AND
Has your church verified the WWCC or application number online? Yes No
9. Have all your Pastoral Staff completed a National Police Criminal Record Check? Yes No
10. Does your church keep a record of whether Pastoral Staff have completed a National Police Criminal Record Check AND a copy of the National Police Criminal Record Check? Yes No
11. Does your church maintain a Safe Church Database (details in SMO ChildSafe Database)? Yes No
12. Is your Safe Church Database (in SMO) up to date? Yes No



Please attach the following document/s:

- Screening Questionnaire/s
- Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Procedure for Staff and Volunteers (applications)

Standard 6

Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse [or other concerns*] are child focused.

- a. The institution has a child-focused complaint handling system that is understood by children, staff, volunteers and families.
- b. The institution has an effective complaint handling policy and procedure which clearly outline roles and responsibilities, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints and obligations to act and report.
- c. Complaints are taken seriously, responded to promptly and thoroughly, and reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

**CRCA adopts the Principles which includes the 10 Standards.*

What this might look like

- The process for raising complaints and concerns about child safety is clear, accessible and prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Staff and volunteers know when and how to report to relevant authorities
- Information about raising and responding to concerns and complaints is available in various accessible formats including child-friendly formats
- There is a clearly defined record keeping system for concerns and complaints

The Royal Commission explains: A child-focused complaints process is an important strategy for helping children and others in institutions to make complaints. Child safe institutions respond to complaints by immediately protecting children at risk and addressing complaints promptly, thoroughly and fairly.

A child-safe institution has clear and detailed policies and procedures about how to respond to complaints. Staff and volunteers understand their responsibility for making a complaint promptly if they become aware of concerning behaviours, as well as their reporting obligations to external authorities. Complaint processes specify steps that need to be taken to comply with requirements of procedural fairness for affected parties, have review mechanisms, and ensure any disciplinary action that is taken withstands external scrutiny in accordance with relevant employment law and other employer responsibilities.

(Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report Volume 6 'Making Institutions Child Safe' Appendix A p426 available at <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>)

Included in this package:

Model Procedures are provided as part of the Safe Church Package. If your church chooses to adopt these model Procedures, please ensure that your church name is inserted where necessary and the date of adoption by the Church Council is noted on the front of the document. If you make changes to any of the Procedures, please attach an explanation regarding why you have made such changes.

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Are all staff and volunteers aware of the *Procedures described in the Safe Church (Child Safe) Policy & Procedure Document*? Yes No
- Please describe how you ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the relevant policies and procedures?
(For example, through induction process and training, keeping copies of the Procedures in prominent place in church office, all staff and volunteers signing Child Safe Church Policy)

2. Are families aware of the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers* and the roles and responsibilities of all relevant parties? Yes No
- Please describe how your church ensures that families are aware of the relevant procedures and the persons responsible for their implementation.
(For example, through information on your webpage or church noticeboard)

3. Does your church have a child-focused approach to the management of complaints and concerns including communicating to children and young people about who to approach if they feel unsafe? Yes No
- Please comment on how this occurs in your church.
(For example, posters on display, discussion about child safety in ministry program)



Please attach the following document/s:

- Procedure for Conflict Resolution
- Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns
- Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers

Standard 7

Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through continual education and training.

- a. Relevant staff and volunteers receive training on the nature and indicators of child maltreatment, particularly institutional child sexual abuse.
- b. Staff and volunteers receive training on the institution's child safe practices and child protection.
- c. Relevant staff and volunteers are supported to develop practical skills in protecting children and responding to disclosures.

What this might look like

- Staff and volunteers engage in training which addresses circumstances and experiences that increase a child's vulnerability to harm and how to recognise signs of child sexual abuse.
- Staff and volunteers share skills to allow continual improvement in promoting safe environments.
- Ministry leaders engage in training to develop effective risk management approaches to ensure child safety and wellbeing.

Staff and volunteers who are required to attend ChildSafe/Safe Church training include anyone who serves:

- as a religious leader (e.g. pastor, regular preacher, worship leader)
- in a governance (church council) role (e.g. elder, deacon, council member)
- in child-related work (e.g. children's ministry, creche, youth ministry)
- in ministry with vulnerable adults (e.g. seniors, persons with disabilities)
- as leader of a ministry with children or young people in their team (e.g. café, cleaning roster)

For more information on ChildSafe/Safe Church training please go to

www.safechurchcrca.org.au

The Royal Commission recommends:

Each religious institution should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, have professional supervision with a trained professional or pastoral supervisor who has a degree of independence from the institution within which the person is in ministry. (Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report Recommendations available at

https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_recommendations.pdf).

The CRCA strongly encourage that all pastors engage in regular supervision or mentoring. The Safe Church Health Check requires all pastors to engage in some form of guided reflective practice: supervision, coaching, mentoring or spiritual direction. (Subject to agreement at Synod 2021).

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church provide ongoing training opportunities for staff and volunteers as appropriate to their needs and role? Yes No
 Please describe how ongoing training opportunities are provided.

2. Does (or would) your church provide support to staff, volunteers or church members who disclose Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct involving a child, or a Risk of Significant Harm to children or young people. Please describe how support is or would be provided. Yes No

3. Have all the church’s relevant staff and volunteers attended Child Safe training within the last 3 years or undertaken the online module and committed to attend a face to face workshop prior to commencement? Yes No

4. Do all your Pastoral Staff engage in some form of regular guided reflective practice (e.g. supervision, mentoring, coaching, spiritual direction) as recommended by the Royal Commission and the CRCA? Yes No

Please provide details of the guided reflective practice each of your pastors has undertaken in the last twelve months:

Name of Pastor	Type of Guided Reflective Practice (e.g. supervision, mentoring, coaching, spiritual direction)	No. of sessions



Please attach the following document/s:

- Record of CSS training (and renewal dates) if this is not captured in your Safe Church Database (SMO ChildSafe Database)

Standard 8

Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse [or other harm*] to occur

- a. Risks in the online and physical environment are identified and mitigated without compromising a child's right to privacy and healthy development.
- b. The online environment is used in accordance with the institution's code of conduct and relevant policies.

**CRCA adopts the Principles which includes the 10 Standards.*

What this might look like

- The church takes steps to identify places and activities where there may be the risk of harm to children.
- Ministry leaders identify any children or young people who may be at increased risk of harm due to situation or vulnerability.
- The church and ministry leaders implement and communicate agreed guidelines for online communication.
- Third party contractors and hirers of facilities are required to have appropriate measures in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Online safety

An important part of compliance with this Standard involves addressing online safety risks. Model *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*, including suggestions regarding use of social media, are available as part of this package.

Third parties and affiliated entities

The Royal Commission recommended that agencies which are affiliated with a church should report their compliance with Child Safe Standards to the church on an annual basis (Recommendation 16.35 Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_recommendations.pdf). This is relevant where a church operates a school, preschool or other service to children and young people. It may also be relevant where the church engages in ministry or ministry partnerships overseas.

Persons of Concern

A document entitled 'Guidelines for Dealing with Persons of Concern' is included with the Safe Church Package. This document outlines the risk management process for known sex offenders and other persons of concern and the reasonable precautions required to ensure safe ministry. In adhering to this process your church may decide that the most reasonable precaution in your context is to exclude a known sex offender from attending your church services and activities.

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church have guidelines for risk management that address both physical and online risks to children and young people? Yes No
2. Has your church's Safe Church Team undertaken an audit of physical environment that might create increased risk of harm to children and young people (for example, offices without windows, basement or other isolated areas, balcony areas) Yes No
3. If the church has residential property that is identifiable with the church, have all regular adult residents been required to provide evidence of their WWCC clearance? Yes No
4. Has your church considered whether any ministries you support, including overseas ministries, have appropriate child protection practices in place? (This may include consideration of whether supporting orphanages overseas is appropriate) Yes No
5. Does your church commit to performing risk assessments for all ministry activities at least annually? Yes No
6. Does your church have a WHS Team/COM to oversee the implementation of Safe Physical Environments (including emergency procedures, risk assessments, privacy policy and safe food handling)? Yes No
Please list the names of your WHS Team Leader and WHS Team members

7. Do all associated entities (e.g. School, Pre-school, Foodbank, Op Shop) report to the church on an annual basis regarding their compliance with the Child Safe Standards and the measures in place to ensure the safety of children and young people? Yes No
8. Do any third-party groups who hire facilities (e.g. dance groups or tutoring) agree as part of their lease or licence agreement to abide by the Child Safe Standards and confirm that they have appropriate measures in place to ensure the safety of children and young people? Yes No
9. Has your church leadership adopted the CRCA endorsed process to manage Persons of Concern in your congregation? Yes No
Please provide the date on which your church leadership adopted the CRCA endorsed process to manage Persons of Concern in your congregation. ___/___/___
10. Do you ensure that any contractors (e.g. cleaners, tradespeople) that have contact with children and could be considered to be engaged in Child-related Work have a valid WWCC and that the church has verified this number online?



Please attach

- Record of WHS training for all paid staff, all members of the governing body and each member of the WHS (if this was not already recorded in the SMO Safe Church (ChildSafe) Database)

Standard 9

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continually reviewed and improved.

- a. The institution regularly reviews and improves child safe practices.
- b. The institution analyses complaints to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.

What might this look like?

- There are regular opportunities to specifically discuss child safe practices in the church e.g. meetings, forums, planning days
- Feedback is sought from children, young people, families and communities about child safe practices
- Any incidents or complaints are reviewed to help improve future plans for child safety and wellbeing.

A review should include:

- Considering and, if necessary, updating your Child Safe Church Policy and any procedures (this is one reason why you should record the date on which a policy or procedure was adopted by the Church Council)
- ensuring that the Safe Church Team is fulfilling their requirements
- awareness of changing legislative requirements
- making any required changes to policies/procedures
- analysis of complaints/incidents
- consideration of feedback from ministry leaders, children, young people and families.

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments where required.

1. Does your Church Leadership (Pastors, Deacons, Elders) have a minuted review of child safe practices at least on an annual basis? Yes No
How does your church seek feedback on child safe practices? *(For example, by publicising the date of this review to church attendees so that they are prompted to provide any relevant feedback.)*

2. Please identify the 3-5 most important potential risks or issues specific to Children and Young People in your church. *(For example, the church has not considered risk related to online communication, the youth room is isolated with no visibility, not all staff and volunteers have undertaken ChildSafe/ Safe Churches training, the church does not currently have strategies for listening to children and young people.)*

3. Please identify the steps your church can take in the next 12 months to address (or begin to address) the issues raised in question 2 above.

Standard 10

Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe

- a. Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.
- b. Policies and procedures are accessible and easy to understand.
- c. Best practice models and stakeholder consultation inform the development of policies and procedures.
- d. Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.
- e. Staff understand and implement the policies and procedures

What might this look like?

- Church leaders are familiar with the Child Safe Standards.
- Child safe issues are regularly discussed at any leadership or governance meeting, both independently and in relation to other issues.
- The church has a Safe Church Policy and sufficient clear and accessible procedures to enable the policy to be consistently implemented
- The church keeps copies of all policies, procedures and relevant documents
- The church maintains specific records of adherence to the Safe Church Policy to demonstrate compliance with legal obligations and reasonable responses to any risk (for example, sign-in sheets, training records, risk assessments, records of complaints)

Records (which need to be kept for a minimum of 45 years) include, but are not limited to:

- *Child Safe Church Policy* (dated versions)
- Procedures (dated versions)
- Records of attendance (children, young people and leaders)
- Ministry Information Forms
- Permission and consent forms
- Incident reports
- Contemporaneous notes, where required (including notes regarding consideration of potentially reportable matters even where a report was not made)

Included in this package:

- Model Procedures and Forms are available as part of this package. If your church chooses to adopt these documents, please ensure that your church name is inserted where necessary and the date of adoption by the Church Council is noted on the front of the document.

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Do all your ministries that involve children (0-18 years) and vulnerable people have a process for gathering permission and consent forms, records of attendance, accident and incident reports and other relevant documents? Yes No
2. Are your records securely stored for a minimum of 45 years? Yes No
How are records stored? *(For example, in locked filing cabinets, online in secure servers, on a central computer with back up provisions)*

3. Does your church have a process for ensuring that staff and volunteers implement the Safe Church Policy and Procedures? Yes No
Please comment on how your church ensures that Safe Church Policy and Procedures are implemented *(For example, random checks by Safe Church Team, discussion in staff reviews, discussion with ministry leaders)*



Please attach

- A sample of the forms or describe the method you use for recording:
 - attendance (of leaders and attendees) at ministry events;
 - parental permission and consent;
 - accident and incident reporting
- ***If your church has any other policy or procedure documents that may be relevant for this Safe Church Health Check, attach these also.***

Submission Checklist

Please ensure you have completed all the following before returning your Safe Church Health Check:

- All questions answered by ticking Yes or No
- Written explanations and additional information given when requested

Attached documents

	Alternative adopted or changes made*	Model adopted with no changes
Safe Church Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procedure Responding to Child Protection Concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procedure for Resolving Conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procedure for Staff and Volunteers appointments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ministry Information Form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ministry Screening Questionnaire/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Copy attached
Record of screening and training of all staff and volunteers		<input type="checkbox"/>
Safe Church Database (SMO ChildSafe Database)		<input type="checkbox"/>
Attendance, parental permission/consent, accident and incident reporting forms (blank examples)		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>(if required) Explanation of changes to Model documents attached</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Final document considered and accepted by Church Council		<input type="checkbox"/>
Final declaration completed and signed		<input type="checkbox"/>

*If your church has made changes to a model document, please list changes in an attachment

Declaration

I, _____ (full name)

declare that I am authorised by _____ (name of church)(the **Church**), to complete the Safe Church Health Check, and that the answers and documentation contained herein are a true and accurate representation of the Safe Church Policies and Procedures of the Church.

I understand that this Safe Church Health Check process is offered by the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia as a resource to assist the Church to review the Safe Church Policies and Procedures of the Church. I understand that the Safe Church Health Check is an assessment against the standards contained in the Safe Church Health Check only and does not constitute an acceptance of legal responsibility by Christian Reformed Churches of Australia.

The Church Council understand that it is their duty to provide a safe church environment.

The Church Council read and endorsed this document on _____ (date).

Signed:

Date:

Church Name : _____

Church email: _____
(the address for follow up information and compliance certificate to be sent to):

Person completing the Safe Church Health Check:

Name: _____

Position in church:

Contact number:

Acknowledgements

With thanks to the following organisations for their assistance and consultation:

- Anglican Church of Australia
- Baptist CFM (Children and Family Ministries)
- Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Assembly Council
- Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Safe Church Health Check Advisory Group
- Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT – Jonathan Bradfield
- Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT – Katie Watson
- Baptist Churches Western Australia
- Baptist Insurance Services
- Baptist Union of Victoria
- Bravehearts
- BYM (Baptist Youth Ministries)
- Catholic Religious Australia (CRA)
- NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian
- Presbyterian Church of Australia
- Queensland Baptists
- Rev Peter Barnett, Safe Ministry Resources
- Survivors and Mates Support Network
- Uniting Church in Australia

For any questions about the Safe Church Health Check
(prior to Synod 2021) please contact:

John Van Dijk

0419 330 003

childsafec@crca.org.au

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