Safe Church Policy Implementation – Guide for Affiliated Churches

Contents

Purpose

The Governing Group (Board, Elders, Management Committee etc.) of a Churches of Christ (CofCQ) Affiliated Church is responsible for the oversight of all activities within the church and for ensuring a safe environment is provided for all activities and people, particularly children and vulnerable people. The Governing Group will oversee the implementation of the Safe Church Policy in a way that is appropriate for the governance model, congregation size, physical environment, ministry activities and considering availability of suitable leaders, local need and demographics.

The *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 has certain requirements relating to these activities. Churches must also comply with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. This guideline assists Governing Groups as they oversee the implementation of the Safe Church Policy and in meeting their obligations under legislation.

Where there are example resources available on the CofCQ website (https://www.cofc.com.au/churches/church-resources/safe-churches), these are indicated in **bold italic text**. Links to external websites and resources are embedded within this document.

Please regularly check to see that you are using the most up-to-date version of this Implementation Guide and associated resources.

Annual adoption of Safe Church Policy

The Governing Group of each Affiliated Church is required to formally adopt (or reaffirm their adoption) of the 'CofCQ Safe Church Policy – Affiliated Churches' <u>annually</u> via completing the section at the end of the Policy and returning it to churchsupport@cofcqld.com.au. The church should also to record its adoption of the Policy in the Governing Group meeting minutes.

This meets the requirements of the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* to have a statement of commitment to the safety and protection of children, and a child and youth risk management strategy which is reviewed annually. It is also part of meeting the implied requirements of our insurers that churches demonstrate their compliance with legislation and protection of children. In addition, churches must ensure that appropriate processes that meet the Policy requirements are adhered to in the conduct of all activities and ministries within their influence and control.

Key actions:

- Annual adoption of CofCQ Affiliated Churches Safe Church Policy, including:
    — signing the section at the end of the Policy,
    — returning a copy of the signed section to churchsupport@cofcqld.com.au, and
    — having a record in the minutes of the Governing Group meeting.

Screening and training staff, volunteers and leaders

CofCQ provides churches with an approved program for training and screening attendees, staff, volunteers and leaders. This is currently Safe Ministry Check. CofCQ's recommendation is that training is completed annually.

Administration of Safe Ministry Check

Safe Ministry Check requires each church to nominate a minimum of two Safe Ministry Contacts within Safe Ministry Check. At least one male and one female contact should be nominated. Churches are also encouraged to nominate Justine Cadena from CofCQ as a Safe Ministry Contact in case someone has concerns they do not feel able to raise with their local contacts. Trainees are notified of who these contacts are when they log in to Safe Ministry Check and via email when they complete training. Safe Ministry Contacts should also be displayed at the church for anyone to contact should they have concerns.

Each church should nominate at least two people as administrators of Safe Ministry Check. Because of the potential for confidential information to be shared (e.g. a negative referee response or a self-disclosure), these should be trusted people. Administrators will need to regularly review (minimum monthly) the status of all training and screening in Safe Ministry Check to ensure it is being completed, to prompt referees to respond as needed, to check for expiring blue cards, and to update people's roles and required training as they change. It is efficient for the SMC administrators to also be the Blue Card Organisational Portal administrators.

The Governing Group must receive regular updates on the status of training and screening and immediate notification of any concerns raised through referee responses or self-disclosures. For regular updates the minimum should be quarterly; or more frequently for a church with a high number of leaders and volunteers.

Training

All attendees, staff, volunteers and leaders should complete the training course/s relevant to their role at the church. This training is for everyone, not just those who are involved with children's ministries or making decisions in relation to children's ministry. If the trainee specifies their role does not involve working with children, this removes the need to enter and verify Blue Card details, but they still complete the other screening steps.

The purpose of offering training to everyone is so that we create a culture of keeping children and vulnerable people safe in our churches and programs.

Safe Ministry Check has 4 roles that someone can be nominated in and will show them content relevant to their role when they complete training:

- **Member** – regular church attender who doesn't volunteer/serve in any ministry or any type of leadership capacity. Some churches choose to run the Member Group Training annually and mark attendees as completed in Safe Ministry Check manually. Some churches have found that a good time to do this group training is at their AGM. This

exposes all members to the training, even those who do not volunteer. This short video helps raise awareness and embed a culture of safety across the whole church.

- **Volunteer/Leader** – anyone who leads or serves in any of your ministries (e.g. kids ministry helper, youth group leader, welcomer, AV ministry, homegroup leader, worship leader)

- **Team Leader** – someone who leads a team of volunteers or leaders (e.g. Kid's Church coordinator, Welcome team leader, Worship coordinator). They are responsible for who is involved in serving and how the program is run

- **Staff/Board member** – any staff member or member of the Governing Group

Screening

All staff, leaders and volunteers must complete the following screening, which is done through Safe Ministry Check:

- Signing a code of conduct

- Completing a self-disclosure statement

- Providing two referees who can attest to their suitability to work with Children or Vulnerable People (Safe Ministry Check provides a one click referee response via email)

- Providing Working with Children Check details (Queensland Blue Card or Exemption Card) for verification if their role involves working with or making decisions relating to children. Safe Ministry Check automatically verifies the Blue Card information entered against the Qld Government Blue Card Register[1].

Completing volunteer/leader training as a group

If you have volunteers/leaders who are unable to log in and complete training and screening themselves, you can show them the training video as a group by having someone who is assigned the volunteer/leader role category in SMC log in and play the training video through their personal SMC account.

If you do this, you must also keep an attendance register that includes people's names, email address, phone number and date of birth. You must also have them complete all the screening questions manually on this form: Safe Ministry Check Screening – for use offline.

An SMC administrator from your church then needs to enter all the information into SMC manually for each person who completed the training, and review to ensure all referees respond and blue card is cleared.

Contact the Safe Church Facilitator at safeguarding@cofcqld.com.au if you need assistance.

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[1] Note that the automatic check of blue cards done by Safe Ministry Check is separate to linking people's Blue Cards to your church's Blue Card Organisation Portal.

Blue cards

The Governing Group must ensure that:

- all people working or volunteering with children hold a current and valid Blue Card, **before** they commence in that role, and

- all people making decisions involving activities mainly directed at or mainly involving children, including all governing group members, hold a current and valid Blue Card, **before** they commence in that role.

The latter is in accordance with written advice received by CofCQ from Blue Card Services:

"Board/committee members are considered to be providing 'services directed mainly towards children' by virtue of their decision-making role over the child-related activities the church provides. Therefore, all board/committee members who make decisions about the operation of these activities will require blue cards, including volunteer parents as they are providing a service which is dissimilar to the service their child receives."

CofC has provided a **guide for training and blue card requirements for typical roles** within a church. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and your Governing Group should contact the Safe Church Facilitator via churchsupport@cofcqld.com.au with any questions regarding roles that require blue cards.

The church must also keep a Blue Card register where all people working and volunteering with children are listed. Safe Ministry Check and the Blue Card Portal form this register and a list of people with Blue Cards can be exported from both programs.

More general information regarding Blue Cards can be found at this link and specific information on organisation responsibilities is at this link and this fact sheet.

Anyone who needs to renew their Blue Card should do so before it expires, otherwise they will need to commence a new application. Safe Ministry Check will change a person's status to Pending when their Blue Card will expire in less than 3 months.

Note on Exemption Cards: if someone is working in a profession that is exempt from a Blue Card (e.g. registered teacher, registered health practitioner), they do not require a Blue Card as part of their employment. However, if they wish to work or volunteer with children at your church, they must apply for an Exemption Card.

The Governing Group must receive regular updates on the status of blue cards and immediate notification of any concerns (minimum quarterly; more frequently for a church with a high number of leaders and volunteers and children's ministries).

Restricted persons and restricted employment exemptions

There are a number of scenarios (termed restricted employment) where people are allowed to work with children without holding a blue card (blue card exemptions). The 'restricted employment' scenarios that are relevant to churches include:

- a volunteer parent in a program that your child/ren are attending,

- a volunteer who is under 18, and

- working with children for less than 7 days in a calendar year.

However, changes to the blue card laws in August 2020 mean that if someone is a 'restricted person', they can no longer rely on the blue card exemption to undertake 'restricted employment'. A restricted person is a person who:

- has been issued a negative blue card notice, or

- has a suspended blue or exemption card, or

- is a disqualified person, or

- has been charged with a disqualifying offence which has not been finalised, or

- is the subject of an adverse interstate Working with Children Check decision that is in effect.

This means, for example, that a parent who cannot hold a blue card because they are a restricted person, cannot use the restricted employment blue card exemption to volunteer in the ministry their children attend.

For churches, this means that if you have people who are working/volunteering with children without a blue card because they are either a volunteer parent, a volunteer who is under 18, or are working with children for less than 7 days in a calendar year, you must still ensure that they are not a restricted person.

The 2021 update to the Queensland Criminal Code also means that all adults in Queensland MUST report to the police if they gain information that a child sexual offence is being or has been committed against a child by another adult.

It is important to let your staff and volunteers who are working with children know of this obligation as penalties apply for not reporting.

A simple way to cover off on these requirements is to have all staff and volunteers who are working with children complete a ***restricted person declaration and reporting obligations form*** stating that they are not a restricted person and they understand their reporting obligations and to keep this on file.

Blue card organisation portal

In addition to entering Blue Card details into Safe Ministry Check, all churches must register and link their volunteers, leaders and staff who are working with or making decisions relating to children's ministry to their Blue Card Organisation Portal. Each church must register themselves separately – the portal is not linked to Churches of Christ in Queensland or to Safe Ministry Check. You should have at least two people from your church with administrator access to the Organisation Portal.

It is important to link all staff, volunteers and leaders to your portal and to de-link anyone who is no longer at your church or working/volunteering with children. Through the portal you

can see the status of Blue Card applications, renewals and if any issues have been flagged with someone's Blue Card status.

Anyone who [applies for a Blue Card online](#) will need to be linked to your church through this portal as part of the application process. If someone got their Blue Card through a paid or volunteer role with another organisation, you still must link them to your church's Organisational Portal. Not linking a blue or exemption card holder to your organisation before starting a person in child-related regulated activities is an offence and penalties may apply.

[Use this link](#) to find resources on setting up and using the Blue Card Organisational Portal.

Blue cards and third-party contractors or once-off event volunteers

There is some subjectivity in the interpretation of blue card requirements as relates to third party contractors, but from a safeguarding point of view, it is recommended that a church sight the blue card of a third-party contractor delivering services to children (e.g. jumping castle, climbing wall, petting zoo operator) or request they sign the restricted person declaration.

One-off volunteers at an event that includes children's activities are not required to have a blue card or go through the SMC screening and training process, unless their role places them directly in contact with children on a one-on-one basis; e.g. a face painter.

Visitor register

Churches should establish a visitor register have available in the foyer/entrance or office of your premises. This register should be completed by anyone who enters your building for the provision of any service or delivery of a contracted service, as well as for once-off volunteers from your church.

The register collects basic information such as:

- Name

- Date of birth

- Email address

- Best contact number

- Reason for entering the church building

- Blue card number and expiry date (if they have one)

If your church employs specific contractors on a regular basis, you could establish a Preferred Contractors register that meets the Governance Group's quality standards expectations. Preferred contractors that are going to have access to children's activity areas, or to any children's programs, should be encouraged to complete the Safe Ministry Check screening process.

Roles, responsibilities and delegation of authority

The Governing Group will outline the roles and responsibilities of leaders and volunteers and provide them with appropriate supervision, accountability and care. Churches may choose to have volunteers for some/all ministries and programs complete an **application form** and provide them with a **letter of appointment**.

The Governing Group may delegate responsibilities for supervision of a particular ministry to one or more individual/s. This delegation may include some or all of the following responsibilities:

- identify and appoint leaders/volunteers for that ministry,

- assess and approve activities and programs (including risk assessments),

- manage the allocated budget and expenditure,

- maintenance of registers and records (e.g. parental permissions, sign in/attendance registers, training completed), including storage and maintaining privacy and confidentiality.

The **delegation of authority** should be accompanied by a **role description** that outlines the main responsibilities of the ministry leader's role.

Delegation of authority needs to be:

- to individuals who are appropriately skilled to complete the responsibility,

- to individuals who have been screened and trained through Safe Ministry Check as a Supervisor, and

- in writing and acknowledged by the person receiving the delegation.

Note: If a paid staff member is leading a ministry of the church, they do not require a separate role description and delegation of authority if their signed contract and job description covers this.

Note: Any responsibilities and tasks delegated to leaders of ministries that are not covered in the Safe Church Policy, will be performed in line with the relevant church policies and processes for those things (e.g. expenditure policies and processes).

Note: Where the volunteer is not a member of the church, it is recommended that a letter is sent to the volunteer confirming their volunteer status and the capacity under which they are acting.

Note on volunteer insurance: Volunteers are covered under the public liability policy as long as they are acting within the scope of their designated duties. Further, someone is considered a volunteer if they have completed training and screening within SMC. The Voluntary Workers Personal Accident policy covers a volunteer who has an accident whilst acting within the scope of their duties. This insurance provides a very limited cover. Contact insurance@cofcqld.com.au for more information.

Key actions:

- Ensure your church is registered with Safe Ministry Check via CofCQ and enter up-to-date details for at least two Safe Ministry Check administrators and two Safe Church Contacts

- Display Safe Church Contacts at the church

- Register all staff, leaders and volunteers in Safe Ministry Check and ensure they complete the training courses appropriate to their role

- Ensure all staff, leaders and volunteers have completed and passed all screening checks in Safe Ministry Check

- Governing Group to immediately review any negative responses from referees or self-disclosures in Safe Ministry Check

- Register the church with the Blue Card Organisation Portal and add at least two administrators

- Link and de-link staff, volunteers and leaders to the Blue Card Organisational Portal as required

- Ensure people volunteering/working in restricted employment under blue card exemptions have declared that they are not a restricted person

- Regular review of status of training and screening by SMC administrators (minimum monthly)

- Regular review of status of training, screening and blue cards by Governing Group (minimum quarterly, more frequently for a church running more programs/with more leaders and volunteers)

- Establish a visitor's register and a Preferred Contractors registry (if required)

- Ensure a role description and written delegation of authority is in place and accepted for each ministry supervisor

- Optional: have volunteers complete an application form and provide a letter of appointment

Programs

Risk assessment

The Governing Group must ensure that an annual ***program approval and risk assessment*** is undertaken for the planned activities for each ministry area. These risk assessments must be reviewed and signed off by the church's Governing Group or their delegate before the ministry activities commence. This demonstrates that due diligence was undertaken to assess and manage risk in case of any incident or accident and any subsequent insurance claims or legal action.

High risk activities as defined in the Safe Church Policy must undergo a ***program approval and risk assessment*** for each activity. The Governing Group should note that the church may not be automatically covered under the CofCQ insurance policy for high risk activities. Queries on coverage and management of risk can be sent to insurance@cofcqld.com.au.

Note: When taking groups to high risk activities run by other organisations/groups (e.g. high ropes course, trampolining), the church should not sign a blanket indemnity of liability on behalf of participants who are under 18. CofCQ can provide a permission letter that parents/guardians can sign, indemnifying their child.

Third party operators

Third party operators (e.g. a petting zoo operator) are required to hold their own insurance and provide you with a Certificate of Currency. Third party operators with a child-focussed scope should provide you with their blue card details (number and expiry date) and a church delegate must sight the card(s).

If you are employing a third-party operator of a high-risk activity (e.g. a jumping castle or mobile rock-climbing operator) you are advised to email the contract between the church and the third-party operator to the CofC insurance team for review prior to signing (insurance@cofcqld.com.au).

Note: many agreements have waivers in them which may void our insurance coverage.

Jumping castles/inflatables

It is important to note that jumping castles and other inflatables are classed as a high hazard/risk activity and will need to be declared to our insurer to confirm they are prepared to provide cover. If the jumping castle is to be managed by the operator, then see the notes relating to Third Party Operators.

If the jumping castle is to be managed by your church, take the following steps:

- Obtain the necessary permits. If this will take place away from your church property, you need to secure the necessary permits to operate or install an inflatable. Make sure to ask your local government about operating permits, safety precautions, and other requirements that are needed for the event.

- An inflatable jumping castle must be anchored to the ground properly. The installation must be conducted by appropriately experienced installers. Check the ground where your jumping castle will be anchored. Is it sandy? Stony? Is it made of concrete? Report it to the installers so that they will know what materials to bring to properly secure the inflatable to the ground. Confirm that professional installers will be used.

- Confirm the jumping castle is appropriate for the patrons using it (specify age and time limitation).

- Define who is monitoring and enforcing numbers, ages and size of persons using the jumping castle.

- Provide a copy of the hire agreement for review to insurance@cofcqld.com.au (prior to signing).

Temporary lighting

When putting up temporary lighting for one-off events, consider workplace health and safety in the placement of lights. Best practice is to have all 240V lights tested and tagged, or if you have RCDs, have these tested by a licensed electrician at the required frequencies (see Electrical and Equipment Safety section).

Incidents, accidents and emergencies

Ministry leaders/supervisors must be made aware of their responsibilities when an incident/accident occurs during a ministry/program/service. These include:

- Attend to any injured party and notify the appropriate emergency services if required

- Make the area safe to prevent further injury, accident or incident

- Complete an **incident report form** and notify the nominated person

Incident report forms, should be completed at the time of the incident or within 24 hours. Forms should be readily available to all who use the church, and completed forms should be filed to ensure privacy and confidentiality is maintained. The Governing Group must ensure ministry leaders/supervisors know who to notify and what to record about incidents, accidents and property damage that occurs during their programs.

The Governing Group must ensure ministry leaders/supervisors have an **Emergency Response Plan** that details what to do in case of an emergency or critical incident (e.g. significant injury, critical incident, intruder, evacuation required). This includes ensuring emergency contacts are available, evacuation or lockdown protocols are in place and leaders are aware of who from the Governing Group should be advised and when. The Governing Group must ensure appropriate debriefing is provided to leaders, volunteers, attendees and their families in the event an emergency or critical incident occurs.

Permissions and signing in

All ministries involving children where parents/caregivers are not present for the whole program should collect an **attendee information and permission form** annually. This should include details of medical conditions, allergies (food and medication) and emergency contacts.

This information should be readily available to all leaders of the ministry and all leaders should be briefed as to any anaphylactic allergies or medications (e.g. asthma) that children will carry with them and self-administer. Parents/caregivers should be reminded to provide updated information when changes occur. Specific additional permission should be gained for off-site or high-risk activities (including camps).

All children primary school aged and younger should be **signed in** by a parent/caregiver each time they attend a program/ministry. Children under school age should also be signed out by the same parent/caregiver at the end of the program (unless the person signing them in has given permission for a different person to sign them out). High school aged children may sign themselves in. Sign in records may be collected on paper or using a program such as Elvanto. All attendance records for children's programs/ministries should be kept electronically for 7 years.

Supervision

The Governing Group must ensure that the number and experience of supervisors, leaders and volunteers is adequate for all programs/ministries being undertaken at the church. For children's ministries/programs, a higher ratio of adults to children should be provided for younger children and consideration should be given to the mix of age/experience of leaders if young people who have experienced trauma are attending a youth program.

As a guide, the National Quality Framework (https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/educator-to-child-ratios) recommends the following ratios:

- Birth to 24 months – 1:4
- 25 to 35 months – 1:5
- 36 months up to and including pre-school age – 1:11
- Over pre-school age – 1:15

This may require having some volunteers who would be available to jump in at short notice if a program like a creche had a sudden influx of children on a particular day.

Transport

The Governing Group should ensure that appropriate transport arrangements are in place where this is provided as part of a ministry/program (e.g. picking up or dropping off youth group attendees, or taking a group to an off-site activity). This includes buses and private vehicles. Drivers should complete a **Driver Information Form** and the following protocols should be observed:

- Vehicles should be registered, insured and roadworthy

- Drivers must provide a copy of a current and appropriate open drivers licence for the type of vehicle being driven

- Learner drivers and red provisional drivers are not suitable to transport children (unless red provisional drivers are over 25 when they obtain their provisional licence, then the Ministry Supervisor and Governing Group can use their discretion)

- Where no alternatives are available, drivers on their green provisional licence may be considered at the discretion of the Ministry Supervisor and Governing Group

- Drivers must maintain a zero blood alcohol level

- Drivers driving children who are not already part of the children's program leadership (e.g. an extra driver for an activity, camp) must have completed the Safe Ministry Check Leader/Volunteer training and screening, including having a Blue Card

- No fewer than two leaders must be present when driving children and must ensure that at least one leader is of the same gender as the final child being dropped off

At all times, the Ministry Supervisor and Governing Group should consider the maturity, ability and experience of drivers when approving them for providing transport for ministry activities, particularly those involving children.

Toileting

In some churches the toilets may be in the main building, while in others the toilets are in a separate building or tucked away down the side of the church property, far from where others are congregating. Governing groups should consider the physical location of their toilets and form ***appropriate toileting protocols*** for various ministries involving children from there. Specific considerations and options for various age groups follow.

For babies, infants and toddlers in crèche:

- Ask parents/caregivers to ensure that their children have been toileted or had nappies changed before being signed in, and

- Let parents know that nappies will not be changed by leaders. Instead, the child's parent/caregiver will be texted or found in the service and asked to come to the creche and attend to their child.

For pre-school and primary aged children:

- They should be taken in pairs by an adult leader,

- Check the inside of the cubicle first to ensure it is safe,

- Wait outside the door of the cubicle and only assist the child if required, and

- When a leader needs to assist in the toileting of a child, they must inform the ministry leader/supervisor when they return to the main group.

For older primary aged children and teenagers (again depending on the layout of the church and location of the toilets):

- Send older primary aged children in pairs,

- Encourage teenagers to let leaders know when they are going to the toilet and leaders should note which children are heading to the toilet, and

- Be mindful of when the children left for the toilet and if they are gone longer than seems reasonable, a leader should go and check on them and encourage them to return to the main group.

Food safety

Specific guidance on food safety for non-profit organisations is provided by the [Queensland Government](#), and is summarised here. This [Food Safety for Fundraising Events brochure](#) is also useful.

Where food is prepared by people at home and provided to the church to either give away or as part of a 'bring and share' type event, there are no requirements for training or for the facilities where the food is being prepared under the *Food Safety Act 2006*. However, it is recommended that the church ensures that the person preparing the food in the home has suitable skills and knowledge of the safe handling of food and that food can be transported and stored at safe temperatures and without becoming contaminated.

Where the food being served is not potentially hazardous (e.g. typical morning tea type food or a BBQ that is consumed immediately after thorough cooking), there is no requirement under the Food Safety Act for those handling the food to have specific training, however, good general hygiene and cleanliness should be encouraged and appropriate facilities and equipment provided.

Where food is being cooked from scratch at the church, the church has an obligation to ensure that all persons undertaking food handling operations have appropriate skills and knowledge required to produce safe and suitable food. Volunteers involved in food preparation at the church should complete an online food handling course such as [DoFoodSafely](#).

In addition, if meals/food is prepared/cooked at the church and consumed in a sit-down meal more than 12 times a year, the church must have a licence from their local council and a qualified Food Safety Supervisor. This applies regardless of whether people pay for the meal or not.

Regular review of fridge and pantry items and general kitchen cleanliness and tidiness should be undertaken by a designated volunteer/s or staff member to ensure good hygiene is maintained and no pests or out-of-date food are present.

First aid

Each ministry/program should have at least one leader/volunteer who is First Aid qualified in attendance each time it meets/runs.

Appropriately stocked and labelled First Aid kit/s should be available at all times in an easily accessible place at the church. Appropriate first aid signage should be in place to ensure

that first-aid equipment can be easily located, even by those with limited knowledge of the site. The names of qualified first aid personnel are to be prominently displayed.

A contents list should be maintained and checked regularly (minimum quarterly; more often for higher use buildings/kits) and the kits re-stocked as needed. If your First Aid kit came with a list of contents, use this to re-stock it. A contents list for a basic first aid kit can be found here. Poisons information hotline (13 11 26) and emergency contact numbers should be kept with the First Aid kit/s.

A First Aid book should be present with the kit/s and leaders should write down the date, who was treated, the injury, and the type of First Aid provided. If a child receives first aid, their parent/care-giver should be informed when collecting the child, or texted/called at the end of the program if transported by others.

Enough First Aid kits should be available so that one or more can be taken off-site by ministries/programs while at least one remains on-site.

Church users

Ministry leaders/supervisors and responsible persons for external groups using the church must be advised that they are responsible for:

- reviewing their spaces for immediate hazards each time a program is run,

- setting up the spaces in an appropriate way for their program/activities and giving due consideration to the abilities and inclusion of all those in attendance,

- packing up and basic cleaning of the spaces used,

- making the space safe if an issue occurs during their program – this may include putting temporary safety measures in place and/or putting up a notice that something is temporarily out or order and not to be used or accessed, and

- immediately reporting safety issues or broken equipment/property to the appropriate person.

Key actions:

- Conduct and approve an annual risk assessment for each ministry

- Conduct and approve specific risk assessments for high risk activities; notify CofCQ insurance team about high risk activities to check insurance coverage

- Ensure third party operator contracts are reviewed by CofC insurance before signing, obtain a copy of their Certificate of Currency and sight their blue cards (if relevant)

- Collect driver information forms and ensure driver protocols are followed

- Keep a record of all incidents/accidents

- Ensure ministry leaders/supervisors are aware of what actions to take and who to contact in the case of an emergency/critical incident

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- Collect permission and personal information forms for each child at the start of each year; collect specific permission forms for camps and other off-site programs

- Establish sign in/sign out protocols for ministries involving children; keep records

- Establish appropriate toileting protocols for each ministry involving children

- Ensure food safety requirements are met

- Ensure at least one person with first aid qualifications is present at each ministry/program

- Ensure First Aid kit/s are available and a system is in place to record First Aid given and to check and re-stock kit/s regularly

Property

Facilities maintenance and access

The church buildings, property and equipment should be kept in good repair, at a standard that is suitable for the activities being conducted. Maintenance and safety issues should be attended to promptly and records kept.

The church buildings and property should be kept tidy at all times, with all equipment and ministry resources having dedicated, safe and adequate spaces for storage. All spaces should be kept at an appropriate level of cleanliness and hygiene. Safe access for those with a disability and low mobility should be considered.

Damaged equipment should be immediately removed from use and identified hazards made safe until they can be repaired/removed.

When conducting Working Bees, churches should ensure that a risk assessment has been conducted and there are adequate controls in place to mitigate risks (using the ***program approval and risk assessment*** form), that all participants have completed volunteer level training in Safe Ministry Check, and that volunteers have provided medical information. Churches should also ensure that the work being conducted is not high risk e.g., heavy lifting or specialised tasks. Insurance cover also does not extend to unskilled workers who are undertaking activities which would usually require them to have licenced skills and permits. If you have any questions please contact insurance@cofcqld.com.au.

The Governing Group should ensure that:

- an ***annual maintenance checklist*** is completed on a walk around of the church buildings and property by a minimum of two people. This also assists in identifying and rectifying any hazards. For a church with higher use and/or higher maintenance needs, this should be completed more frequently (e.g. quarterly). The completed checklist should be kept on file and evidence of addressing any issues identified should be kept (e.g. in a maintenance log),

- routine maintenance and regular servicing for equipment is in place and that there are records and certificates as required to show this,

- there is a system in place to ensure broken or damaged items/property/spaces are made safe and repaired promptly, and

- that working bees are undertaken with proper risk assessments and controls in place and that volunteers have been trained through Safe Ministry Check.

Chemical safety

Hazardous chemicals are those substances which may harm health or have been classified as a hazardous chemical by the manufacturer or importer.

These substances are to be stored appropriately so as not to pose a risk to the health and safety of persons in the storage area. They should be stored where they cannot be accessed by children. Containers used to store the hazardous substances and dangerous goods must be labelled clearly. The potential for any spills or leaks of hazardous substances or dangerous goods shall be identified and relevant spill containment and clean up equipment made available. Should these substances need to be disposed of, environmentally appropriate and safe practices shall be undertaken.

The church will maintain a Hazardous Chemicals Register listing all hazardous substances held at the church. Both the register and current Safety Data Sheets (less than 5 years old) for hazardous substances are to be readily accessible for those who will use the substances in areas where the substances are stored or used.

Asbestos

Information on asbestos is available at this link. Churches must identify if asbestos is present, clearly indicate the location of asbestos (including signage), keep a register and have a written asbestos management plan if asbestos has been identified. An asbestos register is not required if the building was constructed after 31 December 1989 and no asbestos has been identified and asbestos is not likely to be present.

The asbestos register must be kept up-to-date and be readily accessible to businesses or contractors carrying out demolition, removal, refurbishment, maintenance or service work at the church. Only licenced contractors should be used to remove asbestos.

Fire safety

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services department provides a Fire Safety Management Tool Checklist which should be completed annually and kept on record. Evacuation signs must be present and current and fire extinguishers must be present and be serviced and replaced at the required intervals, with records kept. A fire blanket should be present in all kitchen/s.

An annual fire drill must be conducted. This is also a good time to refresh the congregation on the evacuation point and general evacuation procedures.

Electrical and equipment safety

Under the *Electrical Safety Regulation 2013*, the church must implement the following:

- disconnect any unsafe electrical equipment from its electrical supply and do not reconnect it until it is repaired or tested by a qualified person and found to be safe,

- ensure that any extension cord or flexible cable is located where it is not likely to suffer damage or is protected against damage (including damage by liquid),

- a competent person (a licenced electrician) must complete testing and tagging of specified electrical equipment* and safety switches (Residual Current Devices) at the required intervals:

  — Equipment used only for office work – every 5 years, and

  — Equipment used for service work – every 12 months,

  — **OR**#

  — Fixed safety switch:

    o push button test by user (church) – every 6 months (or every time it is plugged in for a portable safety switch/RCD)

    o operating time/current test by competent person – every 2 years for equipment used only for office work

    o operating time/current test by competent person – every 12 months for all other equipment

#Either testing and tagging of equipment **OR** a connection to a safety switch (RCD) that has been tested at the required frequency is required. It is recommended that RCDs be installed on all electrical circuits on the switch board in preference to testing and tagging equipment as RCDs are a higher order safety control.

*Specified electrical equipment is defined in section 97 of the *Electrical Safety Regulation 2013* as:

(b) for the performance of office work or service work [a church would be considered to have elements of both office and service work]—

(i) a cord extension set with a current rating of not more than 20 amps; or

(ii) an electrical portable outlet device with a current rating of not more than 20 amps; or

(iii) electrical equipment, other than a portable safety switch, that—

(A) has a current rating of not more than 20 amps; and

(B) is connected by a flexible cord and plug to low voltage supply; and

(C) is moved during its normal use for the purpose of its use.

Ministry leaders should be encouraged to visually inspect electrical equipment regularly and not to use any damaged equipment. If the church runs an Op Shop that includes selling or giving away second-hand electrical equipment, follow the Worksafe Queensland guidelines.

Key actions:

- Complete maintenance checklist annually, or more frequently for higher use premises; address any hazards or maintenance issues promptly and keep a record

- Ensure there is a system in place for routine maintenance and servicing of buildings and equipment and that records are kept

- Ensure there is adequate and safe storage for equipment, resources and chemicals (including labelling)

- Ensure there is a system in place for reporting, making safe and repairing equipment and property that is broken/damaged/unsafe and that records are kept

- Ensure working bees include risk assessments and that volunteers have been trained in SMC

- Communicate expectations to internal and external users of the church

- Complete an annual fire drill

- Complete Fire Safety Management Tool Checklist annually

- Ensure evacuation signs are present and up-to-date

- Ensure a Hazardous Chemical Register is maintained and SDS are available

- Maintain an asbestos register and signage (if required)

- Disconnect unsafe electrical equipment until repaired and keep cords safe from damage

- Arrange a competent person to complete testing and tagging of electrical equipment OR safety switches (RCDs) at required intervals

Complaints, concerns and disclosures

Feedback

The Governing Group must ensure there are obvious ways for people to provide feedback and input on property, programs and behaviour at the church. This may include putting up prominent signs with the names and contact details of people who can be approached if someone wishes to provide feedback. This should also include ways for children to provide feedback. Providing ways for people to give feedback or raise concerns is part of ensuring and open and safe culture.

Complaints and concerns

Ensure all *complaints and allegations* raised about any person, the church facilities or programs/ministries are recorded and addressed promptly, following the church's *Conflict and Complaints Handling Procedure*. If a complaint is received in writing, it should be responded to in writing following a conversation or meeting to discuss and resolve as appropriate.

Disclosures and incidents

If a person receives a disclosure or witnesses an incident, they should report it to their ministry leader and/or Safe Church Contact as soon as possible and complete a *complaints and allegations form* or *incident report form*.

Ensure that your notes follow these guidelines:

- Context: what was the conversation about or what happened exactly?

- Clarity: Stick to the facts as presented or events as they occurred. Don't confuse with extra information. When stating words or sentences, used inverted commas i.e. Peter said "I am angry all the time". Do not change words or terms used but include them exactly as stated.

- Conciseness: Only note what needs to be noted to achieve the first two points.

- **Do Not:** Offer opinions, judgements, diagnoses or filter what you hear through your own life experience, theology or interests. Be factual and fair.

If someone is in immediate danger, the person receiving the disclosure or witnessing the incident should call 000 first.

Complaints and allegations relating to children, including disclosures and/or child sexual abuse or grooming behaviour, should be immediately escalated to the Safe Ministry Contacts of the Affiliated Church and then to the Senior Pastor and Chair of the Governing Group.

A disclosure relating to the abuse or grooming of a child must also be reported to Police Link on 131 444. Police Link require that these disclosures are reported in person or over the phone. The police report number should be recorded. If the alleged perpetrator is a person connected to the church, the CofCQ Safeguarding Response Group must also be contacted within 48 hours (refer Person of Concern section). Records relating to complaints or concerns involving children should be stored in accordance with the church's Privacy Policy and kept indefinitely.

For other concerns for safety of children, report to your Regional Intake Service on 1800 177 135 or https://secure.communities.qld.gov.au/cbir/PrescribedEntityChildSafetyReport.

For adults experiencing abuse, support them to contact police, and refer to *suicide intervention steps* for helpful steps and links to support services.

For disclosures or concerns about the behaviour or actions of Ministering Persons endorsed with CofCQ (church pastors), contact the Ministry Ethics Unit (governance@cofcqld.com.au).

Referrals

In some cases, it may be appropriate to refer families or individuals to other sources of support.

Referring families for ongoing professional support

In cases where the concern is not taken up by the Child Safety Regional Intake Service, a family may require additional support and assistance to address challenges they face. With their permission, you may support families or individuals to access the support services of Family and Child Connect (FACC) or Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS).

IFSS provides active intervention for families with multiple or complex needs. FCC is a central referral point for families and professionals to link families and children to appropriate support services. Contact with IFSS and FACC can be made by phone on 13 FAMILY or online https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/supporting-families/support-parents-families.

Services provided by FACC and IFSS are according to residential zones. If a service is not available in the child's residential zone, contact your local Child Safety Regional Intake Service to discuss your concerns.

Referring to the National Redress Scheme

Survivors of child sexual abuse in a church institution may be eligible to apply for redress. Survivors should be encouraged to speak with the National Redress Scheme on 1800 737 377. For more information see www.nationalredress.gov.au.

Referring survivors of historical abuse

A victim and/or a survivor of historical abuse (or their family) may require additional support. A full list of support services available in Queensland is at https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/contact.

Key actions: If you have a concern or receive a disclosure

Is someone in immediate danger? Call 000

If a person receives a disclosure or witnesses an incident where someone is in immediate danger, they should call 000. This should be reported to their ministry leader and/or Safe Church Contact as soon as possible and a complaints and allegations or incident report form completed.

Is a child at risk? Call 131 444 (Police Link)

Complaints and allegations relating to children, including disclosures and/or child sexual abuse or grooming behaviour, should be immediately escalated to the Safe Ministry Contacts of the Affiliated Church and then to the Senior Pastor and Chair of the Governing Group.

A disclosure relating to the abuse of a child must also be reported to Police Link on 131 444. The police report number should be recorded.

If the alleged perpetrator is a person connected to the church, the CofCQ Safeguarding Response Group must also be contacted within 48 hours (refer Person of Concern section).

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 is available for support.

Do you have other concerns relating to children? Call 1800 177 135

Report other concerns for safety of children to your Regional Intake Service on 1800 177 135 or https://secure.communities.qld.gov.au/cbir/PrescribedEntityChildSafetyReport.

Is an adult in need of help?

For adults experiencing abuse, support them to contact police, and refer to *suicide intervention steps* brochure for helpful steps and links to support services.

Lifeline 13 11 14
Suicide Callback Service 1300 659 467
Headspace: 1800 650 890 or
Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636
SANE Help Centre 1800 18 SANE (7263)

Ministering Persons (pastors)

For disclosures or concerns about the behaviour or actions of Ministering Persons endorsed with CofCQ (church pastors), contact the Ministry Ethics Unit (goverance@cofcqld.com.au).

Key actions: Referrals

In cases where a concern is not taken up by the Child Safety Regional Intake Service, and with their permission, a family may be connected with the support services of Family and Child Connect (FACC) or Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS). Contact with IFSS and FACC can be made by phone on 13 FAMILY or online www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety.

Survivors of child sexual abuse in a church institution should be encouraged to speak with the National Redress Scheme on 1800 737 377 or www.nationalredress.gov.au.

A victim and/or a survivor of historical abuse (or their family) can see support services available in Queensland at https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/contact.

Persons of concern

The CofCQ Persons of Concern Policy and Procedure are required to be followed where a Person of Concern or potential Person of Concern is identified as being connected to an Affiliated Church. Affiliated Churches must report the presence of a Person of Concern or potential Person of Concern to the Safeguarding Response Group within 48 hours of becoming aware by completing the **Concern Reporting Form** and emailing it to safeguarding@cofcqld.com.au. Affiliated Churches must not attempt to manage a Person of Concern without following the Person of Concern Procedure.

As detailed in the Person of Concern Procedure, the presence of a Person of Concern must also be reported to police, even if the offense or allegation is historical. The process is outlined in the **Information Guide for Reporting Historical Offenses and Allegations to Police**. The report number must be kept on file by the affiliated church and provided to the Safeguarding Response Group.

The Safeguarding Response Group can be contacted at safeguarding@cofcqld.com.au.

Key actions:

- Report a Person of Concern or potential Person of Concern to the Safeguarding Response Group within 48 hours

- Follow Person of Concern Procedure with CofCQ Safeguarding Response Group, including reporting to police when necessary

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Reporting and record keeping

All records and forms referred to in this Guide should be kept securely and in accordance with the Privacy Policy of the Affiliated Church. Records relating to records relating to child sexual abuse that has occurred, or is alleged to have occurred should be kept for at least 45 years, and records of personal injury incidents/WHS incidents should be kept for 5 years.

The church must provide a copy of their Blue Card Register to CofCQ if requested.

Relevant records may need to be provided to statutory authorities in the event of an investigation or charge or to insurers in the event of a claim.

Refer to the **Quick Reporting Guide** for a stand-alone summary of all reporting requirements.

Where to find assistance

Further resources available to churches to support them in their implementation of the Safe Church Policy, including templates, are available on the CofCQ website. Go to www.cofc.com.au and click 'Churches'.

Churches may also contact the Church and Community Engagement team at: churchsupport@cofcqld.com.au or phone the Church Support Hotline on 1800 193 438.

For insurance related queries, email insurance@cofcqld.com.au.

For Persons of Concern or concerns regarding children and vulnerable people, contact the Safe Church Facilitator and Safeguarding Response Group via safeguarding@cofcqld.com.au.

For concerns regarding Ministering Persons, contact the Ministry Ethics Unit via governance@cofcqld.com.au.