



**Reformed Church
BOX HILL**

Grace Alone • Christ Alone • Faith Alone • Scripture Alone • Glory to God Alone

Child Safety and Protection

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
CODE OF CONDUCT
AND
PROCEDURES**

(Version 5, July 2023)

Section 1. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1.1. Introduction

This document contains Policies, Code of Conduct and Procedures adopted by and maintained in the Reformed Church of Box Hill (RCBH) to promote and maintain a child-protective culture.

At RCBH, we accept the Bible as our rule of faith and life. The principles and procedures in this document are to be read and applied in submission to the authority of Scripture.

This policy is written incorporating and adhering to the 10 National Child Safe Standards/Principles as well as the one extra Victorian standard.

1.1.1 Biblical Principles

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:17

Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Matthew 18:5-6

And he said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.” Luke 17:1-3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

We believe the truly defenceless, including those who are victims of child abuse (whether sexual, physical or emotional), require our protection.

We also recognise another class of those who are vulnerable, i.e. those who may be (either mistakenly or deliberately) falsely accused of child abuse (particularly sexual abuse). These suffer as serious an offence (see Deuteronomy 19:16-21), and rarely recover their reputation once the accusation is made public.

Hence, when an accusation is made, it is extremely important that we, as a church,

judge righteous judgment (Proverbs 17:15); the church is bound to uphold the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). If a member of the church is involved, as either accuser or accused, the church is obliged to investigate the matter and come to a considered judgment (1 Corinthians 6:2-5). Where a crime has been committed, the matter will also need to come before the courts (Romans 13:1-4). The church, however, may not abrogate its responsibility by leaving it all to the courts; the Bible says this would be the “shame” of the church (1 Corinthians 6:5).

If an accusation is made that proves to be true, the perpetrator must be made to face up to the consequences of his sin before the church, and his crime before the courts; if false, then the one making the accusation must be made to face up to the consequences of making a false accusation. Either way, where a serious accusation has been made there is serious sin that needs to be addressed.

However, in framing this protocol, the Church recognises that we need to do more than address the problem once it has arisen. The Bible requires us (e.g. the principle in Deuteronomy 22:8) to do all we reasonably can to foresee possible sources of danger and put in place reasonable safeguards. We also recognise the need in this to strike a sensible balance between taking reasonable precautions on the one hand, and not being unreasonably oppressive when it comes to guarding against all possible risks on the other.

1.1.2 Policy Statement: A Commitment to Child Protection

The purpose of this Policy is to declare the commitment of the Reformed Church of Box Hill (RCBH) to promoting and maintaining a child-protective culture and environment in line with the National 10 Child Safe Standards/Principles (Victoria, 11), to state the duties and behaviours required of everyone who represents RCBH in dealing with children, and to provide appropriate procedures to support those objectives.

RCBH is committed to welcoming children and their parents or carers and providing a ‘child-safe’¹ environment, culture and programs for children and other vulnerable people who attend the services and other programs. We see such a commitment as flowing naturally from our vision and mission to operate according to biblical, Christian principles for living and for recognising the unique value and God-given potential of every person, regardless of race, age, gender, ability or disability.

All children who come to RCBH have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of children in our care will be our priority. The authorised leaders accept the responsibility of providing a safe and friendly environment where children are listened to, feel safe, have fun, accept

¹It is recognized that no organisation can guarantee the safety of children and other vulnerable people who are on site at a venue. The term ‘child-safe’ means that child safety is paramount to this organisation, that it has compliant policies and procedural documents and that risk identification and mitigation practices are embedded in the culture.

challenges, learn and grow. This duty of care applies at all times, although when children attend church and remain under the supervision of their parents, then the parents have the primary duty of care.

We recognise the particular need for sensitivity for those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including those with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage. RCBH acknowledges the importance of protecting the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth and all other children and youth of culturally diverse backgrounds. RCBH encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights. RCBH encourages the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth and their families within our activities. RCBH is culturally diverse with attendees and members from all sorts of cultural backgrounds. It is important to us that all children and youth feel included and safe no matter what their background is. All children should be proud of their cultural heritage and backgrounds and should be encouraged to embrace it and its strengths. RCBH has no tolerance for racism. Unrepentant racism will be dealt with as part of the church discipline process.

RCBH is situated in the suburb of Box Hill, Melbourne, Australia and was the home to the Wurundjeri Aboriginal people. These people were from a large tribe whose land included much of what we know to be Melbourne today.

RCBH take into consideration the needs of children with disabilities and seek to include them and make them feel safe and welcome. RCBH has a disability toilet on site for both genders and wide access ways within the building to allow for easy access for disabled people of any age including use of wheelchairs and mobility aids.

This Policy recognises both Federal and State legislation (10 National Child Safe Standards/Principles (Victoria, 11) and commits workers to responsibly and reasonably cooperate as needed with Government departments, law enforcement and child protection agencies. The operational principles of our Code of Conduct support and facilitate the protection of children and young people.

1.1.3 Scope:

The provisions and duties of care expressed in this Child Protection Policy apply to:

- Ministers. A minister of religion is: A person defined or appointed as a recognised leader in an organised religious institution; or the appointed leader of a local religious congregation in an organised religious institution who has general authority.
- The Session (consisting of all the elders and deacons, action jointly)
- All employees (including volunteers) members and adherents/regular attenders.
- All activities and programs organised by or with the approval of RCBH, on the premises or off-site, including camps and day trips.
- All hirers of the venue and its facilities. Such temporary users of the church facilities will be provided with copies of this Policy Code of Conduct and relevant procedures,

and the Hiring Agreement will include a signed commitment to complying with the expectations of these documents.

- Contractors, subcontractors, delivery persons or others engaged to provide services on the premises, if they may reasonably be expected to have any contact with children whilst on site. Where possible, such temporary visitors to the church premises will be provided with an Induction Pack and required to sign their willingness to comply with the expectations outlined.

1.1.4 Authority

This Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct reflects current State and Federal law and guidelines towards being a child-safe organisation. This Child Safety and Protection Policy is in line with the 10 national and 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards/Principles.

It was approved by the Session and adopted for use by RCBH July 2023.

1.1.5 Policy Review

The Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Code of Conduct will be reviewed at least every two years, or to remain compliant with new legislation.

Any proposed changes or updates will be submitted to the Session of RCBH for approval at a properly convened meeting for approval before being adopted and implemented.

This Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Code of Conduct will be presented annually to the Annual General Meeting of RCBH for noting and ratification.

The two-yearly review will include:

1. Updating Church Child Safe Policy and any procedures deemed necessary.
2. Ensure that the Safe Church Team is fulfilling their requirements.
3. An update of changing legislative requirements.
4. Making any required changes to policies.
5. Analysis of any complaints/incidents.
6. Consideration of feedback from ministry leaders, children, youth, and families.

Records of the following will be kept for a minimum of 45 years either onsite or on the Safe Churches SMO database:

1. Child Safe Church Policy- all revisions
2. Procedures- all revisions
3. Records of attendance- children, youth and leaders
4. Ministry information forms
5. Permission and consent forms
6. Incident reports
7. Contemporaneous notes, where required (including notes regarding consideration of potentially reportable matters even when a report was not made).

1.1.6 Availability of Child Safe Church Policy

The RCBH Child Safe Church Policy is made available at all times on the church website. There are also printed copies held within the church complex including in the church library and made readily available for anybody to access.

The RCBH Child Safe Policy is written in English only.

The RCBH Child Safe Coordinators are Albert Geuze (Session Elder- Male) and Juan Law (Female). If you would like any further details please reach out to one of these two coordinators.

1.1.7 Operating Principles

Duty of Care: Means any legal responsibility that RCBH has to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those who participate in programs or activities of the church.

Vicarious Liability: Means any legal liability that RCBH may be determined to have for the conduct of those who act on its behalf (e.g. its staff and approved voluntary leaders).

Reasonable Standard of Care: Refers to the level of care that a user may reasonably expect that RCBH will take in providing any program, activity, service, or facility.

Reasonable Foresight: Refers to a responsibility that RCBH has, when planning activities for children and young people, to identify any reasonably foreseen danger/risk and take reasonable steps to prevent or avert such risk.

Child Protection Reporting Obligations: This principle covers mandatory reporting, for those professions and roles that are defined by law, and the moral and legal responsibility that all adults have to report all types of known or possible child abuse, where there is a reasonable belief that a physical or sexual offence has occurred or may be committed against a child

Reasonable belief: A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds, through disclosure by the child or a third party or personal observation of indicators that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk.

1.2. Safety and Participation for Children and Families

The staff and leadership of RCBH encourage children to feel a part of the church by seeking their feedback regarding children's programs, and through listening to them when they speak about matters that directly affect their sense of safety or wellbeing.

Part of our work with children is to *teach and inform* them of what they can do if they feel unsafe, threatened or upset by the behaviour of adults or other children. *We will listen to and act on* any concerns children or their parents/carers raise with us.

We are committed to protecting children from harm. 'Harm', as used in this policy, includes any and all of the following types of abuse or neglect of children and young people: physical; sexual; emotional/psychological; racial/cultural or spiritual/religious. (See Appendix 6)

1.2.1 Feedback from Children

Children and young adults will have the opportunity to reflect on their experience of church programs and to make comments regarding the standard of planning for and delivery of

programs for their age-group. At the end of every term, we will invite comments on other aspects of wellbeing, including staff conduct of programs. Such feedback will not only provide the children an avenue to voice their concerns but also inform RCBH and guide adjustments to practices, programs and training. Team leaders will also encourage children to discuss issues with their parents, and raise any concerns to the relevant leaders.

1.2.2 Respect among peers

Children are encouraged to respect one another within all church activities including church run activities and social activities outside of the church environment. Leaders of organised church run events are trained to look out for any negative behaviours and privately and sensitively discuss any matters that arise with children involved as well as their parents to ensure that all children and youth feel safe in every environment.

1.2.3 Engagement of families in Church Child Safe Policy

It is important to RCBH that families feel and know that their children are being left in safe hands in church activities on and off site. For this reason RCBH includes families in feedback sessions on church activities attended by their children to ensure there are no concerns and they have an opportunity to give feedback. Leaders and families alike find these sessions useful in being able to provide their feedback. Any concerns are taken seriously and constructively and are addressed in the programs and outcomes discussed with families in an informal setting.

Refresher meetings are run annually with parents of children and youth to discuss the RCBH Church Child Safe Policy as well as our Code of Conduct. The RCBH Child Safe Coordinators provide print outs of the documents and encourage for good practice that parents sign the code of conduct and attain and provide documentation of their up to date Working with Children Check.

1.2.4 Identification of staff and volunteers roles for all children and youth activities

A current list of RCBH staff and volunteers involved in working with children and youth activities is kept on site on the church's noticeboard. This includes role descriptions.

1.2.5 Pastoral Support

The RCBH pastor/minister is expected to engage in informal supervision/mentoring/coaching/spiritual direction of any child or youth deemed appropriate on a needs be basis. This can be requested by the child, youth or family member and can be run for as long as the child requires this. Child Safe procedures will be followed during any sessions run.

The RCBH minister/pastor also conducts formal children's talks within the church service which is conducted in front of the full congregation present.

1.3. Employment of Staff and Volunteer Leaders

1.3.1 Recruitment, screening and selection practices

RCBH will be vigilant in the recruitment, selection and screening of all staff, contractors, leaders and volunteers to do all that is reasonable to ensure they are safe and suitable to work with children and young people. It is important that every person who works with children under the auspices of this church upholds and exemplifies our Christian beliefs and values, especially in their interaction with children and other vulnerable people.

1. Our statements of commitment to child safety and our behavioural expectations of employees and volunteers are included in all employment advertisements and Job Descriptions.
2. We will conduct thorough screening to determine whether a prospective staff member, contractor, volunteer or leader may pose a risk to children. This will include the church leadership making reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:
 - a. Child-related Employment Screening Clearance;
 - b. Current and valid Working with Childrens Check
 - c. proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
 - d. the person's history of work involving children; and
 - e. references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.
3. The type of evidence that an applicant is required to provide to the church will vary depending on the type of position that they are applying for. However, RCBH will not offer any applicant a position of responsibility until they provide the required evidence to a person authorised for the purpose by Session
4. Short-listed applicants will be interviewed by at least two members of Session prior to appointment being made official. The Session will make appointments to any specific paid role in the form of an Employment Contract.
5. All workers who do not have a current written employment contract are to enter into a **Covenant and Undertakings** (in the form provided in Appendix 9) dealing with their suitability to be workers and agreeing to abide by these child protection policies, procedures and the Code of Conduct.
6. Pastoral staff (Minister and Elders) must have an up to date National Police Criminal Record Check. Copies of these are stored our SMO child safe database account.

1.3.2 Support and Training

We provide a system of induction, support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. This system will train and guide our staff and volunteers in their interactions with children and clear procedures for managing programs and activities.

1. Staff and volunteers are provided with a copy of this **Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedures** that defines unacceptable conduct, boundaries and expectations for behaviour. Staff will sign a pledge stating they have read, understand and will comply with guidelines and follow procedures faithfully. (See Appendix 9)
2. ‘Refresh, Renew, Update’ sessions are run for all program staff and volunteers, on an annual basis or as frequently as necessary so that staff and volunteers are aware of the importance of child safety and familiar with child protective practices and reporting expectations, and where there have been changes to legislation or practice.
3. Each paid staff and leadership team including all members working with children and youth will, as required by Session under the church child safe policy, attend workshop/training sessions organised by the denomination or other Registered Child Safe Training Organisations at least every 3 years.

1.4. Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns and Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers

Child abuse, especially sexual abuse of a child must be reported, where a reasonable belief is held that the child concerned has been abused, is being or is likely to be abused. A responsible adult can come to a reasonable belief through:

- i. Disclosure by a child about abuse to his or her self.
- ii. Disclosure by another child or an adult about abuse to a child, or
- iii. Direct observation of the abuse or evidence of it by the reporting adult.

The identity of the abuser and the circumstances of the event determine the procedure that should be followed by the leadership, employees or volunteers of RCBH.

1.4.1 Abuse of a Child Outside of the Church

If a child attending a RCBH program discloses abuse against them or to another child committed by a person outside of the RCBH community, then the procedures outlined in **Reporting Procedure 1** (Appendix 1 and 1A) must be followed. All such disclosures should be written up on a **Complaints Form** (Appendix 2) and the Child Protection Officer informed.

However, it is the duty of the person to whom the disclosure was made to report the matter to either the Police or Child Protection Services (DHHS), following the Reporting Procedure 1. The church leadership may also decide to make a report.

In this case, ***no further investigation by the church is required***. However, all reasonable steps to protect the child from harm should be taken.

1.4.2 Procedure for handling complaints against a RCBH staff, volunteer or member.

In the case of an allegation being made against staff member, volunteer, leader, member or contractor at RCBH, the Child Protection Coordinator will follow the Reporting Procedure in **Procedure 1** (Appendix 1 and 1B) to notify both the church leadership team and either the Police (if the matter is deemed severe or criminal) or the Child Protection Unit of DHHS.

In this case, then the additional requirements of the **Reportable Conduct Scheme** (See Appendix 4) must also be followed by the Pastor, summarised here:

RCBH will take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount.

Step 1. Ensure that the details of the allegation are recorded on a church **Complaint Form**, and the Pastor or Leadership Team is informed. Report the matter to the Police or DHHS.

Step 2. Withdraw the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down (with pay, where applicable), re-assignment to other duties that do not have direct contact with children, or to work under increased supervision while the matter is being investigated.

Step 3. Notify the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People in accordance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme guidelines, that is, within three (3) working days.

Step 4. The investigation process should be completed within 30 days of notification, and the report of the investigation, including findings and actions taken (or decision not to act) will be sent to the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People. In some cases it may be appropriate to bring in an investigator from outside the church, to avoid conflicts of interest.

Step 5. When a report is made, the leadership will contact the church's insurer (Currently GJ Insurance Consulting Pty Ltd. Ph 1300 384 799 or insure@gjic.com.au)

1.4.3 Investigations

RCBH will appropriately investigate all allegations relating to an incident of abuse in accordance with its obligations and to the extent reasonably practicable.

In some circumstances, as described by the **Reportable Conduct Scheme**, it may be necessary for RCBH to conduct an investigation *in addition to* any investigation conducted by authorities (e.g. the police). RCBH may conduct an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by the Department or the police and will co-operate with the authorities as required. All people covered by this Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure must co-operate fully with any investigation by the Department, the police or RCBH.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for RCBH to engage a person (or persons) from outside RCBH to conduct an independent investigation in relation to allegations.²

RCBH will make diligent effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other employees, leaders, volunteers and contractors may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation (e.g. to provide witness statements).

1.4.4 Case management

In the event of a child disclosing an incident of abuse it is essential that it is dealt with swiftly, sensitively and professionally.

An investigation conducted by RCBH will be conducted in accordance with procedural fairness to protect the integrity of the investigation and the interests of all the participants involved in the investigation. RCBH will also handle the allegations in a confidential manner to the greatest extent possible. The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but may be (but not limited to):

- withdrawal from current role;

² It is important to have an arrangement in place. The investigator must be a person of experience and qualification, maybe with a role in the wider church association or sourced through the church's insurer.

- re-assignment to duties with no contact with children;
- increased supervision;
- disciplinary action, dismissal or criminal prosecution.

1.5. Risk Management

RCBH will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall approach to risk management. Risk assessment and management practices are embedded in our procedures for all services, programs or activities authorised by the church. We use these practices to inform our planning and implementing of all aspects of operation at RCBH.

Risk management applies to Work Health and Safety generally. This policy applies specifically to the minimising of risks of abuse of any kind to children who are in our care and to ensuring their physical safety in the buildings or activities of the church. RCBH has zero tolerance for child abuse of any kind.

In situations where a Person of Concern who seeks to attend or join RCBH has a known record of offending in child abuse of any kind, the leadership will put in place appropriate boundaries restricting access, to ensure the safety of children. This is not to say that such a person, with a proven reformed attitude, cannot be received into fellowship and benefit from the pastoral care of the church.

RCBH Session and the Child Protection Officer (CPO)/Child Safe Coordinator/s will identify and manage risks within RCBH and its environment and child/youth activities. This will be completed by an annual audit of the church premises to ensure the environment is safe. Child/youth activity risk assessments will also be conducted annually and on a needs be basis.

All RCBH staff and volunteers for any nominated activity involving children and youth are responsible at the event they are leading for being the work health and safety representative. It is their responsibility to ensure the emergency procedures, risk assessments for the task at hand, privacy policy and safe food handling is appropriately conducted and completed.

If the Session identifies risks of child abuse occurring in RCBH or its environment the Session will make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) RCBH will take to reduce or remove the risks (i.e. risk controls).

As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the Session will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

A **Child Protection Officer** is appointed by the Session for responding to complaints made by staff, contractors, volunteers, children or other attendees and members of the congregation.³

The Child Protection Officer (CPO)/Child Safe Coordinator will be identified and their role explained at appropriate times in the church year. Guests, staff and volunteers are expected to use either the **Complaints Form** or the **Incident Form** to note concerns arising from

³This person is mature, experienced and readily accessible during those times children are generally on site, but does not always directly work with children. The Child Safety Officer is appointed by the Session and is accountable to the Session (the CPO should not be the Pastor!). The CPO has access to the Complaints and Incident Forms and is familiar with the legal requirements applying to the reporting of abuse against children.

observations or experience. (See Appendices 2 and 4). Copies of these forms will be kept in the Church Office by the CPO.

1.5.1 Safe Physical Environments

All Emergency Procedures are located within the church on the wall in the main foyer area.

All staff & volunteers for any children's activities are trained on what these emergency procedures are.

RBCH is dedicated to ensuring safe physical environments for all personnel on the premises.

The Risk Assessment below shows the current hazards on the premises and how these have been addressed to ensure safety for all. Please see below.

Risk Assessments will be completed for all ministry activities using the below format.

CONSEQUENCE		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
IMPACT	People Safety	No injury	First aid treatment	Medical treatment	Hospitalisation	Fatality
LIKELIHOOD	Almost Certain: Occurs often (Once a week)	5	10	15	20	25
	Likely: Could easily happen (Once a month)	4	8	12	16	20
	Possible: Could happen (Once a year)	3	6	9	12	15
	Unlikely: Hasn't happened but could (Once every 10 years)	2	4	6	8	10
	Rare: Conceivable, but almost impossible (Once every 100 years)	1	2	3	4	5

Hazard	Current Controls	RISK		
		LIKELIHOOD	CONSEQUENCE	RISK RATING
Stairs leading to the back hall can be a tripping hazard for those who have difficulty walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a separate entrance to the back hall from the outside of the building if needed. Wheelchair access from this point is possible. 	POSSIBLE	MINOR	6
Main double doors for access into the church and the church sanctuary do not stay open with a soft close but swing close. This poses a risk of the doors slamming shut on someone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doorstops are used where needed to ensure easy access for those who struggle with mobility or are disabled and require wheelchair access. 	POSSIBLE	INSIGNIFICANT	3
There is a gravelled carpark at the rear of the church building which allows any participants of church activities at the church to park their cars. The gravelled parking area poses a slipping hazard for anyone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who think they are more at risk of slipping and falling there are 3 carparks at the front of the church that are concreted. If there is a slip and an injury there are first aid kits located within the church near the church library. 	POSSIBLE	MINOR	6
Child safety concerns for activities behind closed doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children's activities i.e., Sunday school classes, catechism classes, youth groups etc. are held in rooms with glass doors. We also make sure that there is always another adult in the room to ensure that there has been nothing that has happened to put child safety at risk. 	RARE	MODERATE	3
The bathroom sizes at church are small and tight to move around in. This is a hazard for those who have mobility issues or have a disability where wheelchair access is required as a falling risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a bathroom located on the church property that is a disabled bathroom as per AS Standards. There is easy access to this if needed. 	UNLIKELY	INSIGNIFICANT	2

As part of providing a safe environment for children within RCBH we have a Childrens toileting Procedure- see Appendix 11.

1.6. Record Keeping

All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, must be recorded in the form of a Complaint or Incident Report. This will record places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours or evidence of harm. Reports must be securely stored by the CPO. They provide valuable legal documents for any investigations and demonstrate the church's due diligence.

1.7. Privacy and Confidentiality

RCBH will collect, use, disclose and hold personal information of all people who fulfil a role within the church, in accordance with relevant privacy legislation. Such data will be securely stored and protected.

As much as is reasonably possible, an individual's confidentiality is to be protected. Both those who are making reports and those about whom accusations are being made are entitled to confidentiality. Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, staff members, leaders, volunteers and contractors must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act in a way consistent with the Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure, and relevant statutory requirements.

Throughout the process of an investigation into a complaint/allegation RCBH leadership including the CPO aims to support those peoples making the complaint/allegation by regularly checking in with them to make sure they are supported.

1.8. Procedure for Resolving Conflict

The Procedure for Conflict Resolution sets out a procedure for resolving conflict between two or more staff, volunteers, members or attenders of the Church in a pastoral and restorative manner, rather than through a formal complaint handling procedure. It is important to identify that some issues cannot be resolved in this manner, and this Procedure is not designed to:

- resolve issues relating to domestic violence, family law matters before the Family Law Court (or similar body),
- resolve complaints or concerns relating to abuse (including Child Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct involving a Child) or other serious breaches of the Code of Conduct that are to be resolved in accordance with the Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers; or
- replace any process set out in the Constitution of the Church in relation to the disciplining or removal of members from membership of the Church.

The Procedure applies to all staff, volunteers, members and attendees of the Church.

An attendee is a person who regularly attends (at least once a month) a ministry of the church (for example, Sunday services, Bible study, Friday night youth group). The Procedure should be read in conjunction with the Safe Church Policy and:

- Staff and Volunteers Code of Conduct
- Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers and members
- Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns

Situations to which this policy applies include the following: a) a disagreement between two or more staff, volunteers, members or attendees of the Church; b) a perceived offence caused by a staff member, volunteer, member or attendee to another; c) a perception by one person that they have been bullied by a staff member, volunteer, member or attendee (and that it is a matter that is able to be resolved in a pastoral manner); d) dissatisfaction with the manner in which a staff member or volunteer has fulfilled their ministry role; and e) a complaint that a staff member or volunteer has committed a minor breach of the Code of Conduct.

Raising an issue

- a) Anyone may raise an issue
 - with a person directly (see Pathway 1).
 - with Church Leadership or the Safe Church Team in order to seek assistance in resolving the issue (see Pathway 1, Pathway 2 and Pathway 3).
- b) If the concern relates to a member of the Church Leadership or the Safe Church Team, the person should raise their concern with another member of the Church Leadership or Safe Church Team.

Key Principles

- a) In raising an issue, all parties are to be guided by the following key principles:
 - Seeking to glorify God in our responses to each other.
 - Striving to serve each other even in the midst of our disunity.
 - Seeking to be Christ-like in our reactions to each other.
 - Extending grace to each other.
 - Focusing on forgiveness and restoration of relationships where appropriate.
 - Seeking help where needed, to address grievances.
- b) The Church acknowledges that:
 - the nature of relationship breakdown means that it is necessary to respond sensitively and with care for all parties involved;
 - in many conflict situations, to help each party understand the key issues and ways forward, the assistance of a neutral third party becomes essential;
 - many issues are specific to a particular context and relationship and so must be responsive to this, seeking resolution of substantive issues and where possible, appropriate restoration of relationships between all parties;

- the pathway recommended by Church Leadership will depend upon the nature of the issue, the positions or roles of the parties involved and the skills and capacity of Church Leadership to address the situation.

Pathway 1 – Personal Approach

- a) Where an issue arises between a staff member, volunteer, member or attendee and another and the parties feel able to address their concerns without involving other parties, they are to go to the other person and express their concerns with a view to resolving their differences in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17.
- b) The person initiating the personal approach should consider seeking counsel from a wise and unbiased senior leader (from within the church community or externally) or receiving conflict coaching before approaching the other person. c) This approach may be useful for addressing personal disagreements and perceived offences. This pathway will not be appropriate where there are concerns about significant power imbalances.

Pathway 2 – Locally-assisted Approach

- a) In the event of any of the following then the matter should be brought to the attention of Church Leadership.
 - Pathway 1 being unsuccessful in restoring relationship; and/or
 - the issue relates to perceived bullying; and/or
 - the issue relates to dissatisfaction with the manner in which a staff member or volunteer has performed their ministry role.
- b) If an issue is brought to the Church Leadership
 - Church Leadership are to provide support to all parties.
 - Where the Church Leadership considers the issue to be sufficiently serious, they are to appoint a suitably skilled person to assist in resolving the conflict. This may be a senior member of the pastoral staff. Church Leadership are to avoid conflicts of interest where possible when selecting this person.
- c) Where all parties involved in the matter are willing to work towards restoring relationships, the person selected to assist in resolving the conflict will:
 - value confidentiality at all times;
 - meet with each person separately to ensure they are given a chance to tell their story in private, working through their underlying concerns in moving towards resolution;
 - clearly communicate the process to be used to each party during resolution meetings;
 - hold a meeting with the parties together to identify common ground, work through the issues and determine the course of action;
 - follow up to ensure that the solutions are being implemented; and
 - if appropriate, monitor the situation over the following weeks, including to check-in with the parties to ensure that the situation is resolving and that relationships are being restored.

Escalation to Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff or Volunteers.

During the course of resolving a concern in accordance with this Procedure, it may be necessary to escalate the matter in accordance with the Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers. There may be several reasons this is required, including:

- that on inquiry into the issue it is identified that the conduct complained of would more appropriately be characterised as a serious breach of the Code of Conduct (such as child protection concerns; or
- the subject of the concern is a staff member or volunteer and they are not willing to participate in this Procedure (as required under the Code of Conduct).

Escalation to membership removal process

During the course of resolving an issue in accordance with this Procedure, it may be necessary to escalate the matter to the process for removing someone from membership of the Church as prescribed in the Constitution of the Church.

Section 2. CODE OF CONDUCT

2.1.1 Purpose:

RCBH is a group of followers of Jesus Christ seeking to reflect the teachings of Christ and of the New Testament with integrity and humility. Beyond personal faith in the redeeming work of Christ in His death and resurrection, we accept that our faith is worked out and expressed in the quality of relationships we develop as a church community and all those with whom we interact in our daily lives. Jesus draws our attention to God's expectation for the conduct of His people (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18) in Luke 10:27: '*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbour as yourself.*' He reinforced this 'law of love' by adding, '*By this all people will know that you are my disciples; if you have love for one another*' (John 13:35). Jesus also taught and demonstrated the importance of truth and honesty, of justice and mercy as essential to Christian living.

This **Code of Conduct** seeks to apply to the ministerial, or pastoral relationship those ethical standards that God expects of all people. People in various forms of recognised ministry are therefore expected to be examples and models of Christian faith and practice (1 Timothy 4:12). It is the duty of any person in a ministry position not to use the influence or authority of their position for personal gain, whether that gain is financial or in terms of power, sexual gratification, or otherwise. This includes any action, verbal, written or electronic, physical or emotional that could be interpreted as emotional, sexual or spiritual abuse, and applies especially when working with children.

The adoption of this **Code of Conduct** and the related **Procedural Documents** for investigating breaches of the Code, reflects a deep desire for an open, accountable process that seeks to express justice, acceptance and compassion to all parties, rather than to protect the organization.

Any violation of these principles of good conduct is a disgrace which brings shame on the Church, on the LORD whose name we bear as Christians, and on the testimony of the gospel. However it is a far greater disgrace for the Church to cover up sin and protect those who should be called to account, before both God and the civil law, for their sin. The Church alone among the institutions of the world properly understands the nature of sin, its disastrous consequences and the conquering power of the gospel over sin. In all its public and private ministry, RCBH seeks to honour God's law and gospel.

This Code has been written in recognition of the power differential between people in ministry roles and the people they serve. The potential for this power imbalance to impact detrimentally on relationships is high. These guidelines have been established to help inform the expectations of conduct in all aspects of personal relationships between people in ministry and those they serve.

2.1.2 Our Commitment

Our commitment to expressing the love of Christ leads us to conduct all our affairs so that all people are able to live, work and learn in an environment that is free from abuse of any kind. Our commitment is to cultivate an environment and culture where a diversity of people, regardless of age, gender, race and culture can thrive and grow holistically. That is, we are committed to RCBH being a safe place for all people, with a special focus on the safety and wellbeing of children.

This **Code of Conduct** aims to detail the standards of conduct expected by staff (paid and voluntary) in the performance of their duties in working with children and to provide guidance in areas where there is a need to make personal and ethical decisions.

The **Code of Conduct** recognises and is aligned with all statutory and compliance requirements enshrined in State and Federal law. RCBH is committed to operating in accordance with the law in all its operations.

2.2. Specific Expectations to Protect Children from Abuse

All those who minister or work under the auspices of the church with children should be fully aware of the **Child Protection Policy** and **Code of Conduct**. Abusive behaviour towards children will not be tolerated. Any and all allegations will be investigated and reported if found to be substantially true.

2.2.1 DO:

Everyone involved in the care of children on behalf of, or in connection with RCBH must:

- contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone '000');
- adhere to the Child Protection Policy and Procedure and uphold the RCBH's commitment to child safety at all times;
- take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse, recognising your duty of care;
- conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as an employee, volunteer, leader or contractor of RCBH and as a positive role model to children and young people;
- work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of RCBH;
- be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area;
- establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
- be fair, considerate and honest with others;
- treat children and young people with respect. Value their ideas, opinions and consider their age, background and abilities;

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island** children (for example, by never insensitively questioning a child's self-identification as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island person);
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with **culturally and/or linguistically diverse** backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of racial discrimination);
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of **children with a disability**;
- listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they are or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child;
- ensure (as far as practicable) that adults are not alone with a child, or, at least, observable by another adult.
- wherever possible, conduct activities in open places and spaces – i.e. where the activities and participants can be observed by multiple responsible adults
- raise concerns about suspected abuse with the Child Protection Officer or a leader as soon as possible;
- comply with all reporting obligations as they relate to reporting under legislation;
- record and act upon all allegations or suspicions of abuse, discrimination or harassment;
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure that, as quickly as possible, the immediate and ongoing safety of the child or children;
- be professional, consistent and responsible in all their actions;
- maintain strict impartiality;
- respect confidentiality when sharing information about children in accordance with the Child Protection Policy and Procedures and your reporting obligations;

2.2.2 DO NOT:

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of RCBH must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- put a child at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors for an improper reason);
- speak to a child in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Some examples are:
 - swearing or using inappropriate language in the presence of a child;
 - yelling at a child, except in an emergency situation where the child's safety may be in danger;
 - dealing with a child in anger; and
 - using hurtful sarcasm.
- discuss sexual activities with a child, unless it is a specific job requirement and the person is trained or qualified to discuss these matters;
- have private contact with a child outside of church activities without the knowledge and/or consent of parents and RCBH's leadership;
- have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless such contact is also copied at the time to the child's parent(s));
- use any personal communication channels/devices such as a personal email account or social media to communicate with a child without parental knowledge;
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child without parental knowledge;
- use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol while in the presence of or while supervising a child in a church-related activity;
- use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs while in the presence of or while supervising a child in a church-related activity;
- provide or allow a child to consume alcohol;
- provide or allow a child to consume illegal drugs;
- initiate gratuitous physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves;
- engage in rough physical games, hold, massage, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate and or/culturally insensitive way;
- engage in any sexual contact with a child for any purpose;
- take a child to your home or encourage meetings outside program activities (unless parental permission has been provided);
- be naked in the presence of a child;
- possess sexually explicit printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) or access and display such material on-line or on any display device, in the presence of children;
- sleep in the same bed or sleeping bag with a child;

- be in a bedroom/dormitory or tent alone with a single child
- harmfully single out any child, on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, sexuality, or disability;
- engage in any activity with a child that is likely to emotionally harm them (e.g. watch a movie that is age or content inappropriate for a child);
- be alone with a child unnecessarily and for more than a very short time, unless you are observable by another adult or it is unavoidable;
- develop a ‘special’ relationship with a specific child for their own needs without parental knowledge and consent;
- show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians;
- do anything in contravention of RCBH’s policies, procedures or this Code.

DECLARATION

I, _____, have read the Code of Conduct and the Child Protection Policy and Procedures that express the intent of the Reformed Church of Box Hill to protect and nurture children and other vulnerable people.

I agree to comply with these rules and expectations.

I understand that if I breach the Code of Conduct or commit an act of serious misconduct or break the law, this may lead to my:

- suspension from duties during investigation of allegations against me;
- termination of employment without notice or payment in lieu (summary or instant dismissal);
- being reported to the police and charged with a criminal offence.

Signed: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / 20____

Signed: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / 20____

RCBH Session Member

Section 3. CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES & FORMS

3.1 Complaints and Allegations

Any person who believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse should telephone 000.

Certain professions are referred to as 'mandatory reporters'. This includes medical practitioners, nurses (including school nurses), members of the police force, counsellors and primary and secondary teachers and principals. Penalties may be incurred by those named as 'mandatory reporters' if they fail to notify the Child Protection agency if they have reasonable grounds for a belief (not proof!) that a child or young person is in need of protection, because they have suffered, or are likely to suffer significant harm, particularly physical or sexual abuse.

In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, **any person** who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, should disclose that information to the Police or the Child Protection. In Victoria 'Failure to Report' is a crime!

3.2 When is a child in need of protection?

A child is in need of protection if any of the following grounds exist—

- a) the child has been abandoned by his or her parents;
- b) the child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person willing and able to care for the child;
- c) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- d) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- e) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- f) the child's physical health has been, or is likely to be, significantly harmed and the child's parents have not provided, arranged or allowed the provision of, or are unlikely to provide, arrange or allow the provision of, basic care or effective medical, surgical or other remedial care.

3.3 Making and Managing an Allegation of Abuse

1. Where possible, any person (including a child or parent) making an allegation of child abuse should be encouraged to fill out a **Complaints Form** (Appendix 2) and give this to the CPO. If they are not willing or able to fill out the Form, the CPO (or other leader) may take notes and fill out the form at a later time. The CPO **will** share the allegation with the senior leader of RCBH. A copy of this Form **must** be kept by the CPO. The complainant may keep the original. This is an essential record of the event.

If a child is concerned about their own safety or the safety of another person, the child may speak to the **Child Protection Officer (CPO)**. The CPO will meet with the complainant, and hear the story, taking notes and seeking clarification, ensuring that the complainant feels listened to, understood and protected. (Some complaints may be able to be dealt with at this time, where there is misunderstanding, a lack of evidence of any abuse or no reportable act has been committed.)

2. Any responsible adult should, if they have come to a reasonable belief that abuse of a child has happened, is or is likely to happen, follow the steps outlined in **Reporting Procedure 1** (Appendix 1A) below. This includes senior leadership, or any concerned member of the church.

3. If the allegation is made against an employee, volunteer or worker in a church program or activity, then the Pastor must ALSO follow the steps outline in **Reporting Procedure 2:** (Appendix 1B)

For further reference on how to approach the matter step by step, please refer to appendix 10.

Appendix 1. Reporting Procedure 1

1. Clarifying, Recording Evidence and Specific Information about the Child

A Report is required if you believe, based on reasonable grounds, that a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm as a result of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect AND that the child's parents or caregivers have not, or are unlikely to, protect the child from such harm.

The following information will be required when making a formal report to either the Police or Child Protection Services.

- The child's name, age (date of birth is preferable) and address
- The name, age and address of any known siblings
- Your reasons (observations or disclosures) for believing that the child is at risk of abuse, or actually being abused or neglected
- Your assessment of the immediate danger to the child
- Current whereabouts of the child or vulnerable person (if not in the home)
- Your description of injuries or 'sign' behaviours you have observed
- Any other information you may have of relevance to the investigation

2. Fill out a Complaints Report Form (Appendix 3)

N.B. You do not have to be given permission by church authorities to make such a report. Your identity as notifier will remain confidential unless you choose to inform the child or family.

3. Reporting. Making a report is to lay a serious allegation of a criminal offence against another person, so clarify your perceptions carefully before reporting.

You can make your report to:

- **RCBH Child Protection Officer** or any **Session Member** using a Complaint Form. Attach your notes to the form, keeping a copy. Please note, the CPO will inform the senior leadership of the church of your report, and they will act in accordance to law. You may still make an independent report to:
- **The Police.** (Ring 000) The police are the most appropriate first responders if the report is regarding abuse that is immediate, criminal or endangering the child either on church premises in another location.
- **Child Protection Services <insert the correct phone number for your state or territory>**

Victoria: (1300 655 795 BH, or 13 12 78 AH) is a statutory service provided by DHHS to protect children and young people at risk of harm and to work with families to ensure

Appendix 1 A. Reporting Procedure 1

Reporting Child Abuse – External to your Workplace

The chart below outlines the process that a person working with children in a specific setting should follow to protect a vulnerable child from actual or possible abuse, from someone **with no relationship or connection with the organisation**.

Disclosure	By a child who is being abused.	By another child or adult	By personal observation
'Reasonable Belief'	Through observation, listening, checking with other adults you come to a reasonable belief that a child <u>has been abused</u> , <u>is being</u> or <u>in danger of being</u> abused. (See definitions of abuse)		
Recording/Documenting	Make notes of observations and information gathered. Record data on the name, age, gender, current location or address of the child; describe any visible injuries or relevant behaviours; any info on the abuser (if known). Do not interrogate the child! Fill out a Complaint Report Form, if possible.		
Severity	Criminal – sexual or physical abuse, grooming.	Misconduct: physical, emotional abuse, bullying or severe neglect.	
Report to:	The Police Risk of immediate harm or risk to life: Call 000	Child Protection Services For relevant numbers see the following pages	
	Lodge Complaint Report Form with Child Protection Officer or <Head of entity>. These officers may also report to the appropriate agencies.		

There is nothing else you need to do, as a responsible adult.

Your identity as notifier will remain confidential unless you choose to inform the child or family.

Appendix 1 B. Reporting Procedure 2.

Reporting Child Abuse – In your Workplace

The chart below outlines the process that a person working with children in a specific setting should follow to protect a vulnerable child from actual or possible abuse, from someone who is an employee, volunteer, member or adherent of the church or organisation. Even if you know the person as a colleague, your first duty of care is to safeguard the child.

Disclosure	By a child who is being abused.	By another child or adult	By personal observation
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'Reasonable Belief'	Through observation, listening, checking with other adults you come to a reasonable belief that a child <u>has been abused</u> , <u>is being</u> or <u>in danger of being abused</u> . (See definitions of abuse)
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Recording/Documenting	Make notes of observations and information gathered. Record data: the name, age, gender, current location or address of the child; describe any visible injuries or relevant behaviours. Note the identity of the abuser. Do not confront this person, unless to protect a child from immediate danger. Do not interrogate the child! Fill out a Complaint Report Form if possible, even if you wish to also make a verbal complaint.
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Severity	Criminal – sexual or physical abuse, grooming.	Misconduct : sexual, physical, emotional or severe neglect.
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Report to:	The Police Ring: 000 Immediately!	Child Protection Services (1300 655 795 BH, or 13 12 78 AH)
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Lodge Complaint Report Form with **Child Protection Officer** or <Head of entity>. These officers may also report to the appropriate agencies.

There is nothing else you need to do, as a responsible adult. Your identity as notifier will remain confidential unless you choose to inform the child or family.

Reporting Obligations of the 'Head of Entity' under a Reportable Conduct Scheme:

- Notify:** 'head of entity has 3 working days to notify the Agency responsible for of a reportable conduct allegations.
- Investigate:** You must investigate an allegation (*subject to Police clearance on criminal matters*); advise the Agency as to who is investigating; manage the immediate risks to children (e.g. remove alleged offender from any contact with children)
- Update:** Within 30 days, provide a report which updates the Agency with information and actions you have taken.
- Outcomes:** Notify the Agency of findings and actions (or why non action was taken).

Appendix 2. Complaint Report Form

Please use this Form to make a Formal Complaint regarding discrimination or abuse of any kind towards yourself or another person, including a child.

Please read the Code of Conduct Document before using this form.

COMPLAINT FORM (Private and Confidential) Date: / /20____ Time: ____:____ am/pm

Your Name: _____	(If applicable) Role at < the church>: _____
Is the complaint about offending behaviour: a. Directed towards you? Yes / No b, Concerning a child? Yes / No c. About a vulnerable person? Yes / No	Who was the victim of the behaviour? Name: _____ Date of Birth: ____ / ____ / ____ Age: ____ Address: _____
Please briefly, but accurately, describe the alleged behaviour about which you are lodging this Complaint Report Form. (Keep to the facts, without interpretation or opinion.)	
Who was the offending person? _____	
What abusive behaviour did you observe or come to hear about? _____ _____ _____	
Is the abuse still happening or was it a past event? _____	
Is there any physical evidence of abuse – is the child injured? _____ _____ _____	
Where did the event/behaviour take place? _____ _____ _____	
Were there other witnesses? If so, provide name(s) _____ _____ _____	
What is the level of risk to the victim now? (Low – High; Immediate – possible) _____ _____	
Any other comments: _____ _____ _____	
Statement of Intent: I make this complaint in all sincerity, recognising that such a complaint may have a serious or long-term impact on all those involved. I will act in good faith in the process and accept the ruling of the investigator where I believe it is fair and transparent.	
Signed: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / 20____	
Witness: (Print name) _____ Date: ____ / ____ / 20____	
Signature: _____	

Appendix 3. Managing Complaints and Investigations

COMPLAINT REPORT MANAGEMENT and INVESTIGATION PROCESS

On Complaints Report Form

Complaint or allegation received	Provided as a written text Received verbally, recorded as notes		
Complaint registered in system	(in a Complaints Register) Identify the complainant.		
Initial assessment by Senior <Leader>	Is complaint low level : misconduct, non-sexual, non-criminal; dispute between students or student-teacher	Is the complaint medium level : reportable misconduct; sexual, physical, emotional or neglect; negligence; abuse of power; Risk to reputation of College	Is the complaint high level : criminal, sexual or physical abuse; between students; teacher-student; other adult. Risk to person or company (College)
	A	B	C
Allocation to Investigator	Senior <Leader> <i>or Delegate</i> ¹	Senior <Leader> <i>or delegate</i>	Police or Child Protection Agency
Acknowledge complaint	Formal letter, from the Senior Leader / Board Chair acknowledging complaint and advising of steps the College will take in investigation, or that the matter has been referred to the Police or another agency.		
Investigation and Report	The investigation must be timely (immediate, if possible), thorough, fair and impartial. Interviews may be audio recorded or, if notes only are taken, signed off by the interviewee as fair and accurate. For criminal matters, clearance must be given by Gov't agencies before investigation.		
	Written report to the <Board> by the Investigator. DECISION		
Findings (for A or B)	Complaint substantiated or partially substantiated.	Complaint not substantiated No case to answer.	
Actions	a. Criminal Justice decision b. Consequences (internal) fair and appropriate, all things considered. c. Communication – to the church community, respecting privacy regulations	a. Clear and immediate exoneration of the accused person; b. Letter to the complainant re findings, and further options open, should they dispute the findings; c. Restorative actions – promoting forgiveness, healing and growth.	

¹ If there is **any** conflict of interest, an investigator should be appointed by the Governing body, especially if the matter was cleared by the Police after their initial investigation.

Appendix 4. The Reportable Conduct Scheme (Victoria)

THE REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME outlines a series of responsibilities for the ‘head of entity’ (Senior Pastor) to undertake, where an allegation has been made about child abuse against a person who is acting for the church or participating in activities run by the church.

The following information is provided by the **Commission for Children and Young People**.

What is the head of an organisation required to do?

The head of the organisation is required to:

- have systems in place to:
 - prevent reportable conduct from being committed
 - enable reportable allegations to be made
 - investigate and respond to reportable allegations
 - report allegations of criminal conduct or suspected criminal conduct to police
- ensure allegations are appropriately investigated
- notify the Commission of reportable allegations and provide updates and outcome of the findings.



Types of reportable conduct

Sexual offences	Sexual misconduct	Physical violence	Significant psychological/ emotional harm	Significant neglect
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rape or sexual assaultGrooming or encouraging a child to engage in sexual activityOffence relating to child abuse materialSexual activity in the presence of a child	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Crossing professional boundariesSexually explicitly commentsOther sexual behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hitting/kicking/ punchingPushing/shoving/ grabbing/throwing/ shakingUse of objectInappropriate restraint/excess forceExposure to violence or threats of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Persistent hostility/rejectionScapegoatingHumiliation/ belittling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clothing or foodMedical careShelterSupervisionProvision of drugs/alcohol

committed against, with or in the presence of, a child



What are you required to do?



- The head of an organisation must notify the Commission within **3 working days** of becoming aware of a reportable allegation

- You must investigate an allegation – *subject to Police clearance on criminal matters*
- You must advise the Commission who is undertaking the investigation
- You must manage the risks to children

- Within **30 calendar days** you must provide the Commission detailed information about the reportable allegation and any action you have taken.

- You must notify the Commission of the investigation findings and disciplinary actions the head of entity has taken (or why no action was taken)



What information will the Commission receive?

3 day notification	30 day update	Advice on investigator	Outcomes of investigation	Additional documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of employee Date of birth Report to Police Details about your organisation Initial advice on nature of allegation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of allegation Details of your response Details about any disciplinary or other action proposed Written response from employee relating to disciplinary or other action (if any) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of investigator Contact details As soon as practicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copy of findings and reasons Details of disciplinary or other actions and reasons Reasons for taking or not taking action As soon as practicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any request made by CCYP in writing for information or documents



A more complete outline of the elements of the Reportable Conduct Scheme can be found at:

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/resources/reportable-conduct-scheme-information-sheets/>

Appendix 5. Incident Report

This form is to record the details of any incident involving the writer of the report, especially where there was an accident, near miss or emotional reaction involving another person, or if the writer of this report has been accused of child sexual abuse or other misconduct.

Appendix 6. Definitions of Abuse against Children

Child abuse includes:

Any act committed against a child involving

- a. a sexual offence; or
- b. an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
- c. the infliction, on a child, of-
 - i. physical violence; or
 - ii. serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- d. serious neglect of a child.

“Child” means a person under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child. Collective term for “child” is “children”.

There are five common types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and racial/cultural

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:

- Hitting, punching, kicking, beating (marks from belt buckles, fingers).
- Shaking (particularly babies).
- Burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair.
- Alcohol or other drug administration.

2. Sexual Abuse, including ‘grooming’

2.1 Sexual abuse is any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another’s trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.

2.2 Sexual grooming is a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child, as a precursor to sexual abuse. Examples include inappropriate special time with the child, inappropriately giving gifts, ‘accidental touching’, allowing the child to sit on lap, having secrets. In isolation, such behaviours may not indicate the risk of abuse occurring, but if there is a pattern of behaviour occurring, it may indicate grooming.

Grooming behaviours often mimic the kind of relationship-developing strategies that Christian ministries use for the benefit and wellbeing of children, that is, gaining the trust of the child, demonstrating care and concern, spending time, visiting in the home, finding out about family, friends and hobbies. However, grooming to involve a child in sexual activities for the personal gratification of an adult is a crime.

3. Emotional or Psychological Abuse

Emotional abuse is the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person, which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child’s

development, self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child's presence.

4. Neglect

Neglect is characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. And includes any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's development. Examples include the failure to provide food, shelter, adequate hygiene or schooling for a child.

5. Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated, unreasonable, unwanted behaviour conducted by an individual or group against another person, which has a negative impact on health and wellbeing. This includes aggression, verbal, emotional/psychological or physical acts or the use of social media or other forms of communication that intimidates, humiliates or threatens. It often involves an abuse of a power differential between the bully and the victim.

Other Forms of Abuse

6. Racial, cultural or religious abuse

Racial abuse is any harmful conduct that discriminates against, or demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, ethnic origin, skin colour or other evidence of 'difference'. It may be overt, such as racial vilification or discrimination, or covert, such as demonstrating a lack of cultural sensitivity or positive ideas about a different ethnicity.

Religious or cultural abuse is similar to racial abuse, but is directed towards expressions of religious faith or practice or cultural dress, identifying styles of cultural expression or practices.

'The harm that is caused by racial, religious or cultural abuse targets the child's identity.'

7. Spiritual abuse

This involves the perpetrator using their position of authority in the church or higher understanding of biblical teaching or God's will to manipulate a child for their own use or benefit, or to pressure a child using guilt, shame, or a strong "works" based ethic. This is not reportable to a Government Child Protection agency, although in extreme circumstances can be classified as emotional abuse.

8. Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying occurs when a person uses any form of telecommunication to sexually groom, bully, suggest an inappropriate relationship be formed, or engage a child in sexual language or behaviours. The explosion of electronic communications (Facebook and other social media sites, text-messaging, internet chat rooms etc.) has seen a sharp increase in cyber-bullying.

STATISTICS OF ABUSE

It is very difficult to know precisely the amount of child abuse that occurs in Australia, as many acts go unreported. Statistics of reported acts, though, are available through government agencies. Child Protection Australia 2010-11 report reported that there were 237, 273 notifications of child abuse involving 163,767 children in Australia.⁴ The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2002) revealed the following breakup of perpetrators: 74% natural parent, 10% step-parent or de facto, 7% other relative or sibling, 5% friend or neighbour, 4% others (including strangers).⁵ The reality of abuse in Australia is a lot worse than the statistics. There are estimates that as many as 1 in 20 men in Australia may sexually offend against a child. As many as 1 in 5 children will be sexually abused during their childhood. On average, it takes a girl 7 years to tell someone about such abuse, and for men the average is well over 25 years, if they ever do.

⁴ NSW and ACT Baptist Churches, *Creating Safe Spaces Manual 2012 v1.3, p11*

⁵ Ibid.

Appendix 7.

MEDICAL & HEALTH INFORMATION – SPECIAL EVENT

Reformed Church of Box Hill

Child's Name:
(Surname) (Christian name)

Date of Birth

Is your child taking any regular or currently prescribed medication? YES / NO

If so, please name the medication and provide details of dosage and administration.
.....
.....

Your child's leader will administer medication to your child as directed by written instructions from you. Please clearly mark your child's name on all medication along with the dosage and administration procedures.

Is there anything about your child's health which means that s/he should engage in only limited physical activity? YES / NO

If so, please give details.....

Does your child require a special diet because of health problems? YES / NO

If so, please give details.....

Is there any other information which may help us care for your child? YES / NO

If so, please give details.....

Emergency contact 1. Name: _____ Mobile: _____

Emergency contact 2. Name: _____ Mobile: _____

Preferred Medical Centre/ Doctor: _____ Phone: _____

Do you have private medical insurance? Provider: _____

AUTHORISATION

'In the event of an accident or sudden illness, I authorise the person in charge to call an ambulance or to seek medical attention at my expense, should I not be contactable.'

Signed: _____ Date: ____/____/20____

Parent/guardian/caregiver [Print name if not one of the above] _____

Witness Name: _____ Signature: _____

Appendix 8. Example Permission Form

PERMISSION TO ATTEND EVENT/CAMP FORM

Reformed Church of Box Hill

As a parent/caregiver of:

I, give my consent for him/her to take part in the activity to be held at the(event site) from.....to..... (or on.....)
(date) (date) (date)

I have seen the attached copy of the programme for the (event) and acknowledge that risk of injuries is inherent in physical activities. While I am aware that staff will take all due care, I recognize that accidents may occur.

The staff and supervisors have my authority to take whatever action they think necessary to ensure the safety, wellbeing and successful conduct of the participants as a group or individually in the above-mentioned activity.

If my child becomes ill or is accidentally injured, I authorise the person-in-charge to obtain on my behalf whatever medical treatment my child requires. I will agree to pay all such medical expenses.

I have attached information as asked concerning my child's health including any relevant details of his/her limitations for the planned activity. My child's own local doctor or medical specialist may be contacted in an emergency.

I also acknowledge that RCBH and all its representative leaders or other helpers at(Event) can accept no liability for any personal injury or property loss suffered by my child during the period of the event.

Signed: _____ Date: ___/___/20___
Parent/Guardian/Care-giver

Appendix 9. Covenant and Undertakings

Reformed Church of Box Hill

I, _____
(Print name)

1. Declare that, except as is stated below,
 - (1) have not been guilty of any sexual misconduct against any person;
 - (2) have never committed any criminal offence involving fraud, violence or drugs;
 - (3) am of good character and suitable for ministry within **RCBH**.

(If exceptions to the above give details and if insufficient room place them in an attachment).
2. Acknowledge I have read and agreed to RCBH's Child Protection Policies, Code of Conduct and the Child Protection Procedures.
3. Agree I will cooperate with **RCBH** in any investigation undertaken in relation to a complaint or allegation of impropriety or misconduct made against me.
4. Agree I will attend and take part in education courses to prepare and equip me for ministry with children.
5. Acknowledge that by signing this covenant no legal contract is created between myself and **RCBH**, but accept that it acts as a consent for the operation of the Child Protection Policy and the Child Protection Procedure Manual and that legal consequences may follow if I have knowingly given false answers to any of the questions 1 – 4 above.

Signature: Witness:

Full name: Name:

Address:..... Date:

Appendix 10. What to do if a Child or Youth Member Discloses Abuse

1. Listen, listen, listen... and do not add anything.
2. When listening to a child or young person remember:
 - that young people often talk about difficult or painful things in a roundabout way
 - they need assurance from adults that it is OK to talk about upsetting things
 - they often feel ashamed and frightened and find it hard to find the right words to explain
 - being observant will help you pick up non-verbal clues about what is wrong; they may drop hints when something is wrong, for example, “I don’t like so and so. Do you like him/her?”
3. Tell the child or young person, “You are not to blame”.
4. Do not press for information or push the child or young person to reveal the details of the abuse. Do not ask leading questions, rather listen carefully and if possible, take notes.
5. Reassure them, “You are right to tell, and I take what you say very seriously.”
6. Tell the child or young person that you and the church are there to help and you will be telling the Church Safe Team and/or Elders what has been said so that they may receive help. 7. Sometimes a child or young person discloses abuse to a person who the child feels safe with or trusts. In this situation carefully listen and reassure the child that you will help them. Do not promise to tell anyone else. Rather, say “There are people who can help you and I will tell them.”
8. Finish on a positive note and tell the child “I am pleased you told me this. You are not alone.” If you consider that the child is in immediate danger, call the Victorian Police 000 (112 from a mobile phone). Stay with the child and call the Safe Church Team who will assist you with the process after that. After the danger has passed, make notes including the date, time, what was disclosed to you and any other circumstances surrounding the event. If there is no immediate danger then as soon as possible after the disclosure make notes of exactly what the child or young person disclosed and the date and time of the meeting and make a report to the Safe Church Team who will assist you with the process after that.

If allegations of abuse are made against an employee or volunteer of the Reformed Church of Box Hill, Victoria Police, and the Elders will be notified. An independent person will be appointed to investigate allegations along with appropriate government agencies (i.e., Victoria Police). The person under investigation will be immediately suspended from duties. If an employee is found to be guilty of the allegations in a court of law, their employment at the Reformed Church of Box Hill will be terminated. At any time, a person may make a direct external report to the police or appropriate government agency and then notify the Church Safe Team that a report has been made.

Appendix 11. RCBH Childrens Toileting Procedure

Guidelines for Parents and Volunteers on Toileting for Children in RCBH

Parents of Young Children

1. All young children are the sole responsibility of their own parents for toileting. It is expected in RCBH that at least one of the parents of any young child that requires to go to the toilet be accompanied at all times by their parent for toileting.

For Sunday School Leaders

1. Please remind parents to take their children to the toilet before joining the class.
2. In the event that a child needs to use the toilet during the class, the parents of the child need to be notified, so they can be responsible for the child in the toilet.
3. Should the child's parents not be found or are unavailable, two leaders must accompany the child to the toilet. The two teachers are to ensure that the cubicle is safe before allowing the child to enter and use the toilet. Then, they must wait outside the toilet until the child has finished.
4. Ensure you are never alone with the child in the toilet at any time.

For Youth Group Leaders

1. Please ensure that the youth have used the toilets in pairs before the commencement of the program.
2. If a youth needs to use the toilet during the program, ensure that they go in pairs with someone of their same gender that they are familiar with. Be mindful of when the children left for the toilet and if they seem to have been gone longer than seems reasonable, ask another leader to investigate with you and check if the children are ok.
3. Ensure that you are not alone with a youth in the toilet at any time.