



SOUTHERN DISTRICTS
ALLIANCE CHURCH



www.sdac.org.au

SAFE CHURCH POLICY & CODE OF CONDUCT

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SAFE CHURCH POLICY AND CODE OF CONDUCT

A note from the pastor:

The Church should be a place where people can learn about God's love and provision for them, a place where they can come into a relationship with God and/or grow in that relationship. For this to happen the Church needs to be a safe place, a place all people can come to Jesus without obstacle or fear of any form of abuse.

Tragically this has not been the case for many vulnerable people who have been abused in a local church context. The recent Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has shown that there have many who have suffered due to this abuse and at times churches lack of willingness to acknowledge and prevent it.

This is not good enough! Jesus says,

“Let the little children come to me. Don't stop them ...”

(Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16)

and

“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away—it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea”. (Matthew 18:5-6)

In short, Jesus cares whether our churches are a safe place – and so should we.

This Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct are part of the effort of the Southern Districts Alliance Church to ensure that all who attend its programs (both those who attend and those who serve) are safe.

Pastor Bill Jensen

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Southern Districts Alliance Church (SDAC) is committed to protecting the safety of all people within its programs, ministries and events.

All people, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, disability and family/social background have equal rights to this protection.

All people (including children) have the right to be respected and valued as well as feel emotionally, physically and spiritually safe at all times.

Our policy has been developed to uphold this commitment to safeguarding and to adhere to National and State legislation.

Our child / vulnerable person protection policy:

This policy applies to all staff, including senior leadership, managers, coordinators, paid staff, volunteers, students or anyone working on behalf of SDAC.

The purpose of this policy:

To protect all people including children and vulnerable adults, who receive SDAC services.

To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide SDAC's approach to the protection of children, and vulnerable adults.

SDAC believes that a child or vulnerable adult should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

Our policy aims to:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of positional power.
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly.
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe (*Participants, Volunteers and Leaders are protected from or not exposed to danger or risk*).
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

Statement of commitment to child / vulnerable person safety:

Southern Districts Alliance Church is committed to ministering to all people including children and vulnerable adults, by providing an environment that is physically, emotionally and spiritually safe and supportive.

This will be done by applying the following safeguarding measures: Thorough recruitment processes (screening, selection, interviews etc.), Working With Children Checks (WWCC), Training, Induction, Supervision and Reviews). The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to promoting within the SDAC: Due diligence, Integrity, Duty of Care, Transparency, Inclusivity, Collaborative Ministry, Christian ethics and the Gospel principles.

Legal framework:

This policy reflects legislation and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

National Legislation:

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children
"Protecting Children is Everyone's Business" 2009 –
2020 (Commonwealth of Australia)

State Legislation

Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)

Working With Children Checks

*Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act
2004 (WA)*

We recognize that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount and is everyone's responsibility as outlined in the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children* (2009 – 2020).
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.

- working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and other organisations/agencies is essential in promoting children's welfare.

WE COMMIT TO

a) Safe recruitment of leaders.

We will screen all prospective leaders in our ministries before they are appointed. (ie. relevant working with children's check/vulnerable people/police check).

b) Adequate training of leaders.

We require that all leaders attend a SCTA (National Council of Churches; Safe Church Training Agreement) workshop before commencing (or within 3 months of commencing) their role and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years.

We require all leaders to attend additional role specific training as required.

c) Have a clear Code of Conduct

We will adopt and implement a Code of Conduct for all leaders and volunteers, including boundaries of behaviour and expectations of interactions with vulnerable people.

All leaders and volunteers must formally agree to follow our Code of Conduct.

d) Continued supervision of leaders and volunteers.

We commit to ongoing training, supervision and support for leaders and volunteers.

e) Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious misconduct.

All leaders and volunteers will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to our procedure. We will listen to children who make allegations of abuse and serious misconduct and presume their truthfulness.

We will ensure that procedures are clear and appropriate in responding to allegations of abuse.

Where a leader or volunteer has an allegation of misconduct made against them, we will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate denominational help for a just and fair resolution.

f) Responding to other disclosures of abuse

We will understand the processes of responding to disclosures of abuse and harm including self-harm and expressed thoughts of suicide.

We will ensure that appropriate training takes place to recognise and respond to indicators of abuse and neglect and receive support for all involved in the disclosure (including leaders/volunteers).

We understand that responding to abuse is not limited to children, but also includes adults within our programs and ministries who may be vulnerable at any given time where abuse could be present and that everyone involved understands the most appropriate steps to take in supporting vulnerable people within our community.

g) Provide an open safe environment

We will afford participants a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation. We will be accountable and transparent.

We will create a child-friendly environment, allowing people to raise their concerns in an appropriate manner. We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and mental well-being.

h) Understand and value diversity

We will be mindful in our approach for all programs to be inclusive for all people. This includes adapting programs for anyone with a disability to receive access to various programs and ministries, as well as provide adequate training for leaders.

Our programs, information, support and services will be sensitive to those from 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD) backgrounds and those within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,. as well as upholding respect to all cultures and encourage the participation of all people and recognise their unique contribution to our community.

DEFINITIONS

Abuse:

Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to:

- *Physical Abuse*
- *Emotional/Psychological Abuse*
- *Family Violence*
- *Sexual Abuse*
- *Grooming*
- *Neglect*

Child:

A person who is under the age of 18 years.

Disclosure:

A disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in authority/leadership (or a trusted adult) within the church/community that they have been subject to abuse or knows of abuse. A disclosure may or may not be an allegation or a notifiable circumstance, but it is the responsibility of the person in authority to investigate and take any appropriate action.

Safe:

A person is safe when they are protected from or not exposed to danger or risk.

Safe Environment:

Discharges duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional/Psychological abuse (including bullying or neglect).

Safe Leader:

Has been through a thorough recruitment process, understands responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team player.

Safe Program:

All risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned.

SCTA:

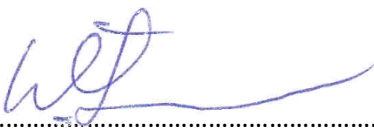
Safe Church Training Agreement under the National Council of Churches in Australia; Safe Church Program.

Vulnerable Person:

A person who may be considered to be susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (physical or mental), age, grief, previous experience of abuse, social isolation or financial hardship. In this sense, vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on: 07/02/2022
(date)

Signed: 

Rev. Bill (William) Jensen
Pastor, Southern Districts Alliance Church

CODE OF CONDUCT

Staff and volunteers are responsible for maintaining a professional role with vulnerable people including children, which means establishing and maintaining clear boundaries that serve to protect everyone from misunderstandings or a violation of the relationship.

This Code of Conduct sets out the behaviour which Southern Districts Alliance Church (SDAC) expects from all people associated with or representing it.

Purpose:

Primarily, this code will help to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and inappropriate behaviour from adults / people in leadership. It will also help staff and volunteers understand and maintain the standard of behaviour expected of them.

Secondly, this will also work to reduce the possibility of allegations of abuse being made against leaders and people in authority and provide possible victims a pathway for voicing their concerns.

And thirdly, this will also work to reduce the possibility of allegations of abuse being made against our organisation.

Upholding this code of conduct:

All members of staff and volunteers are expected to report any breaches of this code to the appropriate ministry leader, SDAC Elders Board or Safe Church Officer under the child protection policies and safeguarding procedures put in place by SDAC.

Staff and volunteers who breach this code of conduct will be subject to SDAC's disciplinary procedures.

Any breach of the code involving external workers/volunteers may result in them being asked to leave SDAC and any associated programs/events/ministries.

Serious breaches may also result in a report being made to authorities such as the police, the local statutory child protection authorities, the National Sexual Abuse Complaints Committee (NatSACC) of the CMA (Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia) and/or the National Board of the CMA.

SDAC condemns all forms of abuse (including child abuse), discrimination and sexual exploitation, and is committed to creating and maintaining an

environment which promotes safety and inclusiveness for children. Child abuse occurs when adults or other children hurt children either physically, emotionally/ psychologically, sexually, through neglect, or in some other way.

SDAC is committed to and will provide a safe environment for people living with a disability, people with a cultural and/or linguistic diverse background. The provision of this environment may include consultation with culturally / ethnically diverse people regarding their specific needs.

Guidelines for caring for vulnerable people:

(Statements are written in first person to help with 'ownership' of this code)

- Conduct myself in a manner that is consistent with the values of SDAC.
- Be welcoming and inclusive. Treating all people with respect, including respecting cultural differences.
- Avoid favouritism to particular participants.
- Provide a safe environment for all people.
- Be transparent in my actions and whereabouts.
- Provide examples of good conduct in daily activities.
- Be mindful of my behaviour, actions, language and relationships with vulnerable people.
- Encourage open communication between all children, vulnerable adults, parents, staff and volunteers, and allow children, and vulnerable adults to participate in the decisions that affect them.
- Encourage all people (including children and vulnerable adults) to feel cared for and confident in speaking up in an appropriate manner against inappropriate comments or behaviour that they feel uncomfortable with.
- Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues with children.
- Ensure any contact with vulnerable people is appropriate and in the parameters of the program/event/ministry as stated.
- Take responsibility for ensuring I am accountable and do not place myself in positions where there is a risk of allegations being made. Wherever possible, I will ensure that another adult is present when I am working in the proximity of children. I will discuss other measures as necessary with my ministry leader or SDAC Leadership (as appropriate).
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour (in an appropriate manner).
- Comply with all relevant Australian and State legislation (including Working with Children Check)

- Immediately disclose all relevant information about myself including: charges, convictions, policy non-compliance, other allegations of exploitation and abuse in accordance with SDAC procedures.

Behaviours to Avoid:

- Do not act in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of children and vulnerable adults.
- Do not act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive.
- Do not condone, participate or encourage behaviour that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Do not jump to conclusions about others.
- Do not engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade others.
- Do not use inappropriate, offensive, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative/suggestive, sarcastic, derogatory, demeaning, culturally inappropriate or discriminatory language or gestures.
- Do not hit or physically assault any person. This includes refraining from physical punishment or discipline of children.
- Do not do things of a personal nature that a child or vulnerable adult can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes. If this is necessary, for example for a child with a disability, I will inform my supervisor first and be as open as possible in my behaviour.
- Don't seek to make contact and / or spend time with any child that I come into contact with in my role as a representative of SDAC outside of the designated times and activities set for performing my role as a representative of SDAC.
- Don't use social media platforms or any electronic device such as: computer, mobile phone, or camera to exploit, abuse or harass anyone.
- Don't develop inappropriate relationships with vulnerable people.

- Don't conduct a sexual relationship with a child or indulge in any form of sexual contact with a child.
- Don't conduct an inappropriate sexual relationship with or indulge in any form of inappropriate sexual contact with a vulnerable adult.
- Don't rely on my reputation or that of the organisation to protect me.

Guidelines for Recording:

- Report any concerns of child abuse in accordance with SDAC's child protection policy and procedures.
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding abuse by a fellow worker, volunteer, contractor or visitor, via SDAC child protection reporting mechanisms.
- Do not allow allegations/suspected abuse/risk of harm or disclosures go unreported
- Do not exaggerate or trivialise abuse allegations/issues.
- Do not make inappropriate promises to children or vulnerable adults, particularly in relation to confidentiality.
- Keep confidential (do not release or discuss) all information that I am party to regarding suspected or proven child abuse or child protection cases, disclosing and discussing information only with SDAC Leadership or other parties as designated by them and according to reporting procedures.