

Why a policy?

The Bible consistently expresses God's concern for the well-being of the weak and powerless members of society, children in particular. Christ's words and example provide a strong rationale for churches being responsible for all those in their care. Baptist Churches Western Australia (BCWA) takes this responsibility very seriously.

As those charged with leading and caring for others in ministry, we have a responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all under our care. All people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times.

We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety, particularly in the area of child protection. This *Safe Church Policy* has been developed to help us live out our biblical mandate and our responsibilities under WA legislation.

Our *Safe Church Policy* has the following goals:

- To minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power within the church.
- To ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled in a consistent, unbiased and thorough manner.
- To ensure that leaders and programs are safe.
- To ensure that all people are respected and valued irrespective of their gender, age, country of origin, cultural heritage, socio-economic background or ability.

Safe Leaders

We commit to:

a) Safe recruitment of leaders

We will recruit using the *BCWA Application for Safe Churches Leadership*

We will screen all prospective leaders before they are appointed.

We will require all leaders in child-related ministry to also obtain a WA Working with Children Check.

We recommend a minimum 6 months church attendance policy for all prospective volunteer leaders.

b) Adequate training of leaders

We require that all leaders attend a Safe Church (or SCTA endorsed) workshop within their first year of ministry and to attend a refresher workshop every three years.

We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific departmental training as required by individual churches.

c) Continued supervision of leaders

We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders. We require all leaders to agree to follow the *Code of Good Leadership Practices*.

d) Responding to allegations of suspected abuse

We require all leaders to report disclosure or suspicions of child abuse, using the procedure in the *Safe Church Training Workbook for BCWA*.

Where a leader has an allegation of misconduct made against them, the *BCWA Response to Complaint protocols* will be followed.

Safe Programs

We commit to:

a) Safe emotional environments

We will give opportunity to all people, including children, to provide input into the programs and the activities in which they are to participate, by fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation in all areas of the life of the church, as far as is sensible and practical.

We will endeavour to obtain information relating to the program participants, including children's information to help meet their physical and emotional needs.

We will require those in ministry leadership to be nurturing and affirming in their ministry interactions.

b) Safe physical environments

We require all leaders to establish safe physical environments as outlined in the *Safe Church Training Workbook for BCWA*.

We require Team Leaders to exercise a duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates made available through the *Safe Church Implementation Guide* for establishment and maintenance of safe ministry environments.

We require a Safety Team to be appointed in each congregation or organisation to ensure that the following areas are incorporated into establishing and maintaining a safe physical environment: fire safety; venue safety; first aid; food safety practices; risk assessment for activities; adequate ministry supervision for activities; transport protocols; critical incident and emergency protocols and ministry review.

We require Team leaders to complete a Permission to Proceed process annually.

Helpful Definitions

Safe Environment: where duty of care is discharged by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe e.g. from spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.

The Safety Team: also known as risk management team, is responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the Safe Church Policy and supporting documentation and processes in local churches/organisations.

Permission to Proceed: written process of accountability, whereby a Ministry Co-ordinator reviews safety plans for a program and grants permission for that program to proceed under the church/organisation's name.

Safe Leader: has been through a 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. These programs have had permission to proceed from ministry co-ordinator (a role that may be undertaken by pastors, elders, deacons or other senior leaders).

Team Leaders: responsible for individual teams and programs. They jointly recruit team members and complete safety management plans for their individual programs.

Team Members: responsible for working within their team to minister in the context of programs.

SCTA: Safe Church Training Agreement under the National Council of Churches in Australia.

The Safe Church Policy applies to all pastors, elders, staff members and volunteer workers associated with the ministry in our family of churches (BCWA).

The Safe Church Policy takes into account The Child and Community Services Act 2004.

More Information

The Safe Church Policy is supported by:

- *Safe Church National Training System*
- *Safe Church Training Workbook for BCWA*
- *Code of Good Leadership Practices*
- *Risk Management & Safe Environment Guidelines*
- *Safe Church Implementation Guide*
- *Protecting People, Protecting Property: Risk Management Manual for Churches*

Contact Information:

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Department for Child Protection – 08 9222 2555
www.childprotection.wa.gov.au

Department for Communities - 08 6551 8700
www.community.wa.gov.au

National Kids Help Line – 1800 55 1800
www.kidshelp.com.au

Life Line – 131 114
www.lifelinewa.org.au

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These guidelines have been endorsed by the Baptist Churches Western Australia, for use in churches and associated organisations. June 2012.



Baptist Churches Western Australia has adopted the Safe Church Training Agreement through the National Council of Churches in Australia. Due to the autonomy of the local church we cannot demand that our churches implement the Safe Church policy. This policy is endorsed by Baptist Churches Western Australia and in any legal proceedings you may be asked if any such recommendations exist and if so, whether or not they were followed. As such, we strongly urge you to implement this policy.



Safe Church Policy

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Baptist Churches Western Australia