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Child abusing other children Policy & Procedure 2023

PURPOSE

The Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Australia is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all children as defined by law [under 18 years of age]. The church recognises that 'Mature Minors', those young people aged between 14 years and the date of the 18th birthday have special rights by law to independent medical, legal and psychological counsel [WA Dep't Health, 2015].

Department of Health Flyer or Fact Sheet definition and scope

Legal age: teenagers and the law | Raising Children Network Information about teenage rights and laws.

Department of Health Flyer or Fact Sheet regarding sexual assault of a child who is a mature minor and mandatory reporting.

The church also recognises that at times, children can bully and abuse other children and that this is unacceptable and could constitute risk of breaching duty of care.

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

(a) All licensed ministers, pastors, paid or unpaid staff and leaders of a member church; and
(b) Volunteers within The Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Australia's church and office premises, to the extent it is relevant to them.

In this policy, 'workplace' includes working on site or off-site, attendance at a work-related conference, camp or church function, and attendance at other ministry-related event, including social events.

POLICY

Overview

The Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Australia supports the rights of all children covered by the policy to attend church based functions with very limited risk of damage, harm and loss to themselves via bullying, abuse or neglect by another child.

Procedures

All activities related to children must be monitored at all times by appointed leaders [who must have a current WWCC].

- Any *observed* or *witnessed* incidences of a child bullying or abusing another child require timely intervention by leaders to separate the children in conflict, returning the child(ren) to parental supervision as soon as is practicable, writing and incidence report [with witness testimony] and reporting the incidence to pastoral leadership, who will invite the parents [or legal guardian] of the children involved to discuss the issues together, to seek resolution between the children and parents.

- Any reported, but *unobserved* and *unwitnessed* incidences of a child bullying or abusing another child at church-based events requires a report to be written up by the person who heard the allegation and for the parents of the child who has made the allegation to be informed of the allegation. It is up to the parents of the child alleging abuse or bullying to make contact with the parents of the child alleged to have abused or bullied their child and to sort out the issue between them. If this does not occur, then the church can arrange for an in-house leader, to act as informal mediator to assist the two families to resolve the matter amicably.

- Incidences in children's church, camp or youth event will require that a child bullying or abusing another child must be removed from the location by an authorised leader and returned to his or her parents as soon as is practicable with a brief explanation outlining that an incidence has occurred in which their child has acted inappropriately towards another child. Pastoral staff will contact the parents of both children with a brief report of the observed or reported event. A meeting in which resolution and reconciliation between parents and children together will be sought by pastoral staff.

- Incidences of alleged sexual abuse reported by a child against another child in the church must be reported to the child sexual abuse squad of the Police and also the Department for Communities [DOC] as required by law. It is not the church's role to investigate alleged crimes or whether a child has been 'acting-out' what they have had happen to them or have seen in media or pornography. FAQ - About mandatory reporting legislation (dcp.wa.gov.au) Make a report (dcp.wa.gov.au)

- Incidences where a church youth leader [who is legally a child] is accused of bullying or abusing a child under his or her care will require that the youth leader steps aside from leadership role until cleared of the allegation. In the case of alleged criminal abuse of a child, the Police and Department of Communities will be notified.

RELATED POLICY & PROCEDURE:

Confidentiality P & P

Grievance P & P

Child protection P & P

Risk management P & P

Sexual Harassment & Bullying P & P

Sex Offenders in Churches P & P

Ministerial Code of Conduct

Discrimination P &P

Approved by Board of Directors 2023-05-19