



PresSafe Basics Training

INTRODUCTION

As someone serving in a ministry to children within the Presbyterian Church of Queensland (PCQ) you are required to undertake training in how to keep children safe from harm. Whether you serve regularly in a ministry program or are serving on a more limited basis you will need to:

- Uphold the PresSafe Code of Conduct
- Have a current, positive Working With Children Check (or be exempt)
- Agree to the PCQ policies and procedures for keeping children safe
- Undertake an interview
- Complete the appropriate annual PresSafe Training
- Complete an Appointment Agreement (Under 18s will need to complete this with their parents)

Context for the PresSafe System

Unfortunately, child abuse does occur. It is a criminal act, often perpetrated by a family member or person known to the child. The church has a duty of care to provide a safe environment for children, both biblically [John 13:34] and legally [Child Protection Act 1999, Children & Young People & Child Guardian Act 2000; Working With Children Act 2000; Work Health & Safety Act 2011].

LEADERSHIP & COMMITMENT

Ten Child Safe Standards

PCQ has adopted the 'Ten Child Safe Standards' recommended by *The Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*.



PresSafe Code Of Conduct

The following principles provide guidance on the expected behaviour to create a safe environment and ensure children are protected from harm and abuse:

- Become familiar with and act in accordance with the PresSafe Policy and PresSafe Procedures for Sessions and Committees;
- Act according to the highest standards in their personal life and relationships;
- Only engage in appropriate actions and activities with children;
- Treat all people with respect and dignity regardless of age, culture, gender, religious/denominational affiliation, sexual orientation or personal circumstances;
- Accept responsibility for the appropriate duty of care for all participants;
- Understand that any perpetration of verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse or harassment is unacceptable and will be treated seriously and sensitively, and must be reported in accordance with the Church mandatory reporting Policy and Procedures;
- Act with courtesy, consideration and good judgement, in interpersonal relationships;
- Carry out their role in accord with the doctrines and values of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland;
- Engage only in lawful activity and never assist persons engaged in illegal activities.
- Respect the authority of leaders and act in accordance with reasonable directions ;
- Complete training as required by the Church in relation to Children's Ministry roles;
- Care for equipment and resources used in Ministry.

The Church agrees to:

- Educate and train those involved Children's Ministry in their duties and responsibilities;
- Support those involved in Children's Ministry as they carry out their roles;
- Provide policies and procedures for best practice and high levels of safety and care;
- Adequately insure approved programs, events and activities

As a Code of Conduct cannot explain every situation where discernment is required, those involved in Children's Ministry should seek advice if placed in a position of uncertainty.

Breaches of policy, procedures or the Code of Conduct are considered non-criminal behaviours which do not meet the standards expected when working with children. Breaches however, left unchecked, can lead to incidents which impact on the safety of children and the integrity of the Church. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the conduct of persons involved in Children's Ministry is monitored to ensure standards are maintained and procedures and policies are followed. Breaches of the Code of Conduct and procedures are to be reported to the Minister who will consult with church leaders on the appropriate course of action.

Expected Behaviour of Team Members

The following points provide guidance to safe and appropriate behaviour when in contact with children and youth.

Do:

- Behave in a manner consistent with your position as a positive role model to children and as a representative of the organisation.
- Follow the PCQ Children's Ministry Policy and procedures.
- Treat all children with respect and take notice of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner.
- Take care as to the degree of physical contact with children. Even though it's common for children to initiate hugs and other contact, those involved in Children's Ministry should quickly redirect children to other activities.
- Allow children to determine the degree of physical contact they have with you, without showing favouritism.
- Report disclosures, allegations or belief regarding abuse to your Team Leader or Minister.
- Alert a Leader if you find yourself in a situation where a member of the opposite gender is required
- Report all concerns, issues and problems to your Team Leader or Minister, as soon as possible.

Don't:

- Engage in inappropriately rough physical games.
- Use any physical means to control or discipline a child, other than restraint by holding to prevent injury.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch children in an inappropriate and / or culturally insensitive way.
- Make sexually suggestive comments, even as a joke.
- Assist children to do things of a personal nature that they can do for themselves, such as going to the toilet or changing clothes.
- Enter the sleeping accommodation of members of the opposite gender, except in emergencies. Be aware of situations where children might be changing, showering or using the toilet.
- Spend time alone with a child where you can't be observed by others (e.g. taking a child to your home, meetings outside of the program activity).

CHILDREN & YOUTH RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
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This system is a legislated structure that aims to prevent child abuse and harm to children. It includes a Working With Children Check for anyone involved with programs or activities that include children. The system:

- Identifies previous offenders
- Screens out those who might offend.
- Establishes clear standards of behaviour.
- Trains people in safe practices, compassionate responses and clear reporting.
- Requires activities be safe and subject to risk assessment.

All PCQ activities you are participating in will have undergone a risk assessment and all activities and leaders have been approved by the Session of the local PCQ church. It is important that safe procedures are followed for activities to reduce the possibility of children being harmed. When conducting a risk assessment, the following will be documented:

- Describe the risk or hazard the activity may present;
- Identify the consequence and likelihood of the risk;
- Evaluate the risk and controls to be implemented to manage the risk.

If you have any concerns about the activity or program you are a part of, please contact the Team Leader or Minister.

RECOGNISING CHILD ABUSE AND HARM

Child abuse is any act that harms a child's physical or emotional health or development. It is frequently a pattern of behaviour by an adult or peer. Below is some general information that may help you identify abuse in the life of a child. This information will not cover every circumstance, so be aware of anything unusual or out of character for the child. Indicators may have other causes not related to abuse, nevertheless share any concerns/observations with your Team Leader or Minister.

Abuse	Key Indicators
Physical Abuse - Hitting & shaking - Burning or scalding - Bruises or fractures caused by excessive discipline - Poisoning - Giving children alcohol, illegal drugs or excessive medication - Domestic and Family Violence	- Corresponding injuries - Unexplained or hidden injuries - Fearful or nervous - Aggressive OR passive behaviour

Abuse	Key Indicators
<p>Psychological or Emotional Abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scapegoating - Persistent Rejection or hostility - Constant yelling, insults or criticism - Cultural affronts or racism - Teasing and bullying - Witness to Domestic or Family Violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low self esteem - Unexplained mood swings - Aggressive OR passive behaviour - Anxious - Attention seeking - Sudden underachievement - Age inappropriate behaviours - Developmental delays
<p>Neglect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not providing a child sufficient food, housing, clothing, sleep, hygienic living conditions, health care, and adequate supervision - Leaving a child under 12 y.o. unattended for an “unreasonable time” - Children missing school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frequent hunger or malnutrition - Poor hygiene - Inappropriate seasonal clothing - Medical needs not met - Unsupervised for long periods - Withdrawn or aggressive - Indiscriminate with affection
<p>Sexual Abuse or Exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner. - Exposing a sexual body part to a child. - Exposing children to sexual acts or pornography - Making obscene phone calls or remarks to child. - Sexual relations with child under 16 y.o. - Grooming activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Genital injury - Sexually transmitted disease - Anxiety or depression - Persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity or behaviours - Regressive behaviour (eg bedwetting) - Preoccupation with sexual matters - Secretive relationships with adults or children. - Self injurious or delinquent behaviour

RESPONDING TO ABUSE AND HARM

Mandatory Reporting

The PCQ has a policy of **mandatory reporting**. If you suspect child sexual abuse or significant harm such as neglect, physical abuse, domestic violence or psychological harm has occurred to a child who is part of the children’s ministry **YOU MUST REPORT THIS**. Your involvement in a children’s ministry program requires you to uphold this policy.

You do not need to have proof to report any concerns you have about the safety of a child.

Indicators that represent reasonable grounds to report a suspected offence include:

- **A child or young person discloses** that he or she has suffered or is suffering non accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.
- **Someone else advises you** that a child or young person has been physically, emotionally, sexually abused or neglected.
- **Your own observations** of the child or young person’s physical condition or behaviours lead you to reasonably suspect that the child or young person has suffered or is suffering non-accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.

All people involved in children’s ministry should:

- Remain alert to any indicators of abuse or harm;
- Pay close attention to changes in a child’s behaviour;
- Make written notes in a non-judgmental and accurate manner;
- Assure children under your care they can come and talk to you.

Responding To Disclosures

In the event that a child discloses harm or abuse to you, your response to their disclosure is very important. If a disclosure is made to you, or you have a suspicion of harm or abuse, then you will need to follow the procedure below.

1. DANGER

Offences requiring immediate attention are to be addressed by calling Police on 000 followed by immediate advice to the PresSafe Risk Management Officer (RMO) on 0413 585 340 or PCQ Safety Administrator on 0404 474 419.

2. SUPPORT

If a child is disclosing abuse or harm, remember to:

LISTEN	Remain calm and listen attentively with sensitivity. No leading questions.
REASSURE	Reassure the child they have done the right thing in telling you.
RESPECT	Protect their identity & avoid promises you are not able to keep.

Make sure the child is aware that you need to report the disclosure to help keep them safe.

3. REPORT

Report the suspicion or disclosure to your Team Leader or Minister as soon as possible.

They will liaise with the RMO. If a suspicion or disclosure relates to a Team Leader or Minister, the matter is to be reported directly to the RMO.

NB: Please report directly to the authorities if you have any concerns that the reporting procedure is not being followed by your Team Leader or Minister.



The RMO and the Office of the Clerk of Assembly are to be immediately advised of any allegation of child abuse against an individual in a PCQ ministry. They will liaise with Police who will advise on suspension of the individual in accordance with their investigation.

4. DOCUMENT

Document the disclosure or suspicion, as soon as you are able. This will be entered in Elvanto by your Team Leader or Minister. For a disclosure, please include the following:

- Names, times, locations of matter disclosed.
- Any first person statements.
- Any questions asked.
- Actions taken after the disclosure.

Do not attempt to investigate or mediate. This is the role of the police and other authorities and by doing so you may interfere with any subsequent investigation.

5. PROTECT

You must protect the identity of the victim. Do not discuss the situation with **anyone** who is not part of this official process. This includes discussing the suspicion or disclosure with any other families or individuals who may be involved. For example, if the allegations are made by a child against a peer, do not confront this person or mediate with their family. This is not your role.