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**Harvest Reformed Church - CHILD SAFE POLICY**

**(Version 2 19/9/24)**

1. **Rationale**

All adults have a Biblical mandate to protect all vulnerable people, especially children.

A Christian church is an organisation that ought to function as a pro-social collaborative community where the Elders, Leaders, Congregation, Volunteers and Parents partner together for the care of the children.

1. **Definition**

Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to: physical abuse, emotional abuse, family violence, sexual abuse, grooming and neglect.

1. **Policy**

Harvest Reformed Church will continue to strive to meet the Victorian Child Safe Standards (<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/>) by maintaining an organisational culture of child safety in several ways including through education and leadership.

The church will update and internally publish this policy, including a code of conduct regarding appropriate behaviour with children.

Church recruitment and induction of staff, as well as acceptance of volunteers will be based on screening, supervision, training and other human-resources practices that aim to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel, and leaders and other staff are expected to know the appropriate processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Led by the Church Leadership, there will be clear strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.

1. **Governance and Leadership**

HRC will have a child safe officer who will be responsible for training and awareness for child safe matters within the church. Where possible, the child safe officer will be the children’s ministry leader, however, at certain times HRC may designate a child safe officer who is not the children’s ministry leader. Although the child safe officer will be responsible for training as well as assessing and identifying risk, all adults including Pastors, Ministry leaders, Directors, Elders, Employees & Volunteers carry a shared responsibility to ensure the safety and protection of children.

1. **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

Harvest Reformed Church sets these expectations of behaviours for all adults interacting with children within our sites or at church-related events…

Always speak and act in a way to proactively protect the safety of children

Behave appropriately towards children physically & emotionally

Build a culture of belonging, and both proactively and responsively prevent bullying, teasing, disempowerment or humiliation of children

Communicate in an affirming way with children: speak constructively and listen actively, and build an environment where they do the same for each other

Demonstrate Biblically-faithful behaviour

Enable inclusion and participation of all children regardless.

Never use physical punishment, or rough playing

Only discuss topical or unsettling matters with children in a way appropriate to their age

Protect children from discrimination and prejudices, including your own

Refrain from any form of sexual conduct with a child, including making sexually suggestive comments, or disclosing sexually suggestive material

Refrain from either closely befriending or favouring, or the opposite, exclusion or alienation of children

Refrain from inappropriate physical contact with children

Treat all children with equivalent favour

Vigilantly observe and respond to situations concerning child protection matters

1. **Recruitment of Staff and Inclusion of Volunteers**

**Recruitment**

Applicants for staff are automatically expected to have a Working with Children Check

Employment applicants are given our Child Safe Policy as part of their application-materials

As routine part of interviewing, employment applicants are asked if they agree to comply with the Harvest Reformed Church Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct

The Child Safe Policy forms part of the induction of new employees

The responsibility is on each employee to know key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns

**Volunteers**

Volunteers are required to maintain current WWCC and record of these is kept on file

The Child Safe Policy forms part of the induction of all new volunteers

Volunteers are required to be familiar with the contents of the Child Safe Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the obligatory reporting of child abuse

The responsibility is on each volunteer to know key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns

1. **Responding to allegations of Child Abuse**

Harvest Reformed Church recognises that Children are vulnerable members of our community, and individuals or minority groups among the children may be notably more vulnerable. Their vulnerability is partly attributable to the reality that they may not have the knowledge or the power to stop abuse by reporting it. Adults of Harvest Reformed Church share the responsibility for ensuring children are safe from harm, and that includes our responsibility to report abuse. Harvest Reformed Church is committed to creating a culture where church members including children feel safe and equipped to report abuse.

Adults who have concerns about children being abused should initially speak to the Elders to see what actions and/or reporting may already be underway in that case, and then confirm that verbal communication with an email

Adults who have immediate concerns about child’s immediate safety may need to call Police on 000

In regards to any reportable conduct allegation, The Church board will complete the Victorian Government reportable conduct scheme <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/report-an-allegation>