



AG-NZ SAFER CHURCHES

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

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NEW ZEALAND
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD IN NZ INC CHURCHES

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**AG-NZ People includes: officers or employees of AG-NZ National Office and ministries, AG-NZ Credential holders; officers of a Member Church; employees, volunteers and other members of a congregation of a Member Church who may or will have a Direct Role with children and/or young people; contractors (external agents) engaged by the AG-NZ or a Member Church who may or will have a Direct Role with children and/or young people.*

INTRODUCTION:

AG-NZ is committed to protecting Children and Young People through the local Church.

These **Safer Churches Procedures** ("Procedures") have been developed by the AG-NZ Executive Presbytery as part of the implementation of the **AG-NZ Child Protection Policy** ("Policy").

The Procedures, assist church leaders in abiding by Health & Safety legislation, applicable throughout New Zealand. This legislation requires safe emotional and physical workplaces for all workers, including volunteers. As such, the content of the Procedures, are useful to all workers, both volunteer and paid.





These Procedures are divided into two categories:

- those considered to be legal, biblical and/or moral imperatives, denoted by the word “**shall**” must be implemented, and
- those considered as good practice, denoted by the word “**recommended**”, are nevertheless strongly recommended.

As part of adopting the AG-NZ Child Protection Policy, Member Churches are required to adopt the Procedures. In any legal proceedings, Member Churches may be asked if any such Procedures were adopted, and if so, whether or not they were followed.

GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Every local Church Board (oversight, trustees, senior leaders etc.) **shall** ensure the AG-NZ Child Protection Procedures are implemented, signed off and minuted by the Board every year. National Office will send documentation to support this process.

Each local Church is to review their approach to the Safer Churches Procedures every 3 years to ensure all policies, procedures and training are implemented as required.

AG-NZ SAFER CHURCHES AWARENESS WORKSHOPS

All people who have a Direct Role with children in AG-NZ churches **shall** receive adequate training in the concepts of Child Protection at minimum every 3 years.

AG-NZ Credential and Certificate holders **shall** complete an AG-NZ Safer Churches Workshop every three years at a minimum in order for Credentials or Certificates to be renewed.

MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

AG-NZ People **shall** abide by the relevant **AG-NZ Code of Conduct** applicable to their role, as part of being respectful of the boundaries of everyone. See the Ministerial Code of Conduct and Volunteer Church Workers Code of Conduct.

TEAM MINISTRY

We establish and maintain Safer Churches environments for each other and those to whom we minister when we work as the 'body', or minister in 'team' context. All AG-NZ People **shall** minister in transparent and accountable teams e.g. avoid unsupervised 1:1 contact with Children or Young People.

PROMOTING EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

AG-NZ Ministers and leaders **shall** actively promote within their member Churches the protection of Children and Young People. It is **recommended**, for example, that AG-NZ People actively assist Children or Young People to;

- Understand when to be confidential and when to talk to others about concerns,
- Find safe people to talk to,
- Raise concerns about abuse,
- Know when they feel vulnerable.

It is **recommended** that AG-NZ People actively assist the families of Children or Young People to;

- Access information about child safety and what child abuse is,
- Feel welcome and have a say in the activities and programs in which their Children or Young People participate as far as is practical,
- Engage in two-way communication between families and the church.





BEING AWARE OF CHILD ABUSE INDICATORS

All AG-NZ Credential Holders **shall** learn the indicators of Child or Young Person abuse and neglect and report to their Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team when they have concerns about a Child and/or Young Person who is involved in the church.

SAFE ONLINE AND DIGITAL PRACTICES

The use of electronic media for communication is part of everyday life. AG-NZ Credential Holders **shall** promote to their Churches safe digital, including maintaining transparency and accountability in the use of electronic communications with Children or Young People as far as is practical e.g. group emails/text messages/ Facebook/ Instagram /Twitter.

AG-NZ People **shall** not transmit, download or store any communication that is: discriminatory or harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic, defamatory, threatening, for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to the Code of Conduct relevant to their position. In the case where AG-NZ People receive such communication, they will report this to their Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team.

AG-NZ People **shall** not send any electronic communication that attempts to hide their identity or represent the sender as someone else.

It is **recommended** that communications with Children under 18 occur with the full knowledge of the parent/s or carer/s of the Child or Young Person.

REPORTING CONCERNS OF CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO MAY BE AT RISK OF HARM

AG-NZ People **shall** report concerns when:

- a Child or Young Person discloses they have been or are at risk of being abused
- someone else (regardless of age) discloses that they know of a Child or Young Person who has been/is at risk of being abused
- there are concerns that the Child or Young Person may have been or is at risk of being abused based on their physical appearance or behaviour.

AG-NZ People are not required, as an initial response, to establish or investigate if abuse has occurred, but rather report reasonable suspicions or concerns of abuse, including the grounds for concerns, to Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team. If the Safer Churches Person or Minister(s) or Event Leader is not available and the abuse is currently occurring, or there are reasons to believe that a Child or Young Person is at significant risk, a report should be made immediately to the police or through appropriate avenues and authorities.

APPOINTMENT OF SAFER CHURCHES PERSON/ TEAM

Member Churches shall appoint a Safer Churches Person/Team, whose roles include: ensuring procedures are enacted and reviewed.

APPOINTMENT OF VOLUNTEER WORKERS

All people who have a Direct Role with children in AG-NZ churches **shall** be screened, police checked, appointed and inducted using a formal accountable / transparent process (For paid workers and leaders, additional steps may be required as part of the Local Church's written employment process).

As a minimum, it is **recommended** that:

a) Prior to Serving

The Volunteer Church Workers Declaration should be completed.

The prospective Children/Young Persons worker be interviewed to gauge their suitability for the role.

b) Ministry Review

It is **recommended** there be a process of annual review of roles for Volunteer Workers. This process should be made clear to applicants at the time of appointment, as part of the induction process. This provides an opportunity for leaders to say they will or will not be available next year/time, which is important for the health of committed teams.

SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEER WORKERS

All people who have a Direct Role with children in AG-NZ churches **shall** be appropriately supervised in their roles, including being provided with clear behavioural expectations for their role through a code of conduct. (For paid workers, additional supervision may be required as part of the Member Church's written employment procedures.)

RESPONDING TO CONFLICTS, AND/OR ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AG-NZ PEOPLE

- AG-NZ People **shall** use the AG-NZ Grievance Procedure when responding to allegations of misconduct and/or abuse by AG-NZ Credential or Certificate holders.
- In all instances, the Local Church shall consider the pastoral, legal and insurance implications of the conflict or allegation and respond with transparency and accountability.

COMPLIANCE WITH HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

All Child safety policies and procedures **shall** adhere to New Zealand Health and Safety regulations.

ANNUAL PROGRAMME APPROVAL

All Children or Young People's policies and procedures **shall** be approved by the Local Church Board/Senior Ministry Team/Trust Board through a formal, annual written approval process.

SAFE SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS IN MINISTRY PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

AG-NZ member churches **shall** provide safe spiritual and emotional environments including a commitment to:

- servant leadership in our ministry to all people,
- upholding NZ Govt. Privacy Act principles,

- respect for cultural diversity within a Christian framework e.g. the cultural safety of Māori, Pacifica peoples, and all ethnic group children and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds,
- the safety of children with a disability.

The AG-NZ Child Protection Policy states that AG-NZ people **shall**:

- put the rights of a Child or Young Person to the protection from harm ahead of any cultural and religious practices of families who come to our Churches.
- understand and respond to the special needs of Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities.

We acknowledge that Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities have special needs. We expect AG-NZ People to act in ways that communicate effectively with and are supportive of Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities. We also understand that we will need to be proactive in recognising the additional vulnerability to harm that Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities experience.

SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

It is **recommended** for the safe running of Children's and Young People's programmes and events that the following matters are considered:

- Facilities
- First aid
- Transportation requirements
- Food safety
- Supervision of children at events
- Activity risk analysis

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

AG-NZ people **shall** respond to incidents appropriately and promptly and take adequate follow up action, including:

- an incident report



- Report all incidents to parents and/or care-givers of Children or Young People, and in instances where the impact has been felt by a wider group, report, with the permission of those involved in the incident, to the wider concerned group

