



Baptist Churches

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Safe Church Policy

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 Church Leadership*.
- We will screen all prospective leaders before they are appointed.
- We will require all leaders in child-related ministry to 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 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 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 it 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	○ supervision for activities
○ Venue safety	○ Transport protocols
○ First aid	○ Critical incident and
○ Food safety practices	emergency protocols
○ Risk assessment for activities	○ Ministry reviews
○ Adequate ministry	
- We require Team Leaders to complete a Permission to Proceed process for their event or program on an annual basis.

Helpful Definitions

Safe Environment: Where duty of care is discharged by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe. Eg: 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: A written process of accountability, whereby a Ministry Coordinator 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 a ministry coordinator (a role that may be undertaken by pastors, elders, deacons or other safe leaders, but the governance body of the church is ultimately responsible for this process).

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

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.

The Safe Church Policy: This applies to all pastors, elders, staff members and volunteers associated with the ministry in our family of churches (BCWA), and 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 and Safe Environment Guidelines
- BCWA Safe Church Implementation Guide
- Protecting People, Protecting Property: Risk Management Manual for Churches

Contact Information

BCWA

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safechurch@baptistwa.asn.au

Department for Child Protection

1800 176 888 | www.dcp.wa.gov.au

Department of Communities

08 6551 8700 | www.dlgc.communities.wa.gov.au

National Kids Helpline

1800 551 800 | www.kidshelp.com.au

Life Line

131 114 | www.lifelinewa.org.au

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



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 the Baptist Churches Western Australia and in any legal proceedings you may be asked if such recommendations exist and if so, whether or not they were followed. As such, we strongly encourage you to implement this policy.