



MOUNT ISA BAPTIST CHURCH

local church, regional footprint, global impact

Safe Church Strategy Working with Children & Young People

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Part 1 - Preliminary Information

1. Purpose

The purpose of our 'Safe Church Strategy' is to enable our church's leaders and workers to develop a safe church culture so that all people, involved in or are attending our church's ministries and services, are safe from harm and able to grow in their relationship with God and others.

This document outlines our approach to the protection of people, particularly, children and vulnerable persons, so that we comply with relevant legislation, engage in best practices, and cultivate a safe church for spiritual growth and wellbeing.

Our Safe Church Strategy:

- commits us to providing a safe environment for all people, especially children and vulnerable persons;
- authorises a Code of Conduct for all the people engaged by the church, whether paid workers or volunteers, who are in contact with children and vulnerable persons;
- provides a process for screening and selecting persons who will attend or participate in ministries with children or vulnerable persons;
- provides a process for handling disclosures of harm or misconduct, and reporting to appropriate authorities; and
- sets out training requirements for all people engaged by the church, whether paid or voluntary, to attend or participate in ministries with children or vulnerable persons.

2. Policy Commitment and Guiding Principles

It is our policy to respect everyone as unique individuals created by God, and to give special attention to the care, protection and wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons. We will behave towards them in a manner that resembles and represents Christ's attitude and approach, providing an environment and ministry that promotes their spiritual, social and physical safety and personal growth and development.

To this end we will promote a "safe church" culture throughout our church, constantly communicating and reinforcing our commitment at all levels of our church's life and ministry.

Regarding the church's commitment to providing a safe environment for all, especially children and vulnerable persons, the church acknowledges that Australian Baptists have agreed to adopt the 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and that these principles represent 'best practice'.

Therefore, the church will have regard to and implement the following principles as integral to our strategy for cultivating a safe church environment and safe activities.

1. Embedding a "safe church" perspective, safety, including child safety, in our church's culture, leadership and governance
2. Respecting children and vulnerable persons by giving them opportunities to participate and have a say in the decisions affecting them
3. Keeping families and communities informed and involved in the development of the church as a safe environment
4. Upholding equity and considering diverse needs
5. Ensuring that people working with children and vulnerable persons are suitable and are properly supported
6. Keeping the processes for responding to complaints of sexual abuse focussed upon the needs and best interests of children and vulnerable persons

7. Equipping staff and volunteers with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and vulnerable persons safe through continual education and training
8. Managing physical and online environments to minimise the opportunity for abuse occurring
9. Continuously reviewing and improving the implementation of these principles for creating and maintain a safe church environment
10. Maintaining up to date policies and procedures that document how the church is a safe place for children and vulnerable persons

3. Scope

The words children or child in this strategy refer to individuals or an individual who is under 18 years of age.

The term vulnerable persons refers to individuals aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.

The term church leaders refers to persons appointed by the church according to its constitution as responsible and accountable to the church members for the governance of the church.

The designation Safe Church Coordinator refers to the person appointed by the church leaders to manager the practical implementation of this strategy under the guidance and directions of the church leaders.

This Safe Church Strategy applies to the persons listed below, referred to in this document Safe Church Strategy as staff and volunteers.

- Any church leader who is making decisions affecting children or vulnerable persons.
- Any person engaged by the church to provide a service to the church, whether paid or voluntarily, and who while providing their service will be in contact with children or vulnerable persons.
- Any students or trainees undertaking an internship or field placement at the church and who as part of that internship or field placement will be in contact with children or vulnerable persons.

Part 2 - SCREENING AND SELECTION

4. Persons requiring a Blue Card

All the church's staff and volunteers must hold valid and current Blue Cards to attend or participate in any church activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable persons.

5. Persons with an Exemption Card

All staff and volunteers who are a police officer or registered teacher must hold a valid and current Exempt Card from the Blue Card Services of the Queensland Government to attend or participate in any church activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable persons.

6. Maintaining a record of the holders of Blue Cards and Exemption Cards

The church leaders are responsible for ensuring the timely and accurate recording of information relating to the issuing of Blue Cards and Exemption Cards (Maintained via the 'Child Safe online portal).

The Blue Card must be sighted to verify its authenticity before recording its information.

7. Changes in circumstances affecting a Blue Card

If for a staff member or volunteer there is a change in their circumstances that might or will affect their Blue Card status, then that person must:

- notify immediately the church's Safe Church Coordinator; and

- notify the Queensland Government's Blue Card Services

The Safe Church Coordinator, in consultation with the Church Leaders, can require the person to desist from attending or participating in any activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable persons.

8. Agreement to comply with policies and codes

All staff and volunteers must be provided with a copy of this Safe Church Strategy, including the Code of Conduct.

9. Application Process

All staff and volunteers must undergo the following application process to be engaged in any program or ministry with children or vulnerable persons.

1. Present a valid and current Blue Card or Exemption Card
2. Submit a written application as per Schedule 4
3. Provide the contact details of at least two referees
4. Attend an interview if deemed necessary by church leaders - Schedule 6
5. Sign an agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct - Schedule 1

10. Church leaders' obligations re: The Application Process

Where a person makes an application to work with children and/or vulnerable persons, the Church leaders must ensure the following criteria are met before accepting the application and allowing the applicant to be involved in any church activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable persons.

1. Churches the applicant has attended (or has been involved or connected with) in the past five (5) years are contacted to ascertain whether there have been any alleged or actual incidents of harm involving the applicant (Schedule 7).
2. If the church leaders determine that more detailed information is required from the application, interview the applicant using the questions in Schedule 6 as a guide to ascertain the suitability of the applicant.
3. In the case of a volunteer, the person has attended the church regularly for a minimum of six (6) months unless exceptional circumstances apply.
4. If the applicant has not obtained their Blue Card through the Church, the Church leaders must also arrange completion of a "Link an Applicant/Cardholder to this Organisation" form and submit to Blue Card Services; (available from www.bluecard.qld.gov.au)
5. Where certain roles require registration by the Baptist Union of Queensland (Queensland Baptists), the applicant must also successfully pass the application process under those Registration Guidelines.
6. Where a job or role description has stipulated additional educational, skill or other requirements, the applicant is also required to satisfy these criteria before commencement.

Part 3 - RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING HARM OR MISCONDUCT

The following guidelines are for responding to and reporting disclosures or evidence of harm or misconduct (a breach of the Code of Conduct).

1. The information will be referred to the person appointed by the church leaders to coordinate the implementation of this Safe Church Strategy referred to in this document as the church's Safe Church Coordinator.
2. If the alleged misconduct or harm was perpetrated by a Registered Minister of Queensland Baptists, then the Safe Church Coordinator or church leaders will inform either the QB Safe Church Coordinator or the Director of Pastoral Services for Queensland Baptists.
3. The church's Safe Church Coordinator will complete a report to document the disclosure or evidence and the coordinator's and/or church leaders' response (Schedule 7).
4. In all cases where harm is disclosed, the best interests of the child or vulnerable person must be paramount and the process clear and transparent.
5. Care must be taken to record information and evidence in the words of the child or person to assist with the accurate presentation of the information or evidence, especially if the matter is referred to a government department or to the police to be investigated.
6. The church's Safe Church Coordinator will ensure that these reports are properly stored either physically and/or electronically and accessible to the church leaders.
7. The Safe Church Coordinator will undertake a risk assessment to identify and minimise any risks to children and vulnerable persons, including ensuring the safety of children and persons who have disclosed harm or misconduct and considering whether there are any restrictions to informing others imposed by Privacy legislation.
8. The person identified by the disclosure as allegedly harming and/or guilty of misconduct will be required to step aside from any activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable persons while the matter is being investigated either by the church's Safe Church Coordinator, the church leaders, a government agency or the police, and until a determination about the matter has been made.
9. Cases of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or of evident neglect, should be referred by the Safe Church Coordinator or a church leader to the police or to the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women.
10. Where a staff member or volunteer has breached a legislative requirement pertaining to the protection and welfare of children, or an obligation stipulated by the Blue Card Services, then the appropriate authority will be notified, to determine the response required.
11. If the failure or breach is outside the scope of government legislation and regulations but is covered by the Code of Conduct or the Church's constitution, then the provisions of this strategy and/or the church's constitution will be applied.

SCHEDULE 1 - CODE OF CONDUCT

- A. The staff and volunteers must respect persons and property and acknowledge that they:**
- Must be responsive and courteous to others and avoid improper use of their position;
 - Must avoid discriminatory and / or harassing treatment of others and seek to respond in an appropriate manner to the diverse needs of children in their care.
 - Must not swear or use inappropriate or crude language in the presence of, or towards others;
 - Must show integrity at all times and act in a manner consistent with a church representative;
 - Must respect privacy and protect the confidential information of others.
 - Must be committed to ensuring the wellbeing of all children in a safe and caring environment.
- B. The church is committed to maintaining a tabacco, drug and alcohol free environment with children and the staff and volunteers acknowledge that:**
- the consumption, sale of or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working with children (other than properly prescribed and administered drugs) will result in dismissal and possibly a report to the police.
- C. In relation to behaviour, staff and volunteers acknowledge that they:**
- Must not be alone with children where they cannot be seen by other Church staff and volunteers;
 - Must not take a child to their home or visit a child in their home unless the visit is part of an organised activity for the group or in the company or consent of the child's parents/guardian;
 - Must not make any sexual or crude innuendos such as suggestive looks, comments, jokes, sounds, display visuals, words, acts or gestures towards any child or Church staff and volunteers;
 - Must not touch, hug, or kiss any person in a way that is inappropriate to the situation, or uncomfortable or confusing to the receiver;
 - Must not drive a child unaccompanied without gaining permission from child's parents and the church leader in a direct position of responsibility;
 - Must not commit any sexual offence, sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including a child pornography offence) or any assault, ill treatment of or neglect of a child or any behaviours that causes psychological or other harm to a child;
 - Must report g) report any behaviour suspected to be "sexual grooming", any concerns in relation to any observed "indicators of abuse", or any disclosures regarding any kind of harm or breaches of this Code of Conduct to the Safe Church Coordinator or a Church Leader. any behaviour suspected to be "sexual grooming" to the designated person
 - Must not victimise anyone who has made or intends to make a complaint, acts or intends to act as a witness, or supports a victim.
- D. In relation to counselling, staff and volunteers acknowledge that they:**
- Will not step beyond their level of competency or training;
 - Will not encourage children to keep things hidden from their parents or other leaders;
 - Will avoid counselling members of the opposite sex where possible;
 - Will always counsel in an open area in view of others, never in a closed room;
 - Will only console if this is with the permission and or welcomed by the child;
 - Will only console same gender of child and with another staff or volunteer within sight;

- g. Will keep counseling matters confidential and the identity of the person private (except when required to be disclosed by law)
- h. If a child makes a disclosure regarding any kind of harm, this disclosure must be divulged to church leadership (however the disclosure must not be revealed to any other person);
- i. Will keep records of the time, place, subject matter and person(s) involved;
- j. Will refer the minor to a qualified counsellor where appropriate.

E. In relation to pornography and sexuality, staff and volunteers acknowledge that they:

- a. Must respect the church's commitment to the Queensland Baptists' Position Statement on Sexuality and Marriage;
- b. Will not speak or act in any way to contradict this statement or the church's beliefs, ethics and values;
- c. Will not view pornography;
- d. Will not display, discuss or distribute pornography to colleagues or children;
- e. Will dress modestly, and not sexually suggestive. Insulting remarks or slogans contrary to Christian principles should not be displayed on clothing.

F. In relation to occupational health & safety, staff and volunteers acknowledge that they:

- a. Must not put themselves or others in danger;
- b. Must not intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything in the interests of safety;
- c. Must follow safe work practices and encourage others to do the same;
- d. Must be familiar with the operation and location of phones, first aid kits and fire extinguishers and should know the identity of the first aid attendant in their area;
- e. Must report all incidents and accidents;
- f. Must comply with the requirements set out in any risk management plan for any activity or special event.

G. In relation to social media, online and electronic communication, staff and volunteers acknowledge that:

- a. There is no reason to communicate via social media or other forms of electronic communication with a child in primary school;
- b. Will not 'friend' or accept a 'friend' request on a social media platform from a child;
- c. Primary online communication to a child should occur in 'group chats' or sent from the official church facebook page;
- d. SMS's sent to high school students should be done through the church database in order that a record of the message is logged.

H. If there is a breach by any person, staff and volunteers agree to:

- a. Report any suspected breaches of this Code of Conduct, or of the law by colleagues to the church leadership immediately;
- b. Take careful written records of any suspected breaches for future reference.

SCHEDULE 3 - EXCLUDING OFFENCES

(A comprehensive but not exhaustive list of excluding offences)

Computer Games

- Demonstration of an objectionable computer game before a minor.
- Possession of objectionable computer game.
- Making objectionable computer game.
- Obtaining a minor for objectionable computer game.

Films

- Possession of objectionable film.
- Making objectionable film.
- Procurement of minor for objectionable film.

Publications

- Sale etc. of prohibited publication or child abuse material.
- Possession of prohibited publication or material.
- Possession of child abuse publication or child abuse material.
- Exhibition or display of prohibited publication or child abuse material.
- Leaving prohibited publication or child abuse material in or on public place.
- Producing prohibited publication.
- Procurement of minor for RC publication or child abuse material.
- Leaving prohibited publication or child abuse photograph in or on private premises.
- Obscene publications and exhibitions.
- Involving child in making child exploitation material.
- Distributing child exploitation material.
- Possessing child exploitation material.

Internet

- Using internet etc. to procure children under 16.

Unlawful Acts

- Unlawful sodomy.
- Attempted sodomy.
- Indecent treatment of children under 16.
- Bestiality.
- Owner etc. permitting abuse of children on premises.
- Carnal knowledge with or of children under 16.
- Abuse of intellectually impaired persons.
- Procuring young person etc. for carnal knowledge.
- Procuring sexual acts by coercion etc.
- Taking child for immoral purposes.
- Conspiracy to defile.
- Incest.
- Maintaining a sexual relationship with a child.
- Unlawful homicide.
- Attempt to murder.
- Conspiring to murder.
- Killing unborn child.
- Disabling in order to commit indictable offence.
- Stupefying in order to commit indictable offence.

- Acts intended to cause grievous bodily harm and other malicious acts.
- Torture.
- Maliciously administering poison with intent to harm.
- Female genital mutilation.
- Removal of child from state for female genital mutilation.
- Failure to supply necessities.
- Endangering life of child by exposure.
- Rape
- Murder.
- Attempt to commit rape.
- Assault with intent to rape.
- Sexual assaults.
- Kidnapping.
- Kidnapping for ransom.
- Child-stealing.
- Abduction or kidnapping of a child or child stealing.
- Cruelty to children under 16.
- Definition of robbery.
- Burglary.
- Unlawful entry of vehicle for committing indictable offence.

Prostitution

- Procuring prostitution.
- Knowingly participating in provision of prostitution.
- Persons found in places reasonably suspected of being used for prostitution etc.
- Permitting young person etc. to be at place used for prostitution.

Drugs

- Trafficking in dangerous drugs.
- Supplying dangerous drugs.
- Producing dangerous drugs.

SCHEDULE 4 - APPLICATION FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Refer to 'Child Safe' resources document CSE3-OA (Example picture below)

This form is also available online:

<https://mountisabaptist.elvanto.com.au/form/4c90c387-a20a-48e6-936a-981393e176fa>

 APPLICATION FORM TEMPLATE Resource Code CSE3-OA	
Volunteer Application Form	
CONFIDENTIAL	This form must be completed by all applicants for voluntary work with
PERSONAL DETAILS Name in full (Please print clearly): Mr / Mrs / Ms / Miss <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F Preferred Name: DOB: / / Occupation: Home Address: Postcode: Postal Address: Postcode: Phone (H): (W): (M): Email: (Please print clearly):	
EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS Name: Relationship: Address: Postcode: Phone (H): (W): (M):	
REFEREES: Before your application can be approved, please give details of two people who have agreed to be your referees. Neither should be a family member. Contact details: Name: Address: P/C: Contact details: Name: Address: P/C: (H): (H): (M): (M):	
OFFICE USE ONLY: Renewal Date: / / 20..... References Checked: <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> WWC check <input type="checkbox"/> logged in SMO Appointment Authority: Name: Signature: Date: / / 20.....	

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

- Please outline your reasons for offering to work with children, young and/or vulnerable people.
- What experience do you have of working with children or other vulnerable people?
- Please list any relevant qualifications and/or training that you have attained (including first aid).
- Is there any medical condition, relevant information or limitation (e.g. epilepsy) that may affect your ability to fully participate as a volunteer? (Please give details)

CHILD PROTECTION STATEMENT & PRIOR CONDUCT

Children and young people who are involved in our activities should receive the highest possible standard of care and protection. Therefore, in all our work, we seek to ensure the well-being and development of each child and young person. Within this context, I, (Applicant name) is committed to the protection of children and young and vulnerable people from all forms of abuse.

- Have you been interviewed, questioned or charged by Police in relation to any offence involving children, young people, violence, alcohol or drugs? Yes No
- Have you been convicted of any offence involving children, young people, violence, alcohol or drugs? Yes No
 (If yes: for either question, please give details or you may choose to discuss this with the person named on the front of this form.)
- Have you read, understood, and will you abide by, the organisation child safe Policy and Code of Practice (Conduct)? Yes No

All applicants are required to undergo a Working with Children and/or Police Check.

I confirm that the information contained in this application is true and correct.
 I agree to abide by the organisations' child safe guidelines, as per the policy and code of practice provided.
 If applicant is under 18, parent or guardian must also sign below.

Applicant Name: Guardian Name:
 Signed: Signed:
 Date: / / 20..... Date: / / 20.....

SCHEDULE 5 - RECORD OF REFERENCE CHECK

1. Details of applicant:		
Full name		
2. First referee contacted:		
Full name		Date:
Relationship with applicant		Contacted by: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone / <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Conversation in person
Summary of remarks concerning suitability for working with children		
3. Second referee contacted:		
Full name		Date:
Relationship with applicant		Contacted by: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone / <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Conversation in person
Summary of remarks concerning suitability for working with children		
4. Church / Organisation contacted:		
Full name		Date:
Relationship with applicant		Contacted by: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone / <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Conversation in person
Summary of remarks concerning suitability for working with children		
5. Church / Organisation contacted:		
Full name		Date:
Relationship with applicant		Contacted by: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone / <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Conversation in person
Summary of remarks concerning suitability for working with children		

Details of person who conducted check:

Signature _____ Date _____

Full Name _____

Please note the information collected above is highly confidential and sensitive and must be stored in a confidential place and only accessible to church leadership.

SCHEDULE 6 - INTERVIEW WITH APPLICANT

Please note, these questions are simply a *guide*. Use your discretion to elaborate on any issues raised, or ask for more details on issues raised in the application.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW WITH APPLICANT

1. Why do you want to be a part of our church's ministry?
2. What involvement / experience in the past have you had with children?
3. Have you read the Code of Conduct and do you have any questions regarding the code?
4. Why do you think that our church's Safe Church Strategy is necessary? Are you willing to cooperate and comply with the standards and requirements of the policy that relate to or affect your participation in the church's ministries and activities?
5. Do you have a Blue Card? If so, who did you obtain your Blue Card through?
6. Have you ever been known by any other name?
7. Have you ever been the subject of a:
 - a. complaint of harm to a child;
 - b. breach of a code of conduct or policy; or
 - c. decision to be precluded from attending or participating in a church/organisation' activities?
8. If so, what steps were taken (if any) by the church/organisation in response to the above, and what was the outcome?
9. Are you aware of any other matter which if known would call into question your suitability to work with children?

QUESTIONS FOR REFERENCES OF VOLUNTEER

1. In what setting(s) have you worked with the applicant?
2. Have you witnessed the applicant work with children?
3. How would you describe how they work with children?
4. Do you have any concerns about him/her working with children?
5. How well does the applicant follow policies and procedures?

SCHEDULE 7 - HARM REPORT

Date / /

1. Details of complainant			
Full name of complainant		DOB	/ /
Address			
Phone Numbers	H:	M:	
2. Details of other persons involved in incident including witnesses (Attached additional pages if necessary)			
<i>Full name</i>		DOB	/ /
Address			
Phone Numbers	H:	M:	
<i>Full name</i>		DOB	/ /
Address			
Phone Numbers	H:	M:	
3. Incident			
Description what allegedly occurred (ask open ended questions). Use additional paper for full statement.	Advisable to attach a written statement from complainant to this report.		
Location it occurred		Time occurred:	
4. Evidence			
What evidence has been preserved (i.e. clothing worn etc. - also person should not wash before medical examination if required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . . . 		
5. Reporting requirements			
Has the designated person / pastor been contacted? OR	Y / N Date and time contacted _____		
Has QB Pastoral Services been contacted if a Registered Pastor, Student Pastor or Pastoral Assistant is involved?	Y / N Date and time and person contacted _____ _____		
6. Designated Person to Complete Below			
Report to police if	<input type="checkbox"/> There is risk of harm to any persons occurring. <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Children Services asks you to. <input type="checkbox"/> There is knowledge, which would assist authorities to apprehend or convict a person of a serious offence. <input type="checkbox"/> The incident involved physical or sexual assault.		
Report to insurers if	Y / N (Where it is likely that the incident will give rise to a claim).		
Report to lawyer if	Y / N (Unsure about your reporting requirements/ complex legal issues)		
7. Records			
A record of all conversations (with dates, times and names) has been kept.	Y / N		
File kept in a locked filing cabinet & marked "Do not destroy"	Y / N		

Name of person completing report _____ Position _____

Signature person completing report _____ Signature designated person _____

SCHEDULE 8 - CHILDREN & TEENAGER PARTICIPANT FORM (TEMPLATE)

Schedule 8 can be viewed and printed (right-click > print) here:

<https://mountisabaptist.elvanto.com.au/form/ea8b51b8-2ae2-4dd1-80c3-4ad3774d7925>

The appropriate ministry leaders can alter this form form via the church database.

(Example picture below)



Child, Youth & Boys' Brigade Registration Form (Schedule 8)

Dear Parent / Caregiver, to provide the best possible care while your child is with us, please complete the following form.

This form is divided into four parts:

- 1) Information required for all participants
- 2) Information required for high school and Boys' Brigade participants
- 3) Information required for Boys' Brigade participants only (all ages)
- 4) Consent - Required for all participants

Please make sure you fill out the required information.

* The information you provide is stored on our Church Database, which is maintained by Tithe.ly. You can read there Privacy Policy (<https://get.tithe.ly/privacy-policy>)

* Only the relevant leaders of the ministry/brigades will be able to view your child's information (e.g., children who are only in Brigades can only have their information accessed by Brigade leaders).

* Girls' Brigade has its own system for storing data

1) Information required for all participants

Personal Information

First Name *	Gender
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Last Name *	Date of Birth *
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="dd/mm/yyyy"/>
Preferred Name	School Grade
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Medical & Dietary Requirements

Dietary Requirements	Asthma
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Allergies	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes - Occasional
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes - Mild
Medical Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes - Severe
<input type="text"/>	

SCHEDULE 9 - A FACT SHEET ON SEXUAL GROOMING

A lot of information exists about how to respond to sexual abuse once it has been discovered. But the best way of protecting children from harm is to be aware of the behaviours that can lead to sexual abuse before it occurs. These behaviours are called 'grooming'. Organisations with unclear boundaries around contact with children can be magnets to people who wish to 'groom' children for sexual abuse (1). By learning about the strategies used to 'groom' children and their families and recognising them as inappropriate behaviours in your service you create an environment that will deter infiltration by sexual abusers (2).

Sexual abuse thrives in secrecy and ignorance. By being alert to potential danger signs, we are better able to understand the steps we can take to keep children as safe as possible.

What is "Grooming?"

Sexual abusers are often people we know; more than 8 out of 10 children (3) who are sexually abused know their abuser. They may hold responsible positions in their local community, and can be personable or charismatic. Abusers come from all classes, ethnic and religious backgrounds and may be heterosexual or homosexual. Whilst a high percentage of abusers are men, some are also women (4). You cannot pick an abuser out in a crowd, however you can identify behaviour that precipitates abuse. This behaviour is known as 'grooming' and research shows us that it can occur for up to 12 months before the actual sexual abuse takes place (5).

Grooming is defined as communication with a child where there is an intention to meet and commit a sex offence (6). More generally it can be seen as the process by which an individual manipulates those around them – particularly, but not exclusively, the child – to provide opportunities to abuse and reduce the likelihood of being reported or discovered.

Research suggests that this process can be very deliberate, and while it can occur over a long period of time, sometimes this period of time is much shorter; there may not be any conscious motivation to sexually abuse a child until just before the abuse occurs. In both cases, there are often opportunities to observe and intervene, even before the would-be abuser is fully aware of what may become sexual intentions.

Unfortunately, identifying sexual grooming of children isn't always straightforward. Sometimes sexual abuse occurs as part of a pre-existing relationship in which there is genuine affection, which makes it a complex issue. But there are often clear signs that can be detected before the abuse occurs.

How Do People Groom Children for Sexual Abuse?

- **By getting close to children** – child sex offenders will often seek out adults and groom them in order to get access to their children. The sex offender can create a relationship built on trust or dependency and gain access to the children through it. Some befriend parents or carers who are facing difficulties or who are vulnerable themselves.
- **By silencing children** – people who want to sexually abuse children may:
 - offer them gifts or treats, and sometimes combine these with threats about what will happen if the child says 'no' or tells someone
 - threaten them with exclusion from their peer group or loss of favour if they do not comply
 - make the child afraid of being hurt physically, or threaten what may happen to other people if the child tells
 - play on the child's embarrassment or guilt about what is happening, perhaps convincing them that no one will believe them
 - make the child believe he or she wanted it to happen.

Signs An Adult May Be Grooming a Child for Sexual Abuse:

There may be cause for concern about the behaviour of an adult or young person if they:

1. Exhibit frequent physical affection such as kissing, hugging, stroking hair or wrestling even when the child clearly does not want it or it is not required.

2. Encourage child or particular children to sit on their lap and offer regular physical comfort or reassurance to a particular child without a recognised cause.
3. Seek out opportunities to be alone with a child with no interruptions.
4. Spend most of their spare time with children and have little interest in spending time with people their own age.
5. Solicit invitations to sports, events or parties where a child will be.
6. Frequently arrive uninvited to places where the child or their family will be in a series of 'coincidences'.
7. Spend a lot of time around places like arcades, playgrounds, parks and sports venues to get to know children so they are not seen as strangers.
8. Regularly offer support to the family members of the child such as offering to babysit children for free, transport children to events, and help out at social occasions involving the child or take children on outings alone.
9. Offer to drive children home or collect children from events on a regular basis.
10. Frequently walk in on children in the bathroom or their bedrooms.
11. Treat a particular child or group of children as favoured, making them feel special compared with others in a group.
12. Find out as much as possible about the child and use that information to engage the child and drive a wedge between the child and any protective adults, e.g. parents, teachers or coaches.
13. Purchase gifts or collect items of interest regularly for a specific child or group of children.
14. Tell secrets to a child and encourage the keeping of secrets.
15. Display ambiguous sexual behaviour, e.g. showing the child pictures of other children wearing swimsuits or less.
16. Display clearly inappropriate sexual behaviour, e.g. showing the child pornographic pictures, using explicit sexual language around children.

What to do if Abuse is Suspected

Where grooming is suspected, please advise your designated person who will then take the matter further.

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

- Child sexual abuse thrives in secrecy.
- People who abuse children may spend up to 12 months 'grooming' a child before they commit a sexual act with them (7). However the period of time spent grooming can also be short, with the impulse occurring not long before the abuse happens.
- People do not just 'groom' children, they also 'groom' the adults around them.
- Environments that have defined boundaries in regards to appropriate behaviour are less likely to attract sexual abusers (8).
- Educators, volunteers and visitors to the service should follow defined protocols for appropriate behavior or be excluded from the service.
- Identification of sexual grooming of children in care centres can be a complex issue. The challenge is to be vigilant without creating a siege mentality.

References

- 1 *Understanding the Grooming or Entrapment Process, CPSU briefings*
- 2 *Wortley and Smallbone 2006*
- 3 *(ABS, 1996, 2004a)*
- 4 *Pritchard, 2004*
- 5 *Wortley and Smallbone 2000*
- 6 *Understanding the Grooming or Entrapment Process, CPSU briefings*
- 7 *Child Sexual Abuse in Queensland: Offender Characteristics and Modus Operandi*
- 8 *Understanding the Grooming or Entrapment Process, CPSU briefings*

Source – Network of Community Activities publication

SCHEDULE 10 - ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Biblical Basis

The people of Mount Isa Baptist Church desire to provide all children and young people involved in ministries of our church with a loving, caring and safe environment (Matthew 19:19) thereby reflecting Christ's love for them. Jesus has called us to receive them and to bless them and not to hinder them in any way from coming to him (Mark 10:13-14). Within this environment we desire to introduce each and every child to Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Behaviour Management

The church recognises that all members of its community: children, young people, and adults have certain rights and responsibilities that the church is determined to safeguard. Mount Isa Baptist expects that all involved in church associated activities display behavior in accordance with the Lordship of Christ.

Rights and responsibilities of Leaders and Volunteers

- Lead without unreasonable interference.
- Set consequences for inappropriate behaviour at activities
- Be treated with respect
- Treat all people with respect and fairness
- Assist participants to be aware of their rights and responsibilities
- Provide and appropriate social model within the church
- Clearly communicate your expectations to participants
- Have a clean, safe working environment
- Assist in making the church a safe and clean place
- Care for people and property within the church
- Receive help and support when required
- Undertake self-evaluation
- Be supportive to colleagues
- Access appropriate training and development
- Be aware of, seek help and manage appropriately those with special needs in the behaviour area

Rights and Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

- Expect a safe and secure environment for their child or young person
- Express opinions regarding matters related to the church activity their child/young person is involved in
- Be respected and treated fairly by leaders, volunteers, children, young people and young adults
- Have access to church personnel at mutually acceptable times
- Receive accurate information about their child/young person's involvement in the activity
- Encourage their child/young person to accept the rules of the church and activity group.
- Advise the appropriate church personnel of their concerns
- Treat all members of the church community fairly and with respect

Discipline

1. Children/young people should be aware of the Code of Conduct expected for participation in the group
2. Be sure that the child/young person understands that the behaviour is wrong'

3. Outline choices of positive and negative behaviour
4. Clearly explain the consequences of behaviour
5. Give positive reinforcement and praise for correct behaviour
6. Maintain open and honest communication
7. When sharing feelings about misbehaviour do not manipulate, exaggerate or hold them responsible for your feelings.
8. Be consistent over time
9. Be fair and equal with all children and young people
10. Redirect child/young person to positive behaviour
11. Don't lecture, talk down to or threaten children and young people

Self Harm

Some children and young people may be at risk of harming themselves. This harm may occur with or without suicidal intent; or may be symptomatic of, or associated with a known medical condition or intellectual disability.

Supervision Numbers

	Number of Children	Number of Leaders (including helpers)
Normal Activities	0-20	2
	21-30	3
	31-40	4
Off-site activities & those involving 0-5 year olds	0-12	2
	13-18	3
	19-24	4
Higher Risk Activities & 0-5 year olds off site	0-8	2
	9-12	3
	13-16	4

(Adapted from "Child care (Child Care Centres) Regulations 1991")

Media

When using media within a church ministry, leaders must comply with the recommended ratings. You may also like to refer to reviews provided by Focus on the Family at www.pluggedinonline.com. It must be noted that for ministry purposes within Mount Isa Baptist Church, despite media having an appropriate classification, not all content would be beneficial or appropriate.

Toileting

Special care must be taken in relation to toileting.

- As our toilets have external access leaders must regularly check the toilets for any hazard
- Wherever possible parents are to supervise or help their own children and young people when toileting. (e.g. Funtime, Crèche)
- If children and young people are able to toilet themselves, they are to be encouraged to do so. Leaders must remain outside of the toilet area, but within a reasonable distance in case of an emergency.
- Where possible toilet several children and young people at a time and take multiple leaders.

Transportation

- There should be two adults per vehicle. Parental transportation is preferred.
- Seatbelts must be worn by all.