

Pukekohe Reformed Church



Working with Children Handbook

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Definitions

- “PRC” refers to Pukekohe Reformed Church.
- “Child[ren]” means anyone under the age of 18.¹
- “Session” refers to the Elders and Deacons of the church.²
- “Volunteer(s)” refers to all members and non-members participating in and / or for PRC.³

- “Child abuse” means the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child.
- “PRC CPP” refers to Pukekohe Reformed Church’s Child Protection Policy.
- “RCNZ Guidelines” refers to the 2014 Reformed Churches of New Zealand Guidelines for Sessions having to deal with Sexual Abuse Against Children, as published in the Office Bearers Handbook, sixth edition.

¹ The definition of “Child[ren]” is chosen specifically for age simplicity and to avoid adding in extra terms.

² The Reformed Churches of New Zealand Church Order article 36 defines the Session as the Elders (ruling and teaching).

³ “Members” refers to communicant and baptised members of PRC; see the Reformed Churches of New Zealand Church Order articles, 58 and 60. Non-member refers to everyone else who is not a member of PRC. “Participating in and / or for PRC” is any member or non-member at any PRC event or program that the Session has authorised.

Welcome to the Pukekohe Reformed Church Working with Children Handbook.

Statement of Commitment

PRC believes that children are a precious gift from God. God loves our children and expects us to value, honour and protect them for the reputation of Christ and His church.

Preface

The best way for PRC to keep our children safe is to have open honest conversations around safe working practices. As volunteers that are willing to give up a sizeable amount of your spare time to work with our children, PRC wants to support, encourage and educate you, so that you, and the children in your care, reach the greatest potential possible in our children's ministry.

The guidelines in this handbook are complementary to the PRC CPP and RCNZ Guidelines and as with the PRC CPP, the overall responsibility, implementation and review of this handbook is with the Session. These guidelines should not be ignored without good reason because they will help you provide enjoyable and successful experiences for all the wonderful children you work with.

Parents / Caregivers (PRC CPP 4 & 7)

- Education of children and parents / caregivers is important in the prevention of child abuse. We encourage parents / caregivers to make use of educational programmes. (PRC CPP 4.2, 7.1)
- If parents / caregivers have concerns about the treatment of a child by a volunteer, they should make this known to the programme leader or refer to PRC CPP 5.1. (PRC CPP 7.3)

Guidelines for Recruitment (PRC CPP 4 & 7)

- The most effective time at which we can minimise the possibility of abuse to children is when new volunteers are appointed. (PRC CPP 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 7.1)
- Approval for appointment should be role specific. Approval is needed for each separate programme a volunteer is active in. (PRC CPP 4.4, 4.5)
- Reassessment of all volunteers should be every three years. (PRC CPP 7.1)
- New volunteers for PRC's programmes should fill in an application form. If they have been attending PRC for less than two years, they should provide a character reference and contact details from their previous church. (PRC CPP 4.2) ⁴

⁴ Sample application form to work page 13

Safe Working Guidelines (PRC CPP 4)

- Volunteers should treat information they receive about a child in a discreet and private manner, understanding that this is the child's personal information. (PRC CPP 4.1)
- Volunteers should not use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine a child. (PRC CPP 4.1)
- Volunteers should not use their status and standing to form or promote relationships which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so. (PRC CPP 4.1)
- Volunteers should wear clothing that is appropriate to their role and is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative. (PRC CPP 4.1, 4.6)
- Volunteers should always maintain appropriate boundaries, this includes communication with children and the use of technology⁵, and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. (PRC CPP 4.6)
- Volunteers should ensure that no children are exposed to unsuitable images or films via any media. (PRC CPP 4.1)
- Volunteers should avoid being alone with a child in a closed setting. They should take reasonable steps to make sure they are visible to others, for example leaving doors open. (PRC CPP 4.7)
- When a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance volunteers should use their judgement to comfort or reassure a child in an age-appropriate way. (PRC CPP 4.6)
- There may be other occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for volunteers to have physical contact with children, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their role. (PRC CPP 4.6)
- There may be times when a child needs restraint or safe handling; this should not be done alone, another adult should be present. (PRC CPP 4.6)
- Any occasional helper to a children's programme is under the responsibility of the programme leader and should not be left alone with children. (PRC CPP 4.6)
- When on an overnight activity, volunteers should never share beds with a child. (PRC CPP 4.1, 4.6, 4.7)
- When on an overnight activity, volunteers should not share bedrooms unless it involves a dormitory situation, and the arrangements have been previously discussed with programme leaders, parents and children. (PRC CPP 4.6, 4.7)
- Volunteers should complete a Private Vehicle Transport Safety form, and should ensure they are fit to drive and free from any drugs, alcohol or medicine which is likely to impair judgement or ability to drive.⁶ (PRC CPP 4.1, 4.6)
- No child may be taken from Pukekohe Reformed Church premises by a volunteer (except in emergencies) without permission of the parent, and without the knowledge of the programme leader. (PRC CPP 4.1, 4.6)

Minimum ratios:

- 1 adult to 5 children for under 2 years
- 1 adult to 10 children for 2-15 years
- 1 adult to 8 children for off-site activities and camps

Appropriate gender mix (male / female) of volunteers should be maintained.

⁵ Volunteers working with children should ensure their communication with children takes place within the boundaries of a professional relationship and are open to scrutiny from other adults.

⁶ Sample of Private Vehicle Transport Safety form page 14

Guidelines for Crèche (PRC CPP 4)

At all times there should be at least one volunteer on duty in crèche. (PRC CPP 4.6, 4.7)

When working with very young children, or children with disabilities or special needs, it is sometimes required to care for children in intimate ways. This can include changing them and applying medication. Consideration needs to be given to meeting the child's needs in a sensitive and caring manner, whilst ensuring this is done in a safe way.

If at any point a child seems to be missing, those doing crèche duty should immediately get help from the child's parents / caregivers and other adults at church.

Those doing crèche duty should:

- Always encourage children, where possible, to undertake self-care tasks independently
- Make other volunteers aware of the task being undertaken
- Explain to the child what is happening
- Use their discretion over who they allow to collect a child
- Toileting procedures should be at the discretion of the adults doing crèche
- No child or youth should bring children to the toilet or change nappies

Guidelines for Day Trips and Overnight Camps (PRC CPP 4)

- Signed permission from the parents / caregivers should be sought for each and every trip and camp.
- All drivers should complete the Private Vehicle Transport Safety form.⁷
- Programme leaders should record the drivers who are transporting which children, and that drivers are well briefed as to route, timing and other arrangements.
- A head count is to be conducted:
 - At the beginning of an event
 - At any change of venue
 - At the end of the event
- Overnight camps for the Youth Group should be supervised by those endorsed by the Session. (PRC CPP 4.1, 4.6, 4.7)

Volunteers should:

- Avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress
- Avoid any visually intrusive behaviour (PRC CPP 4.1, 4.6, 4.7)

Volunteers should not:

- Shower or bathe with children
- Assist with any personal care task which a child can undertake by themselves (PRC CPP 4.1, 4.6, 4.7)

⁷ Sample of Private Vehicle Transport Safety form page 14

Guidelines for Managing Child Behaviour (PRC CPP 4.1)

A good standard of behaviour should be encouraged in all children's programmes. PRC should do this by:

- Providing a safe and secure learning environment.
- Encouraging the children to show respect for God and His Word, respect for themselves, others, nature and property.
- Clearly defining the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- Helping children to appreciate that their behaviour has consequences, and that they are accountable for their behaviour.
- Guiding children in an understanding of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Volunteers should model respect towards each other and the children.

Types of behaviour not acceptable at PRC:

- Name calling, teasing, swearing and blasphemy
- Harsh, belittling or degrading speech
- Physically hurting another person
- Damaging or defacing equipment, resources, or the natural environment
- Bullying and any other disrespectful behaviour towards others
- Sexual jokes or comments
- Inappropriate touch, or any touching that makes a child feel uncomfortable

Ways of dealing with unacceptable behaviour are –

- A good standard of behaviour should be encouraged in all children's programmes. (see above)
- Verbal rebuke
- Discussion and resolution
- Time away
- Loss of privilege

Additional Information and Forms

Bullying

PRC is committed to ensuring that our church provides an environment free from bullying behaviours. All children programme leaders and volunteers should have an understanding of what bullying is; and know what to do when bullying does occur.

Bullying behaviour is:

- Deliberate
- Involves a power imbalance
- Has an element of repetition
- Is harmful

Bullying behaviours can be physical, verbal, or social, and can take place in the physical world or digitally. Bullying is not an individual action. It involves up to three parties; initiators (those doing the bullying), targets (those being bullied) and often bystanders (those who witness the bullying).

Contact regarding the incident should be made by the programme leader with the parents / caregivers. Parents / caregivers should be kept informed if unacceptable behaviour persists, and leaders, together with the parents, should work to find a solution. Where unacceptable behaviour is ongoing an action plan is to be put in place to deal with the behaviour.

If child to child abuse is witnessed, suspected, alleged, identified or confessed, the procedures set out on pages 10 – 12 should be followed.

Photographing or Filming of Children and Volunteers

- Parents / caregivers, children and volunteers need to know if and when photographs or video images should be taken; why and where the images should be published, and who should have access to them.
- Permission to photograph children and volunteers should be obtained. Prior notice should be given to children, parents and volunteers; along with the ability to decline to be photographed or filmed.
- Clandestine photography and video are unacceptable; this includes body worn cameras and video recordings. Care should be taken when children are taking images of other children and volunteers.

Collection of Personal Information

- Any personal information collected through the implementation of this policy should be kept secure and protected from unauthorised use.
- Personal information should only be used to ensure the wellbeing and safety of children, other volunteers, and the church community.
- Information should only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis.
- Information should be securely disposed of when it is no longer needed.
- Any individual is welcome to see the information held about them.

Signs of Abuse

These definitions provide some indicators of abuse but should not be seen as exhaustive or as a checklist.⁸

- Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is a non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

- Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effect on the child's emotional development. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others.

- Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative, for example, rape, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving children in the looking at or production of sexual images, sexual activities and sexual behaviours.

- Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing long term serious harm to the child's health or development. It may also include neglect of a child's basic or emotional needs. Neglect is a lack of action, emotion or basic needs.

- Child-on-Child Harmful Behaviours

It is important to be aware that children can harm other children. These behaviours are outside what may be considered the normal range, and can extend to bullying, violence, and sexual assault. Therefore, when a child alleges inappropriate harmful behaviour by another child, the procedures outlined in this handbook should be considered for both the children.

- Suicidal Concerns or Self-harming Behaviours

When thoughts of suicide or self-harming are identified, this should immediately be notified as per 5.1. of PRC CPP and if immediate action is required, emergency services should be phoned. 0800 LIFELINE

⁸ Copyright Child Matters 2014 www.childmatters.org.nz

Some of the Signs

It is important to consider the overall wellbeing and risk of harm to the child. It is normal for us to feel uncertain; however, it is important that we recognise when something is wrong, especially if we notice a pattern forming or several signs that make us concerned.

- Developmental delays (e.g. Small for their age, cognitive delays, poor speech and social skills)
- Physical signs (e.g. Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions; unexplained fractures or dislocations; burn marks, genital injuries)
- Emotional abuse/neglect (e.g. Low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, evidence of self-harm, inability to cope in social situations)
- Behavioural concerns (e.g. Inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders, substance abuse, disengagement/neediness)
- The child cannot recall how injuries occurred, or offers inconsistent explanations

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

- Is the child's behaviour a sign of abuse or neglect, or are there other things going on in the family that could affect them?
- How is the child's general behaviour?
- How is the child's development?
- Has the child or family hinted at, or said that something is wrong?
- Are there signs of family violence?
- Do I sense the family is struggling, or the child is at risk in some way?

Responding to Child Abuse

Concerns may be raised a number of ways, for example:

- Directly by a volunteer hearing or observing issues of concern or behaviour of concern
- Direct disclosure by a child
- Indirect disclosure, e.g. through written or artwork or through friends
- Complaint from a parent or caregiver
- As an anonymous report

Abuse Suspected

When child abuse is suspected, witnessed, reported or disclosed, if the child is in danger or unsafe, act immediately to secure their safety. (PRC CPP 5.1)

Carefully record any physical or behavioural observations and anything said by the child (using the child's own words as far as possible). Include, date, time, who was present etc. Write down your observations and concerns; give as much detail as possible. Do not take photos of any injuries, rather, draw diagrams. Do NOT formally interview the child – obtain only necessary relevant facts if and when clarification is needed.

Report your concern as per PRC CPP 5.1. **Act** in a timely manner.

Listen to the child and reassure them, but do NOT make promises or commitments you cannot keep.

Dealing with Disclosure of Abuse

Only a minority of children actively disclose abuse. Most child abuse is disclosed accidentally or through observation by an adult of a child's behaviour, words and physical appearance.

When a child does disclose abuse this needs to be taken very seriously. It is important that any disclosure is dealt with appropriately, both for the wellbeing of the child and also to ensure that your actions do not jeopardise any legal action against the abuser.

There are a number of basic 'rules' that should be followed to ensure the safe handling of any disclosures of abuse from a child:

- **Don't panic.** Remember that the safety and well-being of the child comes before the interests of any other person.
- **Listen to the child** and accept what the child says.
- **Look at the child** directly, but do not appear shocked.
- Don't seek help while the child is talking to you.
- Reassure them that they **did the right thing** by telling someone.
- Assure them that it is **not their fault** and you will do your best to help.
- Let them know that you **need to tell someone else**.
- Let them know **what you are going to do next** and that you will let them know what happens.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened.
- **Write down what the child says** in their own words – also record what you have seen and heard.
- Make certain you distinguish between what the child has actually said and the inferences you may have made. Accuracy is paramount in this stage of the procedure.
- **Tell someone** as per PRC CPP 5.1 as soon as possible.
- **Look after yourself.** Discuss the matter as per PRC CPP 5.1.

The same action should be taken if the allegation is about abuse that has taken place in the past, as it should be important to find out if the person is still working with or has access to children.

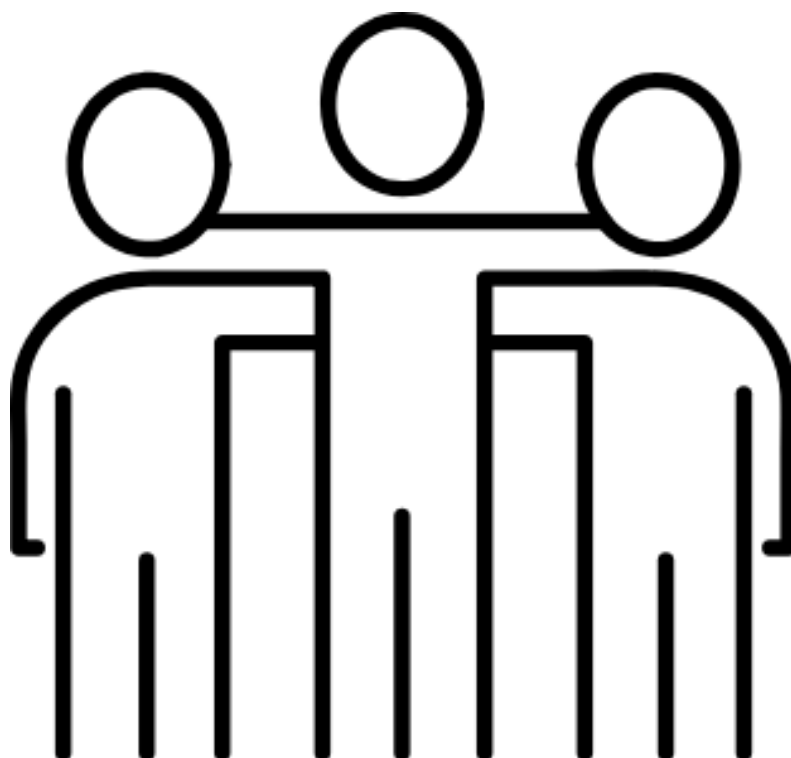
Things NOT TO DO

- Do not attempt to deal with the situation yourself.
- Do not permit personal doubt to prevent you from reporting the allegation as per PRC CPP 5.1.
- Never ask leading questions.
- Never push for information or make assumptions.
- Only necessary relevant facts should be obtained when clarification is needed.
- Do not make assumptions, offer alternative explanations, or diminish the seriousness of the behaviour or alleged incidents.
- Do not keep the information to yourself or promise confidentiality.
- Do not take any action that might undermine any future investigation or disciplinary procedure, such as interviewing the alleged victim or potential witnesses, or informing the alleged perpetrator.

Dealing with an Allegation (PRC CPP 4, 5 & 7)

- When abuse is suspected, all concerning behaviour should be written down and shared with the Session as per PRC CPP 5.1.
- Anyone making an allegation should be carefully listened to and told what actions, if any, are being taken in response to the complaint. (PRC CPP 5.2)
- Anyone involved in an allegation should be kept regularly informed until the allegation is resolved. (PRC CPP 5.2)
- The suspected church member or volunteer should be prevented from having further unsupervised access to children during any investigation. (PRC CPP 4.1)
- After an allegation of abuse is resolved, a full review of the Child Protection Policy should be undertaken. (PRC CPP 7.2)

Last Updated: 06 June 2024



APPLICATION TO WORK IN CHILDREN’S PROGRAMME AT PUKEKOHE REFORMED CHURCH

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Children’s programme you are applying for: _____

Church membership: Communicant _____ Baptized _____ Long term visitor _____

Previous experience working with children: _____

Previous church (if attending Pukekohe Reformed Church for less than 2 years)

Character Referee: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

I certify that my answers are true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

I declare that I have read and understand the contents of this handbook and will adhere to it

Police Vetting Forms should be forwarded on to you for completion. You should not begin your role in children’s programme until the application process is completed.

PRIVATE VEHICLE TRANSPORT SAFETY FORM

To be completed initially and then every three years.

Thank you for providing transport as part of your role in our church's children's programme. We are grateful for the time and energy you give to this programme.

In order to ensure that our children are safe at all times we ask you to complete the following form regarding your licence and vehicle.

I hold a full driver's licence for the vehicle I should be driving Y / N

The vehicle I drive is registered Y / N

The vehicle I drive is road worthy and has a current Warrant of Fitness Y / N

The vehicle I drive is covered by insurance: 3rd party Y / N

Full cover Y / N

I should take responsibility for driving safely and legally at all times while transporting children

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

RECORD OF ISSUE OR CONCERN

Child's Name:		DOB:	
Date:		Time:	
Notes:			
SAMPLE			
Action:			
Signed:		Date:	
Position:			

PERMISSION TO PHOTOGRAPH OR TAKE VIDEO IMAGES OF YOUR CHILD

From time to time, photographs or video images of children may be taken by volunteers or children while participating in this programme. Any photos taken for publication should be either positive depictions of the children, or the images are taken in such a way to avoid identification. Please advise the programme leader if you have any concerns about publication of your child's photo.

If the programme leader believes your child is taking inappropriate or intrusive images, they should remove the child's device and be in contact with parents / caregivers.

Child's name _____

Parent/caregiver _____

Children's Programme _____

I do / do not give permission for my child to be photographed and/or filmed, and for those images to be published by this children's programme.

Signed _____