

Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

# Christian Reformed Church of Casey

**'SAFE MINISTRY'**

**POLICY & PROCEDURES**

This version approved by Church Council  
9 February 2017

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Policy Statement

**Christian Reformed Church of Casey** located at 350-352 Pound Road, Narre Warren South, (hereinafter called **CASEY**) is committed to protecting the safety of all people within its programs, ministries and events.

- All people, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, disability and family/social background have equal rights to this protection.
- All people (including children) have the right to be respected and valued as well as feel emotionally, physically and spiritually safe at all times.
- CASEY holds to this view not only as a legal requirement but in the belief that there is no higher standard of human interaction than that required by God as laid out in his Word.
- All human beings have been made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and are therefore capable of deep interpersonal relationships. Human beings have an inherent dignity, given by God himself which carries with it an implied right to safety and respect (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9).
- The Lord Jesus Christ expressed deep care and a very strong view for the care of children and those who are vulnerable, when he said (18:5) *"...whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me"* and *"... if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."* (Matthew 18:5&6)

This policy has been developed to uphold this commitment to safeguarding and to adhere to National and Victorian legislation.

### 1.2 Scope

This policy applies to:

- all ministries authorised by or under the control of CASEY, including those ministries undertaken at the church's premises or away from the church's premises
- all leaders within the church, including paid staff, senior leadership, volunteers, students or anyone working on behalf of CASEY.

### 1.3 Authority

This version of the policy and further procedures of CASEY were adopted for use by the Church Council on 9 February 2017. The Church Council is committed to implementing this policy and training the CASEY leaders in its content and application.

## 2. Child Protection Policy.

### 2.1 The purpose of this policy:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- To protect children and young people who participate in CASEY's ministries.

- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection;

CASEY believes that a child or young person or leader should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

Our policy aims to:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of positional power.
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly.
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe.
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

## 2.2 Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

CASEY is committed to ministering to children, young people and vulnerable adults by providing an environment that is physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

CASEY is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and will endeavour to provide a safe and supportive environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults by the following safeguarding measures: Recruitment processes, ChildSafe certification, Working with Children Checks, Training, Induction, Supervision and Reviews.

The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to promoting within CASEY; due diligence, Integrity, Duty of Care, Transparency, Inclusivity, Collaborative Ministry, Christian ethics and the Gospel principles.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount, and is everyone's responsibility as outlined in the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other organisations/agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare

**We commit to:**

### a. Have a Clear Code of Conduct

We will adopt and implement a Code of Conduct for all leaders and volunteers, including boundaries of behaviour and expectations of interactions with children. All leaders will agree to follow our code of conduct. (See Appendix 1)

### **b. Safe Recruitment of Leaders**

Screen all prospective leaders in our ministries before they are appointed (i.e. relevant WWCC/vulnerable people/police check) (See Appendix 2)

### **c. Adequate Training of Leaders**

We require that all leaders attend a ChildSafe training workshop within 6 months of beginning their roles and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years. We require all leaders to attend additional specific training as required. (See Appendix 3)

### **d) Continued Supervision of Leaders**

We commit to ongoing training, supervision and support for leaders. (See Appendix ?)

### **e) Responding to allegation of risk of harm (abuse) and serious misconduct**

All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to our procedure. We will listen to and believe children who raise concerns.

We will ensure that procedures are clear and appropriate in responding to allegations of abuse. Where a leader has an allegation of misconduct made against them we will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate denominational help for a just and fair resolution. (See Appendix 4)

### **f) Provide an open safe environment**

We will encourage participants a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation. We will be accountable and transparent.

We will create a child-friendly environment allowing people to raise their concerns in an appropriate manner. We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.

## **2.3 Definitions.**

**We define:**

**Abuse:** Abuse and neglect includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Family Violence
- Sexual Abuse
- Grooming
- Neglect
- Bullying
- Spiritual
- Financial

**Child:** a person who is under the age of 18 years (The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012, Victoria)

- Safe Environment:** discharging duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including, e.g. spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect
- 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.
- ChildSafe:** ChildSafe SP3 Safety Management System training, as approved by Christian Reformed Churches of Australia Synod 2015.

## 2.4 Policy Review

This Policy and its attachments will be reviewed annually at the November meeting of the Church Council. The Council will inform the ministries involved when the date of review will occur, and any changes recommended by the ministries should be submitted in writing to the Council for consideration one month before the review date.

Any proposed changes will be submitted to the November Church Council meeting for approval before being implemented.

## 2.5 Legal Framework

This policy reflects legislation and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children “Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business” 2009-2020 (Commonwealth of Australia)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)
- Working With Children Act 2005 (VIC)

## Appendix 1 Code of Conduct

### **Introduction**

All staff and volunteers involved in ministry at the Christian Reformed Church of Casey (CASEY) are responsible for maintaining a professional role with children, which means establishing and maintaining clear boundaries that serve to protect everyone from misunderstandings or a violation of the relationship.

This Code of Conduct sets out the behaviour which CASEY expects from all people associated with or representing it.

### **Purpose**

Primarily, this code will help to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse and inappropriate behaviour from adults/people in leadership. It will also help staff and volunteers understand and maintain the standard of behaviour expected of them.

Secondly, this will also work to reduce the possibility of allegations of abuse being made against leaders and people in authority and provide possible victims a pathway for voicing their concerns.

And thirdly, this will also work to reduce the possibility of allegations of abuse being made against CASEY.

### **Upholding this Code Of Conduct**

All members of staff and volunteers are expected to report any breaches of this code to the CASEY Pastor/ ChildSafe Safety Officer under the child protection policies and safeguarding procedures put in place by CASEY.

Staff and volunteers who breach this code of conduct will be subject to CASEY's disciplinary procedures.

Any breach of the code involving external workers/volunteers may result in them being asked to leave CASEY and any associated programs/events/ministries.

Serious breaches may also result in a report being made to authorities such as the police, the local statutory child protection authorities and/or the Christian Reformed Churches National Sexual Abuse Complaints Committee and their procedures.

CASEY condemns all forms of child abuse, discrimination and sexual exploitation, and is committed to creating and maintaining an environment which promotes safety and inclusiveness for children. Child abuse occurs when adults or other children hurt children or young people under the age of 18, either physically, emotionally, sexually, through neglect, or in some other way.

CASEY is committed to, and will provide, a safe environment for people living with a disability, people with a cultural and/or linguistic diverse background and will consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about supporting their specific needs.

## Appendix 2 Selection and Screening of Leaders

### **Introduction**

CASEY is committed to child safe recruitment. It is recognised that many children have suffered physical, sexual or emotional abuse by trusted members of their communities, including churches. Therefore CASEY recruitment practices aim to recruit the safest and most suitable persons for its ministries.

### **Selection and requirements**

'Leaders' refers to anyone who holds a leadership position in the church, including pastors, elders, deacons, congregational representatives, small group leaders, ministry team leaders and all those serving in ministries involving children under 18 years of age. Leaders involved in children's ministries will be carefully selected and screened.

When serving as ministry leaders and volunteers must:

- Have been members (partners) of CASEY and regularly attended the church for at least 6 months.
- Complete an application form which requests details of relevant past experience, positions held, details of two referees and permission to contact them and attend an interview with a person or the leader of the ministry approved by Church Council ChildSafe Safety Officer or ChildSafe Coordinator.
- Be provided a copy of the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct, have read these documents and signed their agreement with them.
- Provide a Working With Children Check as required by Victorian law. Where the person applying is for a paid staff position a Police Check will also need to be provided.
- Agree to attend and undertake ChildSafe training within six months of starting the children's ministry position and annual refresher courses.
- Demonstrate they know how to report concerning behaviour and abuse.

All appointments will be ratified by the Church Council.

- Where CASEY identifies that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence they will not be considered for child related ministries.
- Any person that receives a 'Negative Notice' from the Department of Justice in regard to their WWCC will be dismissed or will be denied their application for volunteer/paid work within any child related work.

### **Record Keeping**

CASEY will maintain a database of all records of Working With Children Checks including:

- Full name
- Date of birth
- WWCC number
- Verification date (the date the Church verified them)
- Verification outcome
- Expiry date (when the WWCC number expires)
- Status of the worker (paid or volunteer)

It is an individual's responsibility to renew their WWCC and provide updated details to the ChildSafe Coordinator. If a WWCC expires (after five years) and no update is forthcoming this will mean dismissal of duties until clearance is provided. The ChildSafe Coordinator is to check a person's WWCC annually with the Department of Justice <https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwccu/checkstatus.doj>

## **Appendix 3 Training**

### **Introduction**

CASEY is committed to complying with the expectations as listed in the publication 'A Guide for Creating a Child-safe Organisation' by the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, to ensure best practice within the church. The best preventative measure is thorough and ongoing training. Every member involved in child related ministry must be trained for the role they take responsibility for and have a clear understanding of the expectations of their behaviour, their responsibilities and boundaries as well as a clear line of authority and reporting structure.

### **Scope**

All Church members (Team Leaders, Team members and Helpers as designated by the ChildSafe program) involved in a child-related ministry, as well as:

- all Church Council members apply for WWCC within 3 months of their appointment;
- all volunteers involved with the CASEY ministry.

are required to complete the ChildSafe training within six months after their appointment. A refresher course of the ChildSafe training must be completed every three years after that.

### **Requirements**

Those being trained will receive:

- A copy of this policy and the applicable ChildSafe manuals.
- Training in the content and application of the Protection Policy & Procedure, Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements.

## Appendix 4 Reporting Procedures

### Introduction

CASEY recognises it is possible that any person in the church, whether in a position of leadership or not, to have a child disclose abuse. All cases of abuse, no matter where they occur, will be treated seriously and dealt with according to the guidelines below. If there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been or is suffering abuse such must be reported immediately to the ChildSafe Safety Officer.

### Definitions

The definitions and possible indicators of abuse are detailed in the CRCA pastoral guidelines 'For Justice and Healing' (pp7-9 & 18-28). Briefly they are defined as:

- *Physical abuse*- any intentional act which results in physical pain or injury to any other person, whether or not it is a cut or wound or leaves a mark or bruise.
- *Physical neglect*- not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone else in his or her care.
- *Sexual abuse*- Generally, any sexual intimacy forced on one person by another. Sexual abuse may or may not involve contact between people.
- *Emotional abuse*- Attempts to control another's life through words, threats and fear. It is the destroying of a persons' self worth through harassment, threats and deprivation.

Reasonable grounds: A 'belief on reasonable grounds is formed if a reasonable person in the same position formed the belief on the same grounds' (s.184(4) CYFA Victoria). There may be reasonable grounds when:

- A child states they have been physically or sexually abused;
- A child states that they may know someone who has been abused;
- Someone who knows the child states the child has been abused;
- Signs of abuse lead to the belief that the child has been abused.

### Guidelines

- Treat each allegation seriously and do not attempt to deny the allegation or minimize its impact on the alleged victim.
- Listen very carefully and do not add anything. Do not push the child to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempt to investigate the allegation.
- Assure the child that they are understood and will be taken seriously. Explain that it is not their fault and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Do not promise not to tell anyone else. Indicate that help will be sought from the appropriate authorities.
- Allegations of abuse are to be reported to the ChildSafe Safety Officer with whom an incident report will be completed. Together with the ChildSafe Safety Officer the report will be referred to the police.

- Maintain confidentiality. Any disclosures and all details of subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location.
- Where an allegation is made against a church leader or church worker (volunteer) the accused will be removed from all children's ministry and the matter will be referred to the CRCA National Sexual Abuse Complaints Committee in accordance with the protocol 'Healing a Broken Trust'.
- The insurer must be notified in writing as soon as reasonably practical in accordance with CASEY's duty of disclosure and full and accurate records kept of the communication between HITH and the insurer on that report.

### **Persons of Concern.**

Where the Leadership of CASEY is made aware that a person of concern, namely a person who has been convicted of, currently charged with, or disciplined for a sexual criminal offence, and that person indicates they want to attend at CASEY, such person will be dealt with according to the CRCA 'Guidelines for Persons of Concern'. An appropriate risk assessment will be undertaken and an agreement entered into in consultation with the NSACC.

### **Victorian laws concerning failure to report abuse**

In 2014 the Victorian Parliament passed new 'failure to report' laws. The two new criminal offences:

- Apply to all adults who fail to report suspected criminal child abuse to the police;
- Apply to people in authority in organisations who fail to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a child will become a victim of a sexual offence.

The first offence applies to all adults and therefore everyone at CASEY needs to be aware of this offence. Failure to meet the standards could result in criminal conviction.

## Appendix 5 Electronic Communications Guide

### Introduction

The use of the telephone, email, social networking sites and SMS are part of everyday life for many young people and children. It is important to be aware of the appropriate and positive ways of using these means to ensure communication is done in a safe manner. In some ministry situations electronic communication is a useful tool, such as general messaging to a group of young people. However electronic communication may be used by those seeking to harm or groom children, young people and vulnerable people. (It should be noted that by Victorian law 'Grooming' is now a criminal offence. Refer to CRCA 'Guidelines on the Prevention of Sexual Grooming in the Church').

### Basic Principles

There are three basic principles when having any type of conversation with a young person:

- Remember God is listening: The 'God test' – is this conversation honouring God? The 'parent test' – if this young person's parents were listening/reading this, would they feel comfortable with this conversation?
- Seek transparency in conversations with young people and do not converse where you can't be observed by others.
- Don't get in deeper than you can handle – if issues arise that are greater than your ability or in an area of your weakness refer the young person to others who are better equipped to deal with it. When in doubt, ask for help.

### Guidelines for communicating with children

Ministry leaders should not contact children (primary school age and below) by email, social media, video calls, using chat rooms or by any other form of electronic communication. Ministry leaders should not call or text a child on a child's mobile phone. All electronic communication must be with the child's parent or guardian. On the rare occasion when a leader might need to speak to a child for ministry purposes, the leader is to call the child's parent to explain why they are calling. Only, then with the parent's permission should the leader speak with the child, and that conversation should be kept short.

### Guidelines for communicating with youth

Online communications can create an intense, relational situation because of the ease of access, the comfort of distance and its unobserved nature. A relationship can be developed far more quickly than was possible before online communication was common. Therefore, the church considers talking with young people online to be exactly the same as talking to them face to face. *The same code of conduct for leaders interacting with young people face to face applies to all types of online communication.*

### ***Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/blogs/websites***

Where any of these social media platforms are used as a method of communication within the group this is the best place for leaders to converse with members of the group as all conversations may be held in public. Ensure there is no option for private conversations to take place on this facility.

Best practice is for leaders not to be individual friends on social media with young people within the church or organisation. This is due to the risks inherent in private relationships which may develop over social media. These risks affect both young people and leaders.

However it is recognised that leaders may be individual friends on social media with young people where the relationship is pre-existing or established via other connections, for example they may be related or may have formed the friendship via knowing each other external to the leader/group member relationship. In circumstances where leaders are individual friends with young people on social media leaders are at all times to adhere to the basic principles above.

### ***SMS Text messaging/emails***

Best practice is to only use the above methods of communication as a “one-way” avenue for communicating within the group. Make it clear to all members of the group that while SMS texts/emails will be used for communication leaders will not reply individually to any response from group members, unless a matter of urgency arises and in every case, with a fellow leader copied in on the reply. Give parents the option of always being copied in on any communication from the ministry or organisation leaders and add those parents to the contacts list.

When sending group emails always remember to send any email to yourself first and put all contacts into the blind copy (BCC) field to ensure you do not distribute email addresses without permission. Always copy in fellow leaders. Follow the same privacy protocols if using SMS texts to do mass communication within the group.

### ***Phone/Skype/FaceTime***

In the main seek to avoid where possible individual contact with young people via phone/Skype/ FaceTime. Aim to have 100% of communication to young people via group communication. Should a need arise to use phone/Skype/FaceTime you should be accountable – always get parental permission before you talk with a young person over the phone and tell a co-leader that you are conversing with a young person by phone. If using Skype or Face Time again always gets parental permission before you talk with a young person using this facility. Ensure both you and the young person are using this form of communication in an open area where people can see you or there are others present, e.g. not alone in your room.

In the case where an inappropriate message or image is sent to a leader by a group member via any social media, whether publically or privately, the leader should not reply under any circumstances and it is recommended to immediately notify the ChildSafe Safety Officer.

## CHILDREN'S CODE OF CONDUCT

We all have the right to feel safe and be safe at all times

We know that you will understand the need for this Code of Conduct which serves to protect everyone. Please speak with the Team Leader if you have any concerns about this program.

This Code of Conduct applies to all children who attend.

1. We will play SAFELY, be GENTLE and RESPECT others.
2. We will SHARE and PLAY together.
3. We will not FIGHT with others.
4. We will be POLITE at all times.
5. We will be FRIENDLY to all participants.
6. We will not use NAUGHTY language.
7. We will RESPECT all leaders.
8. We will always TELL a leader if we need help.
9. We will have FUN.



I, \_\_\_\_\_ acknowledge that I have read and understand CASEY's Child Protection Policy, and agree that in the course of my association with CASEY,

### **I will**

- Conduct myself in a manner that is consistent with the values of CASEY.
- Treat all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, political/other opinion, national/ethnic/social origin, property, disability, birth/other status.
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Follow and report any concerns of child abuse in accordance with CASEY's child protection policy and procedures.
- Keep confidential all information that I am party to regarding child protection cases, disclosing and discussing information only with the ChildSafe Safety Officer or other parties as designated by them and according to reporting procedures.
- Respect cultural differences.
- Encourage open communication between all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers, and allow children and young people to participate in the decisions that affect them.
- Be transparent in my actions and whereabouts.
- Take responsibility for ensuring that I am accountable and do not place myself in positions where there is a risk of allegations being made. Wherever possible, I will ensure that another adult is present when I am working in the proximity of children. I will discuss other measures as necessary with CASEY's ChildSafe Safety Officer.
- Be mindful of my behaviour, actions, language and relationship with children.
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding abuse by a fellow worker, volunteer, contractor or visitor, via CASEY's ChildSafe Safety Officer /child protection reporting mechanisms unless they are thought to be the perpetrator.
- Comply with all relevant Australian and State/Territory legislation.
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other exploitation and abuse and policy non-compliance in accordance with appropriate procedures.
- Avoid favouritism to particular children.
- Ensure any contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults is appropriate and in the parameters of the program/event/ministry as stated.
- Always ensure language is appropriate and not offensive or discriminatory.
- Ensure programs are made accessible for people with a disability, and to make changes where needed to assist any specific needs that may arise.
- Provide examples of good conduct in daily activities.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse.
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like.
- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people.

## I will not:

- Engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Use inappropriate, offensive, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, culturally inappropriate or discriminatory language when speaking with a child or young person.
- Allow allegations/suspected abuse/risk of harm or disclosures go unreported.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes. If this is necessary, for example for a child with a disability, I will inform my supervisor first and be as open as possible in my behaviour.
- Hit or physically assault children. This includes refraining from physical punishment or discipline of children.
- Develop inappropriate relationships with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Conduct a sexual relationship with a child or young person or indulge in any form of sexual contact with a child or young person.
- Seek to make contact and/or spend time with any child that I come into contact with in my role as a representative of CASEY outside of the designated times and activities set for performing my role as a representative of CASEY.
- Condone or participate in behaviour of children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Act in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Release or discuss any personal confidential information about suspected or proven child abuse or protection cases other than with the ChildSafe Safety Officer and other parties as designated by them and according to reporting procedures.
- Use any computer, mobile phone, or video and digital camera to exploit or harass children.
- Let children and young people have my personal contact details (mobile number or address).
- Make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to, or in front of, children and young people.
- Act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive.
- Make inappropriate promises to children and young people, particularly in relation to confidentiality.
- Jump to conclusions about others.
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- Rely on my reputation or that of the organisation to protect me.
- Meet with a child under 18 except in a public place or have another person present.

I am responsible for my own actions and utilise safe church standards and best practices to avoid actions and behaviours that could be in breach of this code of conduct and the safe church/child protection policies of CASEY.

I have read CASEY's Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct and discussed its contents with my team leader/pastor. I am aware that CASEY expects me to uphold at all times the standards of behaviour described in the Code of Conduct above. I also understand that disciplinary measures and legal steps will be taken if I am found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct. I understand that in making this report, CASEY may have to inform other authorities, in a confidential manner and only if necessary for the safety of the child, the staff member, or the agency, or to meet obligations under Australian law.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_