



## Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Valley Community Church Inc. (VCC) is mandated to comply with the 11 Child Safe standards set by the State of Victoria. This policy outlines the church's approach to establishing environments that actively prevent harm to our children, provide processes for reporting concerns and outline the leadership approach and oversight of the ongoing development of these policies. It applies in all gatherings in homes as well as any programs run by VCC in the community.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by church leadership to determine whether it is appropriate and inline with best practice and governing legislation.

### **Safe Ministry Contacts**

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### **Standard 1**

**Organizations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued**

VCC recognises the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the Aboriginal community and will take all opportunities to encourage the celebration of Aboriginal culture and acknowledgement of its history. This includes:

- Taking opportunities as a church to learn about Aboriginal Culture
- Placing no restriction on the expression of cultural values, dress or celebration by members
- Actively supporting the identity of Aboriginal children and encouraging them to celebrate their heritage

### **Standard 2**

**Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organizational leadership, governance and culture**

VCC leadership is wholly committed to establish a culture and practice of safety for children participating in our meetings or programs. Recognising the potential for abuse, the leadership count prevention as its highest priority in meetings and events - and is committed to training and educating staff and volunteers in safe practices in this regard.

As part of this commitment a Code of Conduct has been established for all staff, volunteers and members of VCC with regard to creating and maintaining a child safe church.

### **Standard 3**

#### **Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.**

In order to prevent the isolation of our children within programs, opportunities are created for parents to participate in all programs - providing them with on the ground access to the program leaders and to observe the manner in which programs are organized and lead.

VCC and hosts take an active role in all childrens' programs, working closely with leaders and participating in gatherings to establish relationships and rapport with children on a regular basis.

At the beginning of every quarter participating children and families are reminded of reporting processes and the leaders who can be contacted publicly or privately if any matters of abuse or inappropriate behaviour are observed.

VCC leadership is committed to investigating all such reports in good faith and will not discourage any individual from raising concerns.

### **Standard 4**

#### **Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing**

Involvement of families in children's programs is recognised as a helpful defence against the establishment of inappropriate cultures or practices within our childrens' programs. Parents should have easy access to children's events, to observe and participate where appropriate, recognising that the church is at best a complement to the discipleship and nurturing of their children.

All policies relating to child safe environments will be hosted on the Valley Church website ([www.valleychurch.com.au](http://www.valleychurch.com.au)).

At the beginning of each quarter, using in-person gatherings and Valley Church's Whatsapp groups, parents will be reminded of the importance of their involvement and access to children's programs. Reporting procedures are highlighted and the individuals with whom concerns should be raised, confirmed.

#### **Standard 5**

##### **Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice**

VCC recognises the faith journey each person is on with God. While holding to a strict set of Biblical values and commandments, we recognise that each person requires time and space to evaluate their alignment with those values. As a church we consider the Bible our ultimate authority and aim to give everyone participating in our programs an opportunity to engage with and consider their own adoption of these values and principles, in an inclusive environment that does not discriminate on race, sex, gender, culture or physical disability.

#### **Standard 6**

##### **People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice**

As part of the active prevention of harm to children and intentional effort to establish safe environments all volunteers will be screened prior to being engaged in the leadership or facilitation of programs involving children.

In addition to completing a Working with Children check through the Victorian state, all volunteers will be taken through an induction process and will further participate in annual training through Safe Ministry Check training.

Further to formal checks the involvement of all parents in children's programs is encouraged. Events are held in accessible spaces and parents are encouraged to observe all activities.

#### **Standard 7**

##### **Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused**

A comprehensive reporting guide is available on the VCC website ([www.valleychurch.com.au](http://www.valleychurch.com.au))

### **Standard 8**

#### **Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training**

Staff and volunteers from VCC receive annual training through the Safe Ministry Training service.

In addition to this regular training, an annual gathering of everyone involved in children's programs will be held to review VCC's policies, opportunities for improvement and to remind all of the relevant individuals appointed to handle reports.

### **Standard 9**

#### **Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimizing the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed**

Prior to initiating any program involving children VCC will compile a risk assessment and appropriate risk management plan, detailing the potential risks associated with the venue and/or program. All staff and volunteers are provided a copy of the assessments and are briefed accordingly.

Blanket rules governing time spent with children are in place at all gatherings, as part of the Safe Ministry Check Training guidelines, establishing a culture of practice that avoids scenarios where children can be made to feel unsafe.

Four basic rules in place in all scenarios are as follows:

- make it authorised (ensure you have your church leader's approval)
- make it public (open and visible space)
- make it timely (consider the appropriateness of the time of day and length of time)

- make it purposeful (there is an identified wellbeing and/or learning need of the child or young person)

**Standard 10**

**Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved**

VCC leadership reviews and updates all policies concerning the safety and wellbeing of children in the first quarter of each year.

**Standard 11**

**Policies and procedures document how the organization is safe for children and young people**

In an effort to make our child safe policies as accessible as possible, each has been written with brevity in mind, while ensuring that critical information is included. All documents are hosted publicly on the VCC website ([www.valleychurch.com.au](http://www.valleychurch.com.au)) and are updated annually.

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Governing legislation	<a href="https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/">https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/</a>