

Child/Youth Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement:

Metropolitan Community Churches seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of MCC Sydney from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions:

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child,” “children,” or “youth” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Selection of Workers:

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes:

- a. **Six-Month Rule**
No volunteer will be allowed to work with children or youth until s/he has been a member or regular attendee of MCC Sydney for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.
- b. **Written Application**
All persons seeking to work with children or youth must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the offices of MCC Sydney.
- c. **Personal Interview**
Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.
- d. **Reference Checks**
Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organisations where the applicant has worked with children in the past.

Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at the offices of MCC Sydney.

e. **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in providing child care or programming for children and youth during activities and events sponsored by the Metropolitan Community Churches;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;
- Those counseling minors;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors; and
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with minors (i.e., church-sponsored athletic team coaches and vehicle drivers).

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing MCC Sydney to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Pastor or his/her designee on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children or youth and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children or youth. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the offices of MCC Sydney.

Two-Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity. Except if that person is their legal parent or guardian.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.

- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children on behalf of MCC Sydney] becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Pastor or his/her designee for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at MCC Sydney or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker (whether paid or unpaid) alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
3. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
4. We will immediately inform the Executive Director of Metropolitan Community Churches and shall keep the Executive Director fully informed.
5. We will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
6. We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a team will be appointed by the Board of Directors to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or [legal advisor](#).
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth and will no longer qualify to be involved in children or youth activities, or any other leadership role within Metropolitan Community Churches.
8. The Pastor or a person designated by the Pastor will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
9. Pastoral care will be arranged for those who desire it.

Open Door Policy

Room doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for those who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Teenage workers must be at least age 14
- Teenage workers will be screened as specified above.
- Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at MCC Sydney. Parents and guardians are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should not be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of MCC Sydney not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent or guardian. Parents and guardians are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Pastor or his/her designee to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of MCC Sydney not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Pastor or his/her designee if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

For children five years of age and younger, at least two workers should escort a group of children to the bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom or stall first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom or stall door and escort the children back to the activity space. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom or stall door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

For children between the ages of six and eleven, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom or stall is empty, then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.

Youth between the ages of twelve and eighteen may go unescorted to the bathroom but should inform an adult worker when leaving the activity space and when returning to the activity space. The adult worker should then stay aware of the amount of time that the youth is away from the activity space and should seek to locate the youth if the absence from the activity space exceeds ten (10) minutes.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Training

MCC Sydney will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers who are assigned to work at an activity or event sponsored by MCC Sydney and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training. All workers, especially board and club members, are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

Date Adopted by the Board of Directors
of Metropolitan Community Church, Sydney Ltd.]:

__5 July 2013_____