

Child Safe Guidelines for Western Australia

Document C – Reporting within the Church

The church in Western Australia supports the safety and wellbeing of children and young people attending meetings and conventions.

For these Guidelines, the term “church” is used to refer to our ministry and broader fellowship as a collective. This is consistent with the scriptural meaning of “church” a body or gathering of people united by faith. Whilst commonly referred to as the Ministry and Fellowship, “church” has been used to reflect the combined responsibility of both in the context of this matter. It is also to help recognise and retain the sanctity of our individual fellowship and relationship with God.

The term “ministry organised meetings” refers to meetings including Sunday morning fellowship meetings, weeknight Bible studies, gospel meetings, mid-year special meetings, preparations and conventions. It does not extend to private social events such as weddings, funerals, or personal gatherings.

The term “responders” refers to individuals selected from the Western Australian ministry and others who may be called upon to assist in responding to allegations and supporting case management. They are not counsellors or investigators. Their role is to assist in child safety concerns and to help respond in accordance with these Guidelines.

The term “we” or “our” refers to either the church generally or responders specifically, depending on the context in which it appears.

To help maintain child safety, this document sets out an accessible pathway for reporting allegations or complaints. These matters will be handled with consistency, and accountability, in a way that holds to the teachings and example of Christ, and:

- o Enables prompt and consistent assessment and response to concerns or allegations.
- o Upholds procedural fairness in decision-making.
- o Aligns with Western Australian legislative requirements and takes guidance from the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- o Considers current risk and provides for an appropriate and proportional response to such risk.
- o Promotes the safety and wellbeing of children.

SCOPE

The church does not condone any form of abuse or harm, particularly that involving children, young people, or vulnerable persons.

These Guidelines focus specifically on the reporting and management of allegations or complaints related to Child Sexual Abuse (“CSA”) within the church. For further information on what constitutes child sexual abuse, please refer to the WA Government’s resource [*Identifying child abuse and neglect*](#)

We recognise that other forms of abuse—such as physical abuse, neglect, elder abuse, domestic and family violence, or adult sexual assault— cause profound harm. While these matters fall outside the scope of these Guidelines, we acknowledge the courage it takes to speak about them and encourage anyone affected to contact Western Australian Police or other appropriate support services.

The church’s response to reports of child abuse depends on whether the situation happened in a meeting setting or involved someone acting in a church role.

A matter may be considered church-related when a Person Subject of Allegation (“PSOA”) is or was a ministry worker or elder (when acting in capacity as a church elder), or when the alleged incident occurs during or directly arises from a ministry organised meeting. Church-related CSA refers to allegations directly linked to the role the PSOA holds or to a meeting they organise or host.

Upon receipt of a church-related (institutional) matters, the responders will:

- Report all allegations of child sexual abuse to authorities.
- Assess the report and, where appropriate, engage external investigators to carry out an investigation.
- Assess and manage current risks associated with the PSOA and/or the circumstances within which the abuse is alleged to have occurred.

Reporting to Authorities

Anyone that suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is being harmed, or at risk of being harmed or neglected in any way, should report it immediately to the WA Police and/or [Child Protection WA](#)

- **Emergency (000):** If someone is in immediate danger.
- **WA Police (131 444):** For non-emergencies (or attend the local Police station).

Mandatory Reporters - all members of the ministry in Western Australia are mandatory reporters of current Child Sexual Abuse (“CSA”) and must report as soon as practicable.

It is a legal requirement in Western Australia for **certain professions** to report all reasonable beliefs of child sexual abuse to the Department of Communities.

[Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse in WA | Western Australian Government](#)

All adults within the church are encouraged to report CSA to the WA police even if not legally required.

Adult survivors can report historical abuse to WA Police at any time—there is *no statute of limitations*.

Reporting within the church:

- WA overseer:
wa.cs.docs.2025@gmail.com
- Any WA Worker
- *WA Concerns Form*

Resources:

- [Identifying child abuse and neglect](#)
- [Report child abuse | Western Australian Government](#)
- [Child Protection WA](#)
- [Recommendations | Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#)
- [Child Protection Online Training Courses | Bravehearts](#)
- [Webinars for parents and carers | eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Child Safe Training](#)

In non-church-related (including familial) matters, the responders will:

- Report allegations of child sexual abuse to authorities, as required.
- Assess and manage current risks associated with the PSOA and/or the circumstances within which the abuse is alleged to have occurred, to the extent those risks arise in the context of the church's ongoing meetings and activities

Who Can Report

Reports may be made by any person, whether a victim-survivor of abuse or a third party, and whether connected to the church or not.

Reports to the Western Australian Police or Child Protection WA should be made in the form requested by the Police or department.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Maintaining privacy for all parties is a priority, to support the wellbeing of victim-survivors by reducing the risk of re-traumatisation.

All information provided will be treated in strict confidence to protect the identities of the victim-survivor, the complainant, the Person Subject of Allegation ("PSOA"), and the families of all parties. Information will only be shared on a "need to know" basis, or where disclosure is required by law, as part of an investigative process or where deemed necessary to protect others.

Procedural Fairness

All parties will be treated with dignity and respect, and decisions will be made based on evidence. This includes conducting processes impartially—free from bias, conflicts-of-interest, assumptions, or preconceived outcomes—and taking into account all perspectives and available evidence from all sources including the PSOA before any decisions are made.

Responses and actions will be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the allegation.

The PSOA will be informed of the allegation against them, unless the church has been advised or requested not to do so by an authority such as Western Australian Police.

Secure Handling & Storage

We are committed to the secure handling and storage of information. Access is securely managed and limited to individuals directly involved in case management unless otherwise required by law.

Reporting

Speaking up about abuse takes immense courage, so the responders will endeavour to handle every disclosure with sensitivity and respect. We encourage individuals who report sexual abuse to seek support from someone they trust—whether an elder, worker, counsellor or trusted friend.

To ensure reports are addressed promptly and appropriately, we recommend the following pathways:

Church-related Sexual Abuse

- Report directly to WA Police or Child Protection or authorities in relevant location/jurisdiction.
- Report to the church (in addition to reporting to authorities) – see below for information about how to make a report to the church.

Non-church related Sexual Abuse

- Report directly to Western Australian Police or Child Protection or authorities in relevant location/jurisdiction.
- If the victim-survivor, being an adult, or the parent or guardian of a child victim-survivor, wishes to also inform the church, they are invited to contact the church (in addition to reporting to authorities).

Contacting Authorities

- **Emergency (000):** If someone is in immediate danger.
- **WA Police (131 444):** For non-emergencies (or attend the local Police station).
- **Child Protection WA**

Key Terms and Distinctions

Current Child Abuse- Refers to instances of alleged abuse where the victim is under the age of 18 in the present.

Historical Child Abuse- Refers to alleged abuse that occurred during childhood, where the victim is now an adult (18 years or older at the time of disclosure).

Church-Related Child Sexual Abuse - Refers to child abuse perpetrated by a ministry worker or elder in the course of their duties, or abuse that occurred at a ministry organised meeting.

Non-Church-Related Child Sexual Abuse - Refers to perpetrated by individuals such as family members, family friends, or others known—or unknown—to the victim.

Ministry Organised Meetings- Refers to meetings including Sunday morning fellowship meetings, weeknight Bible studies, gospel meetings, mid-year special meetings, preparations and conventions. It does not extend to private social events such as weddings, funerals, or personal gatherings.

Person Subject of Allegation (PSOA)– Refers to the individual whose conduct is the subject of a report or complaint.

Substantiated Allegation - Refers to allegations or complaints that have been proven to have occurred or are deemed more likely to have occurred than not, by relevant authorities, professional investigators, or as acknowledged by the PSOA.

Conflict of Interest – exists when a person has or would reasonably be perceived to have more than one competing interest or is in a position to derive personal benefit from a process, decision, action or outcome.

Responders - Refers to individuals selected from the Western Australian ministry and others who may be called upon to assist in responding to allegations and supporting case management. They are not counsellors or investigators. Their role is to assist in receiving child safety concerns and to respond in accordance with these Guidelines.

Overseer - Refers to one or more experienced ministry workers who act as a representative of the ministry in Western Australia.

If at any time, a person forms a reasonable belief that an individual poses a current risk to a child within a meeting environment, they are encouraged to notify [Child Protection WA](#)

Contacting the church

- **WA Overseer:** wa.cs.docs.2025@gmail.com
- **Any WA Worker**

While a report may initially be made to the WA Overseer or a WA Worker verbally, to help us understand how we may be able to support or respond to an allegation of CSA, we ask that all reports are confirmed in writing (in a form convenient to the person making the report) or by completing the *WA Concerns Form*. Responders are willing to assist with the recording of any report in writing.

A written report is requested to ensure that there is a clear and accurate record of the allegation. The content of the written report will assist the responders to determine whether the allegation constitutes a mandatory reporting matter, whether it requires investigation and to determine how best, care and support can be provided to the reporter and other interested parties.

It is acknowledged that in circumstances where the reporter is a child, then a written report may not be available. In those circumstances, the person who received the report from the child is invited to create a contemporaneous written record of their conversation or other interaction with the child for provision to responders.

Next Steps

Once a report is made, it will be assessed by the responders to determine whether it falls within the scope of these Guidelines. Where appropriate, the responders will help connect the victim-survivor with support services or agencies better positioned to assist, if the church does not have the ability or expertise to provide the support they need.

All reports are reviewed to determine whether there is sufficient information to investigate the allegation. If so, the following process applies.

Conflicts of Interest

In close-knit communities, familiarity can lead to conflicts of interest. To uphold impartiality and procedural integrity, institutional Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) allegations may need to be reported to, or investigated by, independent authorities or advisers. All individuals involved in responding to reported CSA must disclose any conflicts of interest. If a conflict arises, alternative arrangements are made to protect the integrity of the process.

Approach to Allegations Pending Investigation

Where allegations are unsubstantiated, we aim to respond with fairness, discretion, and respect for all involved. To support a fair and respectful process, we ask that all individuals uphold confidentiality and allow due process to proceed. Specifically:

- Details about the allegations or the parties involved in the report should not be shared unless the recipient of that information has a clear and legitimate 'need to know', a reporting obligation, or is the subject of a request from investigating or other authorities.
- The privacy of all parties is a priority, particularly that of victim-survivors to ensure the risk of re-traumatisation is minimised.
- Every individual is entitled to procedural fairness. Until an allegation is formally investigated and substantiated, no assumptions or conclusions should be made, implied or shared concerning the guilt or innocence of the PSOA.
- Avoid speculation or premature disclosure. Sharing information—or informing the PSOA before police or other authorities have had an opportunity to investigate — can compromise the investigation process, cause reputational harm, and in some cases, breach legal protections such as defamation laws.

Discreet precautionary measures may be implemented within a ministry organised meeting to support the wellbeing of attendees and manage any current risk while seeking to preserve the privacy of all individuals involved. As part of these measures, a person may be asked to temporarily step back from church duties, or temporarily cease attending meetings, or to temporarily participate in child-protective arrangements while attending meetings. This action is not a presumption or indication of guilt, but a protective and precautionary response aimed at maintaining a safe and impartial environment while an allegation is investigated.

What to Do When Someone Speaks Up

If someone shares an experience of child sexual abuse—whether recent or historical—how we respond can make all the difference. A calm, respectful, and compassionate response can help the individual feel heard, and supported. We encourage:

- Listening without judgment. Allow the individual to share in their own words and at their own pace.
- Acknowledging their courage. It takes strength to speak up. A simple “Thank you for telling me” Can offer meaningful support.
- Not pressing for details. The role is to listen with care, not to investigate.
- Offering reassurance. Let them know they are not alone—support is available, and there are people who can help.
- Responding appropriately. If the concern relates to child sexual abuse, follow the relevant reporting obligations with sensitivity and care.

Support Services

1800 Respect

website: www.1800respect.org.au
phone: 1800 737 732

Blue Knot Foundation

website: www.blueknot.org.au
phone: 1300 657 380

Bravehearts

website: www.bravehearts.org.au
phone: 1800 272 831

Headspace

website: www.headspace.org.au
phone: 1800 650 890

Lifeline

website: www.lifeline.org.au
phone: 131 114

MensLine Australia

website: www.mensline.org.au
phone: 1300 789 978

Investigating Church-Related Allegations

Responders will assess all church-related allegations. Where an allegation contains reasonably actionable information indicating that child sexual abuse may have occurred—whether in the past or present—responders will assess the matter and make any reports required under Western Australian law.

If the PSOA has already admitted to the conduct described in the allegation, or the allegation has been substantiated through other reliable means, responders may determine that a further investigation is not necessary.

The church acknowledges it will often not be sufficiently free of conflicts of interest and may not have the expertise to investigate allegations or to assess the risk posed by a PSOA. Accordingly, the responders may engage an independent expert to investigate the allegation and to evaluate and advise them on the management of risks arising from the allegation.

Where allegations relate to Western Australian overseer, Western Australian ministry workers are expected to seek support from another Australian overseer to assess and process the case in accordance with Western Australian Guidelines.

Importantly, an allegation that does not include sufficient detail may not be able to be investigated (including where assessed by investigators as having no reasonable prospect of being substantiated).

Managing Risk: Upon Substantiation

Where an allegation of child sexual abuse is substantiated - either by authorities, investigators, other reliable means, or through admission, the church will respond in an appropriate and proportional manner. Appropriate steps may include the provision of additional child safety training, the implementation of corrective measures and/or causing the substantiated offender to step down from ministry or elder roles (if applicable) and where appropriate, the substantiated offender may be excluded from church meetings.

Responders have a responsibility to assess and respond to potential risk to the safety of children who attend its meetings. If an individual with a conviction or a substantiated allegation of child sexual abuse attends meetings, or is seeking to attending meetings, their attendance will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

This is the case regardless of whether the abuse was church-related or not. Where appropriate and reasonable to do so, measures may be put in place to enable the PSOA to continue participating in ministry organised meetings. In such circumstances, risk assessments may be conducted by a professional assessor to guide informed decision-making in respect of the substantiated offender's attendance. Associated costs of conducting those risk assessments will ordinarily be the responsibility of the substantiated offender.

The church will comply fully with all legal and court-imposed restrictions, including those issued by police, courts, parole boards, or the Community Protection and Public Sex Offender Register.

If an incident of child sexual abuse occurs during a meeting or convention involving individuals who do not hold a church role, the church will provide support and assistance appropriate to the circumstances of each case. It will also cooperate fully with authorities and conduct an internal review to assess and address any safety concerns related to the venue or the circumstances within which the incident is alleged to have occurred.

Meeting Arrangements

While the church respects the importance of personal worship, it has a legal and moral obligation to ensure attendees can worship safely, and that all risks to attendees' safety are appropriately mitigated. Every decision and meeting arrangement is made with child safety in mind.

Where professional risk assessments indicate that in-person attendance by a PSOA or a substantiated offender is not appropriate, alternative arrangements, such as the PSOA or substantiated offender being monitored by nominated volunteers throughout their presence at a meeting, or remote listening to ministry-led meetings, may be offered to the PSOA or substantiated offender to support their spiritual connection in a safe manner.

Elders and convention ground hosts will be consulted in relation to safety decisions that consider the nature and status of the allegation, the current risk, local circumstances, the availability of appropriate monitors and in consideration of other attendees.

When meetings are held in the home of a PSOA or substantiated offender, alternative meeting venues will be arranged. If this is not possible, additional measures may be introduced to support the safety and wellbeing of all participants.

Support for Survivors

We acknowledge that raising concerns about child sexual abuse can be difficult. Support is available to assist in reporting to Police, direct to professional services, or simply listen with care.

Adult victim-survivors have the right to choose when, how, and to whom they disclose. Any steps taken will be implemented with consideration for their rights, autonomy, and privacy.

Review and Feedback

We understand that questions or concerns may arise following an investigation, risk assessment, or meeting arrangements.

If anyone has questions or concerns, we encourage that they contact the church.

Where appropriate and depending on the nature of the concern or any new information, a review of the matter may be initiated.

Guideline Review

Child Safe Guidelines for Western Australia – *Document C: Reporting within the Church.*

These Guidelines have been introduced in alignment with federal and Western Australian legislation, the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

These Guidelines have been reviewed by Irdi Legal, external counsel with expertise in child safeguarding, and are subject to biennial internal reviews.

Next review: October 2027

Related Documents

- [WA Child Safe Guidelines](#)
- *Document A – Child Safety within the Church*
- *Document B – Safe Conduct within the Church*
- *WA Concerns Form*

Response Pathways

Each category of child sexual abuse allegation requires a tailored response, both within the church and in accordance with Western Australian legislation and reporting obligations.

