

Australian Evangelical Alliance Inc. (Missions Interlink)

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Policy number	Pol. 004	Version	5
Drafted by	Nataliya Osipova	Approved by Board on	23 March 2015
Reviewed by	Policy Committee	Last reviewed	October 2023
Responsible person	Nataliya Osipova	Scheduled review date	October 2024

INTRODUCTION

Australian Evangelical Alliance Inc. (AEA) recognises that Christians are called to be holy, as God is holy, and that a Christian's manner of life should reflect to the world both God's holiness and love.

We read that Jesus has a special place in his heart for children; we are told to emulate their faith, and we are warned against hindering them in any way.

AEA ministries are committed to protecting the safety of all people within its programs, ministries, and events.

All people, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, disability and family or 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.

We will not tolerate harm to any person, especially to a child or young person.

Our policy has been developed to uphold this commitment to the wellbeing and safety of children and to adhere to National and State legislation, National standards, and regulations.

Our Child Safety Policy

- This policy applies to all activities of AEA and all its ministries including Missions Interlink

This Policy outlines AEA's commitment to:

- The Protection of children and young people who participate in the activities of Missions Interlink from abuse and exploitation;
- Provide all people with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection;
- Its responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe, believing that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind;
- Manage activities in a way that protects children and young people;
- Embedding child safety in AEA's organisational leadership, governance and culture;
- Risk management strategies focusing on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children;
- Creating a safe place for all people, with a focus particularly on children and young people;
- Eliminating the risk of abuse, misconduct, and misuse of positional power;

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

- Budgeting sufficient time and money to child abuse prevention and response;
- Ensuring that all child safety concerns, suspected abuse and misconduct are handled promptly and thoroughly;
- Ensuring that leaders and programs are safe;
- Suitable screening, training and supervision of staff and volunteers (this will comply with the AEA Staff Code of Conduct that sets clear behavioural standards towards children);
- Ensuring that all people are respected and valued. Particular attention will be paid to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The policy applies to all activities authorised by or under the control of AEA where children are involved directly or indirectly, including those activities undertaken at the AEA offices or away from the premises. The policy applies to all Board members, staff and volunteers engaged by AEA.

APPLICATION

Applies to all activities of AEA and all its ministries including Missions Interlink.

Policy

1. AEA believes that childhood should be spent in a protective environment that enables children to flourish and achieve their full potential. As part of this, AEA believes that any form of child abuse and exploitation is unacceptable, and such abuse and exploitation will not be tolerated. AEA is committed to the safety and well-being of all children.
2. We encourage our staff and volunteers to build and maintain a protective environment for children, by adhering to and promoting procedures on child protection.
3. While children's ministries are not a major focus of AEA's operations, there are occasions when children are the focus of and/or are present at events or activities, and this Policy and related Procedures aim to reduce the risk of abuse occurring, as well as ensuring that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.
4. Some AEA ministries, events or activities will involve participation by other organisations. These organisations will possibly have policies governing the issues of member and/or child safety and abuse. AEA's Policy and Procedures are not intended to replace or conflict with other policies, but instead to operate in conjunction with them. Where those organisations do not have equivalent policies, we expect that their practices in relation to Child Protection will be equivalent or higher than those adopted by AEA.
5. All events and activities promoted or delivered by AEA ministries, will contain relevant child safety content in its timetable.
6. Our response to any cases of child abuse will be guided by the following:

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

- a. We will notify the appropriate legal authorities in procedures below.
 - b. We will take steps to protect the person who has experienced abuse from any further harm and will provide them with appropriately skilled and qualified follow up care.
 - c. We will take steps to hold the person responsible for the abuse accountable for their actions, and if they are staff of AEA, also assist with the provision of appropriately skilled and qualified follow up care.
7. We will take steps to explore if any other children have been harmed and provide age-appropriate child safety training.

***Policies** can be established or altered only by the Board: **Procedures** may be altered by the CEO.*

Australian Evangelical Alliance Inc. (Missions Interlink)

CHILD SAFETY PROCEDURES			
Policy number	AEA Proc. 004	Version	2
Drafted by	Nataliya Osipova	Approved on	October 2023
Responsible person	Nataliya Osipova	Scheduled review date	November 2024

RESPONSIBILITIES

All AEA members will be responsible for the care of children. They will need to follow the Child safety policy to reduce the risk of abuse occurring, as well as ensuring that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

Spiritual

The core beliefs of AEA require us to treat all people with love and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

Legal

AEA and its leaders are subject to Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides further explanation of rights and obligations in relation to this topic.

Ethical

Some actions may not be regarded as abuse but are unacceptable behaviour for AEA leaders. These include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature
- Suggestive gestures or remarks
- Jokes of a sexual nature
- Inappropriate touching
- Inappropriate literature or media (e.g. PG, M, MA, R or X rated material used with young children)
- Recording or filming without prior consent
- Acts of violence committed by a leader during an activity

The age of individuals is recognised as one of the determinants in deciding whether behaviour is acceptable or unacceptable. These decisions will be made by people with appropriate levels of training, skills and experience, for example Child Safety consultant or a child psychologist.

Organisational and ministry directors and leaders will ensure that high standards of conduct are always maintained.

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

All staff members of AEA have a responsibility for establishing and maintaining safe environments for children. The National Director will ensure that all people responsible for planning and running an AEA event comply with the following procedures.

DEFINITIONS

Child: Any person under the age of 18.

Abuse: Can consist of one or more of, but is not restricted to the following:

- **Physical abuse** – Any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:
 - Hitting
 - Punching
 - Kicking
 - Marks (e.g. from belt buckles, fingers)
 - Shaking (particularly babies)
 - Burning (e.g. from irons, cigarettes)
 - Biting
 - Pulling out hair
 - Alcohol or other drug administration.
- **Sexual abuse** – Any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual, but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.
- **Emotional abuse** – The chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child's development, self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child's presence.
- **Neglect:** Characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's development.
- **Grooming:** Grooming describes the preparatory stage of child sexual abuse and exploitation, often undertaken to gain the trust and/or compliance of the child or young person and to establish secrecy and silence to avoid disclosure. A child or young person's parents/carers or other significant adults (including organisations) may also be groomed by someone intending to harm a child. Grooming may occur in person or online.

Volunteers: Any person over the age of 16 who is invited by a leader to assist them in their ministry.

Leader: Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of people placed in their care. A leader could include but is not limited to:

- A member of staff
- Qualified ministers or staff of MI Member and Associate organisations
- Volunteer Youth/Children's leaders
- A contractor employed by AEA

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

Person: For the purpose of this document, a Person is any person, including children, who attends or participates in AEA Ministries.

Ministry: Any organised activity that is authorised by AEA or its associated organisations.

Ministry Leader: The person recognised and authorised by AEA as head of a ministry

Child Safety Officer (CSO): The AEA Staff member nominated to receive child safety concerns and implement its child safety policy and procedures.

Child Safety Consultant (CSC): An independent person engaged in the event of a receipt of a child Safety report. The CSC will be involved in any investigation and must be trained, qualified and experienced in child protection.

PROCESSES

The National Director (ND) will:

- Ensure relevant legislation, policies, procedures and quality standards are implemented throughout AEA;
- Keep appropriate records to demonstrate the organisation has provided an acceptable level of duty of care.

The Child Safety Officer (CSO) will:

- Implement the AEA child safety policies and procedures.
- Be the primary receiver of all child safety concerns and reports.
- Deliver or coordinate child abuse prevention and response training to AEA staff, families and age-appropriate training to children.
- Maintain reference checks, working with children checks, interview summary and training database.
- Maintain the risk assessment database for child related activities or events.
- Assist organisers with the development, implementation and documentation of child safety related topics for AEA organised or promoted events and activities.
- Provide regular updates for the ND's quarterly child safety board report.
- Run a training webinar for staff/volunteers once every year.
- Screen of new ministry leaders.

1. Planning for Ministries, Events and Activities

The planning for any event conducted by or on behalf of AEA should consider whether children will be present and under the control or care of AEA staff or volunteers. If so, the remaining sections of this procedure document are applicable.

2. Screening of Leaders by Child Safety Officer

Selection of Leaders is a responsibility of the Event or ministry coordinator.

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

Any person involved in an event which provides a children's ministry, or the coordinators and leaders of events where children may be present must be carefully selected and screened, regardless of whether they are a member of staff or a volunteer. Prior to any person commencing child-related ministries, the following precautions will be taken:

- Leaders must be committed members of their local church and have regularly attended the church for at least 6 months, or have had a formal connection with a Missions Interlink approved organisation for longer than 6 months.
- Candidate leaders must complete an application form which requests details of relevant experience, positions held, details of two referees and permission to contact anyone regarding the applicant's suitability. (see Appendix 1) One referee must hold a leadership position at the local church or mission organisation of the candidate.
- Referees could be asked to forward the names and contact details for two more people who could be interviewed by phone (see Appendix 2) in support of the candidate leader, answering questions provided by AEA. The answers provided will help establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position. Any subsequent conversations with additional referees will be documented and retained on file.
- Short listed candidate leaders must be interviewed by their ministry leader or an experienced and responsible staff member or volunteer of AEA, prior to being accepted as a leader (refer Appendix 3 for suggested interview questions).
- A Working with Children check (or its equivalent if there is no legislative WWCC process, e.g. SA) must be completed, and evidence of the check provided to AEA. The check must comply with local state or territory requirements. Note that in some jurisdictions, responsibility for the check lies with the individual while in others it lies with the employer (AEA).
- All leaders working directly with children will do child protection training every two years and provide AEA with the documentation.
- Candidate leaders must provide written acknowledgement that they understand and agree to comply with AEA's Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct, and associated procedures.

Screening and training of volunteers involved in any aspect of AEA activities that include children must also be undertaken in a way that is appropriate to the volunteers' age and role.

If someone is ineligible for WWCC or equivalent, they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for child related ministries.

These offences do not necessarily preclude the applicant from serving in other ministries within AEA. After careful consideration, AEA might welcome the applicant's contribution in more appropriate areas.

3. Training

The CSO need to ensure that all leaders will be issued with a copy of the AEA Child Safety Policy, Procedures and Code of Conduct and will receive training in:

- The content and application of AEA's Child Protection Policy & Procedures and other relevant child safety resources.
- Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements.

In addition, ministry leaders responsible for recruiting leaders for child related ministries will undertake further education on child protection.

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

4. A Safe Environment

Incidents of abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, leaders and volunteers will avoid being alone with an individual child for any time or purpose and all conversations will be carried out within sight of another leader.

Leaders and volunteers will not visit children in their homes unless a parent is present and in the same room, or another leader accompanies them.

Leaders and volunteers will respect a person's feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact of any kind.

Adults and children are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Leaders and volunteers will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No leader or volunteer will be alone in a room with a child while either is changing.

Leaders and volunteers have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at child-related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

Child-to-child behaviour

Where a child is in a position of power or has responsibility over another child (for example in a childcare arrangement) and abuses that trust through engaging in sexual activity, this is likely to be regarded as abusive. The same applies where one child introduces another child to age-inappropriate sexual activity or forces themselves onto a child. Such situations should be treated as seriously as if an adult were involved because the effects on the child victim can be just as great. Research suggests approximately 50 % of sexual offences against children are committed by children and young people.

Staff and Leaders should:

- ☐ Know and recognise the "Six stages of grooming".

Learn to recognise warning signs that their children may be being abused.

- ☐ Talk with the children under their care about safe and unsafe touch.

Train their children in what to do if someone does something that makes them feel uncomfortable.

- ☐ Train their children to understand what behaviours constitute abuse.

- ☐ Fully cooperate with Missions Interlink Leadership in the investigation and follow-up of any suspected case of abuse where child might be involved.

Children will be made aware of their rights explained in a manner appropriate to their age.

5. Alcohol & drugs

The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs at the location or during an activity is not to be permitted or condoned by any leader. Any child found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be returned home immediately.

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

Any child required to take prescription medication will provide a letter from their parents/guardians to the ministry leader.

6. Disciplining children

It is not the responsibility of AEA or its leaders to discipline a child. If a child does not abide by the rules set down by the leader; or is an obstruction to the care of other children, or may cause harm to other children, the child will be removed and referred to their parent or guardian.

At no time will a leader administer any form of physical, emotional or mental discipline.

7. Reporting procedures

Any concerns or allegations arising in relation to Child Safety should be referred to the CSO.

Where a concern or allegation is made involving a leader or volunteer, the leader or volunteer concerned will be removed from all children's ministry pending the outcome of all investigations.

If there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been or is currently at risk of suffering abuse either within or outside the AEA activity (e.g., home or school), it must be reported to the AEA CSO and to the appropriate authority as mandated by law (within 24 hours)

(see <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/pubs/factsheets/a141787/index.html>)

How to report

State	Reporting Authority	Contact details
ACT	Child and Youth Protection Services	Phone: General public Ph: 1300 556 729 (24 hours) Mandated reporters Ph: 1300 556 728 (24 hours) Online: For less serious concerns, complete an online child concern report. Email: For less serious concerns, contact Child Protection Reports(link sends e-mail).
NSW	Department of Family and Community Services	Phone: Child Protection Helpline

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

		Ph: 13 21 11 (24 hours) (TTY/voice calls: 133 677; Speak & Listen: 1300 555 727; SMS: 0423 677 767) Online: Mandatory reporters with less serious concerns can use eReporting.
Northern Territory	Territory Families	Phone: Child Abuse Hotline Ph: 1800 700 250 (24 hours)
Queensland	Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women	Phone: For a list of contact numbers during business hours, go to: Regional Intake Services. Child Safety After Hours Service Centre Ph: 1800 177 135 or (07) 3235 9999.
South Australia	Department for Child Protection	Phone: Child Abuse Report Line Ph: 13 14 78 (24 hours) Online: Less serious concerns can also be reported online.
Tasmania	Department of Communities Tasmania	Phone: Child Safety Service 1800 000 123 (24 hours) Online: Mandatory reporters with less serious concerns can report online.

***Policies** can be established or altered only by the Board: **Procedures** may be altered by the CEO.*

Victoria	Department of Health and Human Services	Phone: For a list of regional and metropolitan phone numbers: Child Protection Contacts After hours child protection emergency service Ph: 13 12 78
Western Australia	Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support	Phone: Central Intake Team Ph: 1800 273 889 After hours Ph: (08) 9223 1111 or Country Freecall: 1800 199 008 Online: Mandatory reporters with less serious concerns can use the department's secure Mandatory Reporting Web System

Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:

1. A child discloses that he or she has been abused, and/or
2. Someone close to a child (e.g., sibling, relative, close friend) discloses on behalf of that child.

If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be swept under the carpet.
- Not pushing the child to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the child that they are understood and that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what allegedly has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Not contacting the alleged perpetrator. If the leader is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it may be advisable for another person to assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation.
- Maintaining confidentiality.

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

Any disclosures of abuse must be documented promptly and as accurately as possible, using words expressed by the child, and this record is to be kept securely so that the child's privacy is not compromised.

These procedures will be developed, implemented, and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that best practice is achieved.

Related Documents & Resources

General information about Working With Children legal framework

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/pubs/factsheets/a141887/>

Internet sites for Working With Children registration

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren/>

<http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/kids/working.cfm>

<http://www.workingwithchildren.nt.gov.au/>

<http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/bluecard/applications/applications.html>

<http://www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au/checkwwc>

Organisations providing training and consulting in child protection practices

<https://bst.qld.edu.au/safeguarding-children/>

<https://www.ncca.org.au/safe-church-program/about-2>

<http://www.childsafe.org.au/>

<http://www.childwise.net/>

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://www.unicef.org.au/Discover/What-we-do/Convention-on-the-Rights-of-the-Child/childfriendlycrc.aspx>

APPENDIX 1 – Application form

Child Leadership Application Form

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

Position Applied For: _____

Personal Details _____

Full Name: _____

Residential Address: _____

Home Ph: _____ Mob Ph: _____ Work Ph.: _____

Email Address: _____

Please list all ***Places of Worship*** that you have attended regularly in the last 3 years:

Date (Approx.)	Place of Worship

Please list any ***qualifications*** you have that relate to working with children:

Date	Qualification	Institution

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

--	--	--

Please provide any **experience** you have had that relates to working with children:

Date	Organisation	Position

References

Please provide details of two people we can contact, who can comment on your suitability for this position:

Do you give Mission Interlink your permission to ask anyone of their choosing to comment on your suitability for this position? ☐ yes ☐ no

First Referee (local church leader referee)

Full Name: _____

Residential Address: _____

Home Ph: _____ Mob Ph: _____ Work Ph: _____

Email Address: _____

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

Position & Organisation: _____

Second Referee

Full Name: _____

Residential Address: _____

Home Ph: _____ Mob Ph: _____ Work Ph: _____

Email Address: _____

Position & Organisation: _____

DECLARATIONS

I have:

- Read and understood AEA's Child Safety Policy & Procedures?

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

Yes / No

- Read and understood and signed AEA's Child Safety Code of Conduct?

Yes / No

- Had someone express concerns about my behaviour towards a child?

Yes / No

- Have been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of an investigation relating to the abuse of a child or inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Yes / No

I confirm that the information provided on this application form is true and correct.

I consent to a National Police Record check and the release to the Australian Evangelical Alliance any matters deemed to be relevant which are recorded against my name.

Applicants Signature: _____ Date: _____

Applicants Name: _____

Ministry coordinator: _____ Date: _____

Please sign and email to CSO

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

APPENDIX 2 - Questions for Child Safety referees

Australian Evangelical Alliance Inc. Child Leadership Referee Form

Referee Statement in support of (insert name): _____

1. How long have you known the applicant? ____ Years ____ Months

2. Do you consider this person to be suitable for working with children? Explain.

3. Please advise any concerns you might have about the applicant working in the proposed role?

4. Are you aware of any concerns or allegations that have been raised regarding the applicant and children?

Full Name: _____

Position & Organisation: _____

Residential Address: _____

Home Ph: _____ Mob Ph: _____ Work Ph: _____

Email Address: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

APPENDIX 3 – Suggested interview questions

Children Safety Interview Questions by Child Safety Officer

The questions asked in this interview may leave you feeling uncomfortable but they are a necessary part of our child safety policy and must be answered. The answers you provide will be kept confidential where possible but may be divulged to other Leaders within AEA.

1. Why have you applied for this position and why do you feel you are suitable for the role?

2. Please describe any positive experiences you have had with children or young people.

Policies can be established or altered only by the Board: Procedures may be altered by the CEO.

3. Please describe any negative experiences you have had with children or young people

4. Have you ever been in a situation where you have disciplined a child or young person?
If so, how did you handle this situation?

***Policies** can be established or altered only by the Board: **Procedures** may be altered by the CEO.*

5. Have you ever been investigated for violent or sexually related offences? If so, what were the circumstances?

6. Has anyone raised any concerns or allegations about your behavior with children?

6. Is there any other information relating to your suitability for this position that we should be aware of?

***Policies** can be established or altered only by the Board: **Procedures** may be altered by the CEO.*