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**MI EVENTS WITH CHILDREN**

**CHILD PROTECTION**

Missions Interlink is committed to maintaining a safe and caring environment where children are free from harm, and where event leaders/staff/volunteers are not subjected to false allegations. In order to achieve these aims at this event, MI Child Protection policies and procedures must be followed carefully (these will be provided by MI where necessary).

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

**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 event leaders/staff/volunteers. 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 (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 in the course of an activity

The age of individuals is recognised as one of the determinants in deciding whether behaviour is acceptable or unacceptable.

**PROCESSES CHECKLIST**

* Event leaders/staff/volunteers have been selected and screened as per MI policy, including but not limited to, WWCC, appropriate references, interviews, etc.
* The event organiser has sent a record of all leaders/staff/volunteers, inclusive of indication of WWCC status, to the MI National Director.
* Event leaders/staff/volunteers have been appropriately trained regarding legal requirements and MI Child Protection policy, including relevant reporting procedures.
* A safe environment will be maintained at all times by ensuring that:
* No event leader/staff/volunteer is alone with a child at any time
* Privacy is respected and modelled by leaders/staff/volunteers in regards to activities requiring undressing (e.g. swimming)
* Personal boundaries and feelings regarding physical contact will be respected by all leaders/staff/volunteers
* Event leaders/staff/volunteers have a right to ask persons to leave who do not have a valid reason to be present at this event.
* Alcohol or illegal drugs will not be allowed or condoned at this event.
* Children who require prescription drugs must provide a letter from parents to the event organiser.
* Event leaders/staff/volunteers will not be permitted to administer discipline to any child.
* The event organiser will ensure all reporting procedures are followed by every event leader/staff/volunteer, who have been trained regarding reporting procedures.

**REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Any allegations arising in relation to Child Protection should be referred to the National Director or Chair of the Board of AEA.

Documented reporting and escalation procedures are outlined in the Complaints Policy & Procedures.

Where an allegation is made involving a leader or helper, the accused leader or helper 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 appropriate authority as mandated by law (see <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/pubs/factsheets/a141787/index.html> )

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: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
* Not making contact with 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.

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.