



PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF
VICTORIA

SAFE CHURCH

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VICTORIA

ADVANCED TRAINING

PARTICIPANTS WORKBOOK

www.safechurchpcv.org.au



Welcome to Safe Church Advanced Training

Advanced Training covers Safe Church material at a deeper level and in particular focuses on prevention and wider understandings. It is delivered to designated senior leaders in Presbyterian Church of Victoria congregations and organisations with particular responsibility for leading and delivering ministry in both general and specific areas.

ADVANCED TRAINING COVERS...

1. PCV child safety and vulnerable people safety obligations
2. Responding to...
3. Preventing sexual abuse and offending in the Church
4. Seeking help

This participants workbook is provided to you for your own notes.

How to use this workbook

As we work through the four sections of training you will find that information is reproduced for you here in the workbook, along with sections for notes.

In addition, you are provided with copies of two government fact sheets in relation to the *Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017* and Reportable Conduct.

Please make sure that you take the time to read the fact sheets.

If you have any questions about the training material and content please contact the Safe Church Unit. Do not ask questions of your Safe Church Representative – it is not the responsibility of Safe Church Representatives to answer such questions.

More information

www.safechurchpcv.org.au also has further information and resources. If you have any further queries or concerns regarding Safe Church feel free to contact the Safe Church Unit.

**Safe Church is everybody's responsibility –
Anyone can contact the SCU with complaints or concerns**

Telephone 0499 090 449 **Email** safechurch@pcv.org.au

DISCLAIMER

Safe Church deals specifically with the issue of abuse of children and young people and the abuse of authority by those in a position of authority within the church. It does not deal with any other form of grievance or personal injury claim. Safe Church is provided on the terms and understanding that the writer and the church is not responsible for the results of any action taken on the basis of information in this publication, nor for any error in, or omission from, this publication. The author, the publisher, its employees or any other persons involved in the preparation of Safe Church expressly disclaim all and any liability and responsibility to any person, in respect of anything, and of the consequences of anything, done or omitted to be done, by any such person in reliance, whether wholly or partially, upon the whole or any part of this publication. Where a specific issue / incident arises, expert professional advice should always be sought. The information and advice is made available in good faith, reflects current knowledge, literature, legislation, regulations and standards and is derived from sources believed to be accurate at the time of publication. Safe Church should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation and is not a substitute for it. The content will require updating in line with amendments or additions, which may supersede those cited, later in time, after the publication of this document.

1. PCV child safety and vulnerable people safety obligations

The highest mandate to protect children and vulnerable adults in the Church from abuse, offending and harm, is the Biblical mandate to do so.

In addition to this, there are both Church and legal obligations upon the Church to do so:

- Sexual Abuse Insurance
- Legal Duty of Care
- Working With Children Check legislation
- Failure to Protect (Crimes Act Section 490)
- Failure to Disclose (Crimes Act Section 327)
- No Statute of Limitations for sexual assault
- Reverse Onus Legislation
- Mandatory Reporting
- Victorian Child Safe Standards
- Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Safe Church Policy
- Safe Church Code of Conduct
- PCV Code Book – 3.2.1 & 3.2.2

The terms “child” and “children” are defined within Safe Church Advanced Training as people under 18 years of age and as such includes teenagers or young people.

Mandatory Reporting

Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) Victoria

The Victorian Parliament, on September 10th 2019, passed amendments to the Children, Youth and Families Act, which mean that people in religious ministries are added to the list of mandated reporters to Child Protection Services.

The legislation states that a:

"person in religious ministry means a person appointed, ordained or otherwise recognised as a religious or spiritual leader in a religious institution;"

The law makes it mandatory for ministers and other appointed religious leaders to report child abuse, including when it is revealed to them during a confession. Under the law, ministers and religious leaders face up to three years' jail if they don't report child physical and sexual abuse allegations.

Mandatory reporting refers to the legal requirement for nominated groups to report a reasonable belief of physical or sexual child abuse to authorities.

Key Takeaway

The Royal Commission revealed that the culture of “cover-up” always begins at the top, with the leaders.

As Royal Commission and other cases have proceeded through police investigations and into the secular law courts it is likely even more “cover-ups” by Christian leaders will be exposed.

To be truly “above reproach” and have a “good reputation with outsiders” [1 Timothy 3], let alone fulfill the Christian moral obligation to protect the little ones, Christian leaders must make sure they are never complicit in a “cover-up” in a child sexual abuse matter in the Church - including a failure by leaders to protect children from risk of sexual abuse or offending posed by a risky person in a church setting, where leaders knew of the risk and failed to risk manage this.

Both the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Victoria have adopted, and implemented, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Recommendations to Religious Institutions as contained in Volume 16 of the Commission’s Final Report – see

https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/un-redacted_final_report_volume_16_book_2_-_religious_institutions.pdf

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, in September 2019, included a formal apology to victims of child sexual abuse in the Church:

“With deep sorrow the Presbyterian Church of Australia apologises to all who have been affected by sexual abuse through their involvement in the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Sexual abuse of a child is appalling and wickedly violates Christ’s words, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

It is a breach of trust to those who have taken part in church activities, to their families, and to the wider community.

We regret the hurt caused when our response as a church has denied or minimised the pain that victims have experienced or caused them to experience further pain.

The Presbyterian Church has taken steps to respond to child sexual abuse.

- Each State Church is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and we encourage all victims of child sexual abuse to make use of this scheme.

- The Church commits itself to making a timely and compassionate response to all allegations of child sexual abuse.

- The Church has adopted the National Safe Ministry Framework which seeks to be consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

- The Church commits itself to full co-operation with the civil authorities in dealing with accusations of child sexual abuse.

- The Church commits itself to processes of education and training in relation to response to child sexual abuse.”

Offenders

Most sexual abusers/offenders use cognitive distortions to avoid feeling guilty about their sexual offending against children.

For example, they use distorted self-talk to justify their sexual offending, such as claiming that the victim initiated the sexual contact with the offender, or that the victim benefits from the sexual contact, or is not harmed by it.

Offenders often report that their sexual deviancy began in mid-to late adolescence, however, they received no treatment or therapy specifically to prevent them repeating these patterns of sexual behaviour. This is why early identification of harmful sexual behaviours in children and teens is essential to provide therapy by suitably qualified, experienced and trained professional therapists, to seek to assist the child/teen in behavioural change.

Most sex offenders understand that certain acts are illegal and harmful but they commit these acts anyway. They exhibit the following character traits:

- Narcissistic
- Manipulative
- Grandiose about themselves and their “rights” and abilities and talents
- Blame shifting on to others – even the victim or those in authority
- Denial of behaviour is the most common response if confronted about their behaviour but if pressed they give partial confessions to their sexual offending

They use grooming – they identify the potential victim before committing the offence and they do this based on vulnerabilities of the victim and accessibility of the victim to them. They also use grooming of the adults around the child, or in positions of authority, to convince these adults that they are a positive influence in the child’s life and pose no risk of harm or abuse to the child.

In churches today we need to address issues which would not have been dealt with by churches in the past, especially in the area of child safety and safety from abuse in general. More than ever, the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (PCV) is aware of issues of safety, duty of care, and protection from abuse for children and vulnerable adults. In addition, standards of care now expected as a matter of law (specifically the Betrayal of Trust laws and the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act* Victoria) and of community practice are higher than they were in the past and are rightly being enforced.

While it is our highest priority to protect children and vulnerable adults and to allow the Church to be a place where they can worship and grow securely, we also acknowledge that there will, from time to time, be those who are in our denomination, who will be deemed as a risk to others’ safety, but who are also seeking salvation, spiritual growth and reconciliation with God and man. Such a person is referred to as a ‘Person of Concern’.

It is important that we show the love of Jesus to such a person while at the same time showing a duty of care to others in the Church community who may be vulnerable.

Key Takeaway

We need to be “people aware” and “people educated” so we can identify risky people and make a reasonable response to protect vulnerable adults and children.

Culture

The Presbyterian Church of Victoria has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that all people within our denomination or receiving ministry from Presbyterian Church of Victoria organisations are safe within the life of the Church. The Presbyterian Church of Victoria is committed to ensuring our churches and organisations are places where people are cared for, nurtured and sustained in their faith and lives.

The Presbyterian Church of Victoria also recognises that the Church has a duty of care to ensure children and vulnerable adults are protected from harm. Further, the advent of the Betrayal of Trust laws in Victoria, the Victorian Child Safe Standards and other child protection legislation also raises the legal requirement for the Church to have documented strategies for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. Without risk managements plans or safety agreements in place, individuals in governance roles, and the denomination as a whole, risk potential civil and/or criminal liability, in addition to reputational risk.

Finally, risk management is especially needed, given that the Sexual Abuse Insurance held by the Presbyterian Church of Victoria does not cover the participation of a Person of Concern in a Presbyterian Church of Victoria church.

The intention of this strategy is to have the Safe Church Unit work together with church leaders (including pastors, elders and other leaders) and a Person of Concern to ensure that appropriate safeguards (through the clear setting of boundaries and expectations) are deployed within Presbyterian Church of Victoria congregations and organisations to protect people from harm while allowing for the continued presence and involvement of a Person of Concern in the life of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria.

In this way the Presbyterian Church of Victoria seeks to balance:

- The right of children and vulnerable adults to be safe from harm in the Church
- The wish of a Person of Concern to participate in the life of the Church
- The legal duty of care of the Session (as the governance body of a congregation) and the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (as the denomination) to mitigate risks posed by a Person of Concern in the Church
- The Victorian child safety legal obligations of the Session, as both individuals and members of a governance body of an organisation with children

The strategy acknowledges the need for denominational support, training, establishment, monitoring and oversight in this process. It aims to ensure that all reasonable measures have been put in place to ensure safe ministry occurs with a Person of Concern – ministry that is God-honouring, abuse free, harm free, person valuing and respectful.

4. Seeking help

The following additional resources are provided here for you so you can seek information to help in your ministry. Both Christian and secular resources are included.

In addition to listing out websites and books, videos are also listed here, as many people prefer to watch and learn from visual content, rather than – or in addition to – reading. Videos are marked with *

Section 1

Victorian Child Safe Standards

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUK8Nrhc8Wo> *

Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/>

Section 2

Domestic and Family Violence

<https://1800respect.org.au/>

<https://www.police.vic.gov.au/family-violence>

<https://certificate.ridley.edu.au/courses/responding-to-domestic-and-family-violence>

<https://reformers.com.au/products/9781629956947-is-it-abuse-a-biblical-guide-to-identifying-domestic-abuse-and-helping-victims-strickland-darby?srsId=AfmBOooiyLbMC7HdoWEpGiawH9fymk17vTqiaUastEujvU1PjPcsjF9s>

“Focus on the Family” video and podcast resources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fKQGu7OHw8> *

<https://families.org.au/broadcast/friends-helping-friends-identifying-abuse-marriage/>

Coercive Control*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQVPQdyLfno>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DbIDmslUJk>

Senior/Elder Abuse

<https://www.compass.info/about/>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCE5y3lodm-toCb8oEfa8dJA> *

<https://seniorsrights.org.au/elder-abuse/>

https://elderrights.org.au/resources/elder-abuse/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIqobChMIocOQxsDxiQMVSCGDax38vQzjEAAYASAAEgLvovD_BwE

<https://www.police.vic.gov.au/elder-abuse>

<https://www.police.vic.gov.au/elder-abuse>

Sexual Harassment

<https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/volunteering/>

Section 3

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/religious-institutions>

<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/un-redacted-final-report-volume-16-book-2-religious-institutions.pdf>

<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/video13.mp4> *

Other

Free Christian course about responding to abuse in the Church, featuring presenters from CCEF (Christian Counselling & Educational Foundation) – this includes videos and the course can be done individually or in groups * <https://churchcares.com/>

Speak life- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuOoXZ6RSPg> * - Ravi Zacharias

Speak life https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PESDm4_HzLI * - Church of England – John Smythe

The SCU is a resource for the PCV and can be contacted by anyone at any time with questions, concerns or complaints in relation to abuse.

www.safechurchpcv.org.au

Email safechurch@pcv.org.au

Phone 0499 090 449

Finally –

The Safe Church Unit is here to help you. Do not hesitate to ask for assistance.

Thank you for giving your time to this training
and for your serving the Lord in our Church.