



NEW LIFE

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Narrabri

**CHILD
SAFETY
POLICY
MANUAL**

The Child Safe Standards



STANDARD 1

Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture



STANDARD 3

Families and communities are informed and involved



STANDARD 4

Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account

STANDARD 2

Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously



STANDARD 5

People working with children are suitable and supported



STANDARD 6

Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused



STANDARD 7

Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training



STANDARD 8

Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur



STANDARD 9

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved



STANDARD 10

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

New Life Christian Fellowship Narrabri Inc.

Child Safety Policy Manual

1. Introduction

In recent years, various church and para-church bodies have been widely criticised for lacking sound procedures in dealing with issues surrounding child protection. Regulatory and insurance bodies are increasingly requiring all organisations dealing with children to have policies in place to ensure the safety of children in their care.

The Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse implemented 10 Child Safe Standards that have been widely adopted as the best measure of the approaches of organisations such as New Life to preventing all forms of abuse of children in the care of organisations.

This manual is a guide to developing practices in the unique situation of New Life Christian Fellowship Narrabri Inc which will help to ensure that we can avoid situations which have plagued other churches.

This manual covers all activities of New Life Christian Fellowship Narrabri Inc including church services, cell groups and events which are organised by New Life.

This manual should be read in conjunction with other documents produced by New Life, particularly “Information for Members and Leaders” and “Safety Manual”.

Definitions:

Child/children- the legal definition covers all people under the age of 18 years. This manual follows this definition. However, we should remember the developmental differences, needs and abilities of people at different ages, so that practices will differ according to the ages of the children we are ministering to.

Cell group leader- a person officially recognised by the church as leading a cell group.

Leadership Team- this is the name of the Management Committee of New Life

Leader- the person or people who are recognised as being responsible for a particular activity. This particularly applies to people who have contact with children, but does not refer to activities that are solely public, such as worship leading and occasional preaching.



2. Our Commitment

We commit to being a community which:

- provides and maintains a welcoming and safe environment
- offers suitable and well equipped leadership
- provides a level of resourcing that reflects the value of all people
- provides clear and appropriate guidelines for managing the safety of people and programs

We recognise that all people are created in God's image and that children are a gift from the Lord.

We recognise that children are particularly vulnerable to various forms of abuse including physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as bullying.

We commit to taking particular care to protect, strengthen and nurture children in our care.

We will do this by developing:

- policies for recruiting, selecting, training and managing employees and volunteers (Standards 1, 5, 7))
- a code of conduct for leaders (Standards 5,7)
- procedures for handling disclosures and suspicions of harm (Standard 6)
- a plan for managing breaches of the policy (Standard 10)
- policies and procedures for compliance with NSW Working With Children screening requirements (Standard 5)
- risk management plans for all regular activities involving children (Standard 1, 9)
- risk management plan for high risk activities and special events(Standard 1, 9)
- strategies for communication and support, including a complaints process. (Standards 1, 2, 6)
- strategies to encourage children's participation and manage their concerns (Standard 2)
- procedures for encouraging and responding to complaints and concerns (Standards 1,6,9,10)



3. Inclusiveness and Participation Policy (Standards 1,2, 3, 4)

Our core values include that of inclusiveness. That means that we value all people who participate in our church.

We will ensure that the contributions of all people, regardless of age, gender, ethnic background or disability, will be welcomed. When we welcome the opinions of all people, then they feel valued and loved, and are empowered to speak up when something makes them feel uncomfortable or in some way injured.

All leaders who work with children will listen to their opinions and suggestions. Groups will be structured for participation and inclusion.

Leaders will endeavour to be aware of members who are overlooked or who withdraw in order to encourage their participation.



4. Policies for Recruiting, Training and Managing Employees and Volunteers (Standards 1, 5, 7)

We do not call for volunteers for ministry positions. Rather we see who is of suitable character, faith, experience and gifting to fulfil roles.

All leaders, whether voluntary or paid, will receive appropriate training for their position, including training in the child-safe policies of New Life Christian Fellowship.

No person under the age of 18 years will be allowed to undertake leadership positions without supervision by an adult leader.

All cell leaders and other leaders, including assistant cell leaders and pastors, who have access to children as a part of their ministry, will be required to undergo the NSW Working With Children Check prior to starting in a position.

No person will be allowed to undertake any leadership role until they have been in regular fellowship with the church for at least 6 months.

All employees and volunteers are to maintain a good relationship with the Pastor.

All new volunteer leaders and employees who have access to children are required to have a written recommendation from one member of the Leadership Team. Additionally, potential leaders who have not been in regular fellowship with the church for at least 12 months will require a reference from their previous pastor or a character reference from a respected member of the community.

Procedure for Recruiting a Volunteer Leader. (Standard 5)

When a need for a volunteer emerges, the Pastor and/or Leadership Team shall be consulted in order to identify a suitable person. A member of the Leadership Team will be asked to write a reference, or if the person has not been in fellowship with New Life for at least 12 months, then a previous pastor will be approached for a reference.

The recruit must satisfy the following criteria:

- over the age of 18 (unless under adult supervision)
- good character
- attending cell group and celebration regularly for at least 6 months
- in good relationship with the Pastor
- have the necessary skills or training for the role

After consultation with the Pastor, and prayer, the person may be approached to fill the role. The Leadership team may be asked to formally recognise the appointment.

If the role is that of a Cell Leader or other role which involves ministering to children, they must obtain a Working With Children Check. The church will verify that check process and keep appropriate records to ensure that checks do not lapse.

During the process of recruiting a new volunteer, they will be given a copy of this policy and training about its application.

5. Code of Conduct For Leaders

All leaders are expected to conduct themselves in a way that shows the grace and holiness of Jesus. We require our leaders to take seriously the following code of Conduct

As a leader in New Life Christian Fellowship,

I WILL

- attend church and cells regularly
- attend specified leaders' meetings and training
- attend to my personal spiritual growth
- show the love of Christ to the people in my care
- speak words that build people up not pull them down
- be as inclusive as possible, ensuring that everyone understands that they are valued
- be careful in disclosing personal information to people in their care, asking themselves if what they are sharing is in the interest of the other person.
- wear clothing which is appropriate to the activities being undertaken
- live in private as I am expected to live in public
- treat all persons with dignity and respect regardless of age, sex, religious affiliation, sexual orientation or personal circumstances
- report any suspicions that a child may be in at risk of abuse to the pastor and/or the relevant authorities
- advise the pastor if I have been charged with any criminal offence

I WILL NOT

- use bad language- swearing, unclean jokes etc.
- engage in bullying or abusive behaviour- abuse includes verbal, physical, emotional and sexual abuse
- engage in sexual activities towards members in their care
- abuse alcohol and other drugs
- engage in social media with children, other than what is required to plan activities etc.

Breaches of this code of conduct may result in disciplinary action, which may include being removed from the leadership position.

6. Procedures for Reporting Disclosures and Suspicion of Harm (Standard 6)

From time to time a child or an adult may disclose that they are being hurt or abused in some way. Alternatively a leader may come to believe that a person is showing signs of abuse such as regular bruising, inappropriate or unusual behaviour to others.

From March 1, 2020 “religious leaders” such as pastors, priests and volunteer leaders, such as cell leaders, elders and so on are Mandatory Reporters. (Children’s Guardian Act 2019). This means that any leader who reasonably suspects that a person 16 years or under who is suffering neglect or abuse must report their suspicions to Community Services. However this requirement only relates to the person’s role as a volunteer or employee at the church, except for teachers who are required to report suspected abuse or neglect in all contexts.

A Mandatory Reporter fulfils their responsibility by following the procedure below, and ensuring that the Senior Pastor makes the necessary report. However there is nothing to stop anybody making their own report.

If you believe a crime has been committed, you must report it to the Police as soon as possible. Local police can be contacted on 67927199.

Additionally, if there is a complaint by any person that an employee (including voluntary leaders) has engaged in “misconduct” (defined as sexual misconduct against a child or a physical assault against a child), there must be an investigation within the organisation which should normally be completed within 14 days. A report must be made to the Office of the Children’s Guardian within 7 days of the conclusion of the investigation.

You are not required to gather evidence to establish a case. The rule of thumb is to ask yourself whether another person who was given similar information would come to the same conclusion.

The following procedure should be followed:

1. Ask if your suspicion is reasonable. If the person has made a statement about being abused, treat the disclosure as true.
2. Try to find out as much information as possible, but do not press the informant more than they are comfortable sharing. Tell the person that you will pass the information on to the Senior Pastor and that authorities may have to be informed.
3. Record the details as soon as possible after the conversation and keep the information safe.
4. Inform the Senior Pastor immediately, with as much detail as possible.
5. If a child is involved, the Senior Pastor will use the decision making tree at the NSW Mandatory Reporting Guide to determine what is legally required and to report the incident online. (URL <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg>).

6. If the alleged perpetrator is in a leadership position, they will be immediately removed from leadership pending an investigation. If the alleged perpetrator is the Senior Pastor, a member of the Leadership Team must be notified as soon as possible, and they will immediately convene a meeting of the Leadership Team to take action.
 - The complaint or allegation must be investigated quickly, following a process that gives fairness to both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator. If possible, this investigation will be completed within 14 days of the complaint being made.
 - If the complaint is about sexual misconduct towards a child or physical assault of a child, then within 7 days of the conclusion of the investigation, and a decision being made, the Office of the Children's Guardian must be notified of the complaint, the investigation process and the result of the investigation. (More information about this process is at <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check/employer/reporting-bodies>)
7. The Senior Pastor must, additionally, report all claims regarding sexual or physical abuse against children to the church's insurer, ACS Financial.

7. Policies and procedures for compliance with NSW Working With Children screening requirements

It is a requirement that all people over the age of 18 seeking employment, whether paid or voluntary, that involves contact with children must undergo a Working With Children Check.

Prior to being employed in any paid role or being appointed to a role as a cell leader, SRE teacher or other role requiring contact with children the applicant must obtain a clearance from the NSW Government.

The procedure to follow is:

1. The applicant logs on to www.ocg.nsw.gov.au and applies for a clearance. They will be given a number and must then attend Service NSW to confirm their identity and pay a fee if applicable. A few days after this, the applicant will receive an email with their approval number.
2. The applicant brings their full name, date of birth and approval number to the New Life child safety officer who will then check these details. This check must be done on line at wwccheck.ocg.nsw.gov.au . The web site will indicate if the approval is confirmed. Merely sighting the approval number is not sufficient.
3. These details, together with the expiry date of the clearance must be recorded.
4. Only after these steps are followed may the applicant be approved to commence their role.
5. At the start of each year, the child safety officer will check the register and see which approvals will expire in the next 12 months. Any leader whose approval is close to expiry will need to renew their approval in order to continue in the role.



8. When this policy is breached (Standard 8)

Complaints Handling

We will take seriously any complaints about the behaviour of paid staff, leaders or other people associated with New Life.

Anyone with a complaint should first approach the Pastor or a member of the Leadership Team. The complaint is to be listened to without making assumptions or judgements.

If the person is satisfied with having stated their complaint, a record should be made of the conversation in case further action is required later.

If the person wishes to make a formal complaint, they are to be encouraged to write a letter to the Pastor stating the nature of what happened. As much detail as possible should be put into the letter. If the complainant is unsure of how to do this, they should be given assistance.

The Pastor, on receiving the complaint, will investigate the facts in a timely manner and respond to the complainant as soon as is practicable. This will be done in 14 days, if possible.

If the complaint alleges serious misbehaviour by a volunteer leader or member of staff, that person is to be stood down from their roles immediately until the matter is resolved.

If the complaint alleges some kind of criminal offence, the Police should be notified immediately. Any complaint regarding offences against children should follow the procedure in section 6.

Breaches of Policy

Every member is responsible for the good governance of the church and for ensuring that our policies are followed.

Any member who sees that this policy is being breached in some way should first talk to the leaders involved. If this does not resolve the issue the Pastor or Leadership Team should be informed. They will act quickly to ensure that the policy is enacted properly.

If the above steps do not result in change a formal complaint should be made.

9. Risk management plans for activities involving children (Standard 8)

Every activity involving children should include planning for potential risks. The planning should include identifying what could go wrong, the consequences of that happening and what we can do to prevent or at least reduce the likelihood of that event happening.

The activity should be planned on a grid such as this:

Activity	Risks What could go wrong?	Risk Level Ranking Use High, Medium or Low	How to reduce the risk: what changes can we make to reduce risk?	Priority use a number to decide what to do first.

The NSW Children's Commission document "Finding Your Risk" at the end of this Policy shows how risk management can be undertaken and includes a template for risk analysis.

Leaders should be particularly aware of physical risks of injury and the potential for perpetrators of abuse to use events or groups to groom or abuse children.

Before every special event involving children, a risk assessment must be submitted to the Leadership Team.

The Pastor will, in consultation with the Leadership Team and Cell Leaders, develop a risk assessment for Worship Services and for Cell Groups.

Any special event conducted by New Life should have a suitably qualified person nominated as the First Aid person. All volunteers involved with the event are to be advised of who the First Aid officer is for this event and what procedure should be followed if an accident or injury occurs.

10. Cell Groups

Cell Groups are the heart of the ministry and mission of New Life. They provide a venue for personal ministry and evangelism to occur.

Many cell groups meet in private homes where children are part of the family. Some groups may have children present who are visitors to the home with their parents. Cell leaders must be aware of the possibility of special risks to children in unfamiliar places.

If children are to be present at the group, the cell leader must check that hazards of particular risk to the children of that age are removed. For example, the meeting place should be tidy with no trip hazards. If toddlers are expected make sure there are no breakable items or items which may present a choking risk within reach of the child.

Where children are minded separately from the adults, this should be done close by, with doors open and parents encouraged to check on their own children.

The check list on the next page should be used whenever children are expected to be present at a cell group.

Ministry protocols for healing, deliverance, prophetic and pastoral ministry are set out in the manual "Information for Members and Leaders." Any form of personal ministry with children should only be conducted with the consent of parents.



Risk Assessment for Children at Cell Group (Standard 8)

This risk assessment tool is to be used when children are expected to be in attendance at a cell group.

What are the ages of the children attending?

Main Meeting Room

- External doors closed
- No access to stairs
- Floor clear of rubbish or other trip items
- Electrical leads not easily accessible
- No breakable objects within toddler reach
- No choking hazards for toddlers
- Toys, activities are of suitable age
- Hot drinks kept out of reach of children

Children's Area (if children are separated from adults)

- Name of supervisor _____
- Supervisor has a Working With Children Check (if over 18 years of age) and has been approved by Leadership Team
- Area is open and can be seen or monitored
- External doors closed
- No access to stairs
- Floor clear of rubbish or other trip items
- Electrical leads not easily accessible
- No breakable objects within toddler reach
- No choking hazards for toddlers
- Toys, activities are of suitable age

11. Worship/ Celebrations (Standard 8)

Whenever children are present at our worship times, special care must be taken to ensure their safety.

It is the responsibility of the parent or care-giver who brings the children to New Life to ensure that they are watched over at all times.

While we do all that we can to keep the building as safe as possible, small children are always vulnerable to injury in public places. The following areas are potential risk areas and these rules will help to maintain safety.

Outside

The outside area is intentionally made to be inviting to children. When children are present the main gates and the side gates should be kept closed. Children under the age of 5 must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Older children may be monitored at a distance, but a parent should be aware of what is happening.

Kitchen

There are many hazards in the kitchen area. These include burns from stove, urn or hot food, as well as electrical hazards and breakable containers. For this reason children under the age of 5 are not permitted in the kitchen and children from age 5 to 12 are only permitted there under direct adult supervision.

Sound desk

There are many electrical hazards around the sound desk. Children under the age of 5 are not permitted there. Older children and adults are permitted there only for the purpose of performing a specific task related to the area.

Music area (including platform)

The area near the drums and where the musicians and singers stand has many leads and other trip hazards and the potential for small children to pull stands over on top of themselves. Small children should be restrained from being in that area.

Bathroom

Adults need to be aware of behaviour and interactions in the bathroom area.

Finding your risks

This resource will help you to:

- ◆ **Identify what can go wrong in your program activities**
Brainstorm all the possible things that could go wrong in the process of planning and implementing the activities of your organisation. This can be done on an individual activity or as an organisation as a whole. Children and young people can get involved in this process.
- ◆ **Develop ways to reduce the likelihood of things going wrong**
Remember to think about each problem area and decide how seriously a child could be harmed and how likely it is that the problem would arise. When the harm is serious and the problem could arise often, you have a high risk that needs immediate attention.
- ◆ **Set action priorities**
Think about the actions you can take immediately as opposed to action that will require planning and preparation. In some cases you may find that a medium to low level of risk can be addressed quickly; we would encourage you to give them a higher priority so that these changes happen immediately. Generally, high-risk activities should attract a high priority action. However, there may be cases where a period of planning and preparation is required to genuinely lower the risk of the activity hence a lower priority rating may apply to reflect the planning process.

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Activity List each activity you provide for kids	risks what could go wrong	ranking Use scale of High/Medium/Low to describe risk level	how to reduce risk Changes to reduce, modify or avoid risk	priority Use a numerical (1 - highest) to what you will do
Sports Training	Intimate physical contact with children.	Medium	▶ Code of conduct explains what touching and coaching behaviour is acceptable.	2
	Toilets are isolated/out of sight.	High	▶ Planned toilet breaks where children go in groups.	1
	Children wander away from training area.	Medium	▶ Code of conduct explains what area kids can use at training. Kids are told these rules.	2
	Children are not collected as planned.	High	▶ Code of conduct explains collection requirements and who will look after children collected late.	2
Overnight camping trip	Inappropriate person volunteers for supervision duty.	High	▶ Care in recruitment selection.	2
	Adult and child alone together in sleeping quarters.	High	▶ Ensure adequate adult/child sleeping ratios for camp supervision. At least two adults should attend any child contact activity.	1

Finding your risks

Activity List each activity you provide for kids	risks what could go wrong	ranking Use scale of High/Medium/Low to describe risk	how to reduce risk Changes to reduce, modify or to avoid risk level	priority Use a numerical (1 - highest) to what you will do
Overnight camping trip (continued)	Child feels isolated and lonely.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan inclusive activities and actively monitor children. Introduce team building activities. Support leadership in children and young people. 	2 1 3
	Child sustains injury.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to date medical and emergency contact forms for each child are available. Organisation's emergency action procedures are up to date and available. 	2 1
Clown performance visiting a centre	Clown has a history of harm to children.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the individual or clown company if the appropriate checks (police check, Working With Children Check or Certificate for Self Employed People) have been made. Centre policy that requires all guest speakers, entertainment etc must have the appropriate check and evidence given. 	1 1
	Tricks and entertainment hurt a child.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss with the performer suitable and appropriated tricks. Staff have first aid training and qualifications. First aid kit easily accessible. Ensure adequate space is between the clown and the children. 	1 2 1 1
	Child is frightened by the clown.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform parents of clown visit and seek permission for child's participation Children are asked to participate in planning of guests. 	2 2
	Excursion to local playground	A child falls off equipment and hurts themselves.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation has policies and procedures for outings.

Finding your risks

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Excursion to local playground (continued)	A child falls off equipment and hurts themselves.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitably qualified staff member to deal with first aid. Plan adequate staff ratio to supervise children. Parents contact details are taken on the outing. Visit site to check equipment is safe before outing. 	1 1 2 1	
	Parents arrive at the centre to pick up child early and does not find their child.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permission sought from parents to go on the outing. Arrange alternative in centre activity for those being picked up during the outing. Parents are given playground location so they can pick up their children. 	1 2 2	
	Playground toilets are locked or out of sight or there is not one.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site visit before the excursion to check the facilities. 	1	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform Council before the excursion that you are going and see if they can open the toilets for the excursion. 	2	
	Use of volunteers in running school holiday activities	Volunteer inappropriately discloses personal information to a group of young people.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer code of conduct. Volunteer training. 	1 1
		Volunteer runs an in-house activity on their own.	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer code of conduct. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervising paid worker in the centre while activity is being held and is supervising/monitoring the activity. 				1	
Volunteer takes an inappropriate interest in one child.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer code of conduct and appropriate behaviour is reinforced to all volunteers. Supervisor/manager etc to closely monitor situation. Staff demonstrate to children that concerns and opinions are listened to. 	1 1 1		

Finding your risks

Use this template to help find the risks in your organisation.

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Revisions And Changes

August 2019. Section 4 changed to require written references for volunteer leaders.

March 2020. Section 6 rewritten to set out Mandatory Reporting requirements that came into effect on March 1st 2020 and also to set out requirements for investigating and reporting to OCG regarding misconduct against children by employees and leaders.

August 2021 Reviewed

June 2022 Revised to include the Child Safe standards.

Code of conduct modified to be explicitly “I will” and “I will not” statements

Code of Conduct prohibits casual engagement in social media with children