

Maffra Community Church

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN

FIRST DRAFT 27TH FEBRUARY, 2011

LAST UPDATE: 25TH NOVEMBER 2015

This document seeks to provide all paid and voluntary workers within the Maffra Community Church with a responsible code of conduct for working with children. This includes Youth Group, Sunday School and any other ministries to children under the age of 18.

Why have such a document?

As a church community, we want God to be honoured in every part of our lives. Some things are specifically addressed in Scripture. At the end of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he writes these words.

1 Thessalonians 5:22–24 (ESV) - ²² Abstain from every form of evil. ²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

As Christians we're called to live holy lives. This at times will also mean making wise decisions in order to avoid even the appearance of evil. Our children's ministries are open to children of church regulars and visitors. While we would not appoint anyone to ministry that we couldn't wholeheartedly recommend, parents (particularly visiting parents), have no idea of the character of the people whom they are entrusting their children to. Thus it is of utmost importance that the highest care is taken to ensure that nothing could even be perceived to be inappropriate.

What things are required to be involved in children's ministry?

1. All positions (including voluntary) are to be approved by the leaders of that ministry (in consultation with the Elders).
2. All people above the age of 18 who work with children are required to get a Working with Children Check. For voluntary roles, there is no charge for getting this card. Applications can be made online at <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>
3. Your working with Children's Check must be up to date and you must have Maffra Community Church listed as one of your volunteer organisations. Even if you already have a Working With Children Check for other work you must add Maffra Community Church to the organisations associated with your WWCC because any violations only get reported to organisations listed with your Working With Children Check. A photocopy of your card or alternate certifications will not suffice.

Duty of Care

Where it exists the Duty of Care is the moral, spiritual and often legal responsibility that we have, both as individuals and corporately, towards all those that we come in contact with in the various ministries of our churches and their related organisations.

Our Duty of Care is – to act in a manner that will protect people with whom we come in contact from injury or distress. This injury or distress may be due to:

- Our intentional acts
- Our negligence
- Naivety
- Having no policy or guidelines

Child Abuse

Child abuse is an act by parents or caregivers that endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse is not usually a single incident, but takes place over time. In Victoria, a child is a person under eighteen years of age. Commonly recognized forms of child abuse include the following:

- **Physical abuse** occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child's parent or caregiver. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or inadvertently. **Under no circumstances are you to administer physical discipline – even if a parent gives you permission to.**
- **Emotional abuse** occurs when a person repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child and creates an emotional environment which significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development. This includes making fun of children, criticising and insulting.
- **Sexual abuse** occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child. Physical force is sometimes involved. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. Specific examples of appropriate and inappropriate contact are detailed below. **As of October 27th 2014, any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.** If the child is presently in danger call 000. To report all other cases, contact your local police station. Never inform the accused that you are reporting them. Please always inform one of the Elders of the church also.
- **Neglect** is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

Physical Health and Safety

The physical environment should always be such that the safety of children is paramount, e.g.: any electrical equipment used is in safe working order, floors are kept free of slippery surfaces, and food is handled with the utmost care to avoid contamination.

Any faulty equipment/plant which constitutes a hazard to the safety of the child should be immediately removed, where possible, and its condition should be reported to your Occupational Health and Safety Representative/Church Office, in writing, without delay.

What Is Classified As Sexually Inappropriate?

1. THE OBVIOUS

Any sexual contact, exposure to pornography, any exposure to nakedness and any sexual language, looks or gestures.

2. Grooming

Grooming is the term used to describe any intentional behaviour of an adult towards a child in to gain their trust or their favour for unhealthy motives. Grooming is a criminal offence in Victoria. No adult should give special or preferential treatment to any child as this could form bonds that could be (or be perceived) as unhealthy. As such no child should receive greater attention, compliments, encouragement or interest. At no point is it appropriate for an adult to communicate in a personal, private and secretive way with a child through means such as e-mails, texts, social media or notes.

3. Physical contact

It is inappropriate to initiate physical contact of a personal nature with children, as some children may not be comfortable with the contact. Another reason is that the contact can be misunderstood, either by the child or by others around. When dealing with infants or other children who require physical assistance, of course you may pick them up or assist them in whatever way necessary. Likewise, this policy does not seek to forbid the use of common greetings such as a handshake, a high-five or any other action that plain common sense would discern as appropriate. Examples would include (but are not limited to) protecting the child from harm or helping an injured or upset child etc. What we do not permit is unnecessary physical contact that could be seen as personal or intimate. In normal circumstances, there is no reason to touch a child anywhere other than between the shoulder and elbow.

Your conduct with children / youth while involved in children's / youth ministry is not determined by your friendship with the family. For example, you may be working with children who have been long term friends of your family. While the child's parents might be totally comfortable with their children sitting on your knee

or holding your hand in their home, you cannot afford to act towards any child in a way that a visiting parent would not like their child treated. Without having knowledge of your character or your relationship to any child, they may presume you will also treat their child this way. **For this reason avoid any unnecessary physical touch including tickling or wrestling**

As a general principle, if you're unsure whether something is appropriate, err on the side of caution and refrain.

What Other Precautions Can I Take To Avoid The Appearance of Misconduct?

1. Isolation

Never put yourself in a position where you are left alone with a single child / youth. Make sure there is always at least three people present and that you are never exclusively with the opposite sex.

2. Emotional Involvement

It is not appropriate to provide counselling or engage in emotional issues with children / youth of the opposite sex. ie Males should counsel males and females should counsel females. Serious issues should be brought to someone in leadership.

3. Toileting small children

When a small child needs assistance in toileting, the following guidelines should be observed:

- Where practicable, the parent should be responsible for attending to the child
- If this is not practicable, the child should be encouraged to manage him/herself to the fullest possible extent, according to ability.
- When crèche helpers or other workers must assist a child, another adult helper should be informed upon leaving the activity and upon returning wherever this is possible. Where possible, it may be useful to accompany more than one child to the toilet at any given time.

4. Transport

When a child under the age of 18 is traveling in a vehicle driven by a worker, parents are entitled to expect that the vehicle will be driven carefully, observing the legal speed limits and road laws, at all times. At no time should there be more passengers in a vehicle than the number of seat belts that are in working order and available for use. Parents are also entitled to expect that all cars will be registered, insured and driven by fully licensed drivers. Events that require transport will need a permission form signed by a parent (or guardian) granting permission for their child/children to travel in a vehicle.

Negligent driving can have painful emotional and legal consequences. Anyone who cannot/does not drive responsibly must not transport other people's children.

In addition, drivers must give an undertaking to take children directly to and from arranged venues and not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements without parental consent.

When driving children / youth to events / home, where possible refrain from being alone in the vehicle with a child / youth of the opposite sex. If you have multiple children / youth travelling in your vehicle, try to pick up first (and drop off last) someone of the same gender as yourself.

Current Church Contact Details (Updated 21st November 2015)

If you have any concerns about anyone working with children within the church, please bring any concerns to the church elders who are Steve Adams, David Butler or Chris Clarke.

Pastor	Steve Adams	(03) 5147 3354	0430 377 022
Youth	Greg & Kerrie Elliott	(03) 5145 4292	
Sunday School	Rike McCormack	(03) 5145 1280	

**Working With Children / Youth
Code of Conduct Agreement
(Please Fill Out & Return To The Pastor)**

I _____ have read and understood the Maffra Community Church's Code of Conduct for working with Children. I agree to conducting myself according to this document whenever I am involved in the church's Children's / Youth ministries.

I am under 18

I am at least 18 years of age and have a current valid Working With Children's Check with Maffra Community Church listed in association to my check.

_____ Date ____/____/____