

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## 1. Introduction

1.1. This Policy aims to provide all members of staff (paid or unpaid), volunteers, children and their families with a clear and secure framework for ensuring that all children are protected from harm when attending activities and programs organised or run by any of the language congregations, ministries or groups of International Christian Assembly (“ICA”).

1.2. ICA believes a child should never experience abuse of any kind. We have the responsibility to promote the welfare of all children under our care and to keep them safe.

## 2. Purpose of this Policy

2.1. This policy applies to pastors, board of directors, paid or unpaid staff, paid or unpaid sessional workers, volunteers, student interns, contractors or anyone working or serving in or on behalf of ICA (collectively called “Staff and Volunteers”).

2.2. The purpose of this policy is to protect children who attend activities and programs organized or run by any of the language congregations, ministries or groups of ICA and to provide Staff and Volunteers with the overriding principles that guide our approach to child protection.

## 3. Definition of Children

3.1. A child under this policy is anyone who has not yet reached his/her 18th birthday.

## 4. Core Practices

4.1. Staff and Volunteers should cultivate a nurturing, loving and supportive attitude and environment when working with children.

4.2. Children should be listened to, valued and respected.

4.3. Only age-appropriate language, physical contact, material and activities should be used when working with children.

4.4. Sexual or physical abuse, including corporal punishment, will not be tolerated

4.5. Staff and Volunteers who need to work with children are subject to approved recruitment procedures.

4.6. Staff and Volunteers are aware of indicators of abuse and know how to raise their concerns, and support the children appropriately.

4.7. Staff and Volunteers who will work regularly with children at ICA are given appropriate support and training.

## 5. Recognising Abuse

5.1. Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. The child may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

5.2. *Physical abuse*: This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise, causing physical harm or pain / uncomfortable feeling to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

5.3. *Emotional abuse*: This is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child causing severe and lasting effects on his/her emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It can also involve age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children causing them to feel frightened or in danger. Although emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, it may also occur alone.

5.4. *Neglect*: This is the persistent failure to meet the basic physical and/or psychological needs of a child and likely to result in the serious impairment of his/her physical or cognitive development. For example, inadequate care and supervision leaving a child in physical and emotional harm or danger.

5.5. *Sexual abuse*: This involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening or gives consent. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials or watching sexual activities, or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

5.6. *Bullying*: It is deliberate hurtful behavior, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. Bullying can be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group) or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

5.7. *Spiritual abuse*: The misuse of power, authority and/or trust by a spiritual leader or someone in a position of spiritual power or authority with the intention of controlling, coercing, manipulating or dominating a child. The misuse of power within a framework of a spiritual belief or practice, in order to meet the needs of the abuser (or enhance his/her position) at the expense of the needs of the child. Results in spiritual harm to a child and can be linked to other abuse, such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

## **6. The Designated Child Protection Officer**

6.1. The designated child protection officer (DCPO) takes the lead responsibility for child protection, including support for other staff and information sharing with other agencies, developing policies and staff training. Most settings have one DCPO although it is good practice to have a Deputy DCPO. Usually, the DCPO is also the named person who responds to allegations made against a Staff or Volunteer.

6.2. The DCPO should be a senior member of staff with the authority and seniority to carry out the functions of the role. The DCPO should, within two months of being appointed, receive a safeguarding induction that covers their role and responsibilities.

6.3. The role of the DCPO is to:

- Encourage good practice by promoting and championing the child protection policy and procedures.
- Regularly report to the Child Protection Committee.
- Raise awareness of the Child Protection Policy and the code of conduct for working with children to volunteers, staff parents / carers, adults, and children involved in the church.
- Challenge behaviour that breaches the Code of Conduct.
- Organise/signpost appropriate training for all adults working/volunteering with children in the Church.
- Respond appropriately to disclosures or concerns which relate to the well-being of a child. Liaise with authorities if appropriate.
- Maintain confidential records of reported cases and action taken.

## **7. Child Protection Committee**

7.1. A Child Protection Committee should be formed. The members should include the Church Leader, the Child Protection Officer as well as at least one other person. The Child Protection Committee is responsible for the development, dissemination and implementation of the child safeguarding policy and ensuring that it is regularly reviewed and evaluated. The committee will meet at least once a year to review risk assessments and monitor child safeguarding in the Church and the policy should be reviewed at least every three years. It will also ensure that all staff and volunteers have signed the declaration form.

7.2. The Child Protection Committee include members:

- Ken Goh, Committee Member
- Amy Lim, Committee Member
- Betty Chung, Designated Child Protection Officer

7.3. The information provided by those in relevant roles is personal data, and must be handled in accordance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. The website of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCPD) ([www.pcpd.org.hk](http://www.pcpd.org.hk)) provides useful guidance on the proper handling of Personal Data.

7.4. The contact details of the Child Protection Committee are as follows:

7.4.1 Email Address: [child.protection.committee@icahk.org](mailto:child.protection.committee@icahk.org)

7.4.2 Contact Number: 2527 2270

## **8. Staff and Volunteers' Responsibilities**

8.1. It is the responsibility of all other members of staff to ensure that all safeguarding concerns, both minor and serious, are reported to the DCPO as soon as is reasonably possible.

8.2. Even if you think your concern is minor, the DCPO may have more information that, together with what you know, represents a more serious concern about a child. It is never your decision alone on how you should respond to concerns – but it is always your responsibility to raise concerns, no matter how small.

8.3. Inform the DCPO immediately. If the DCPO is not available, speak to one of the members of the Child Protection Committee. And keep the concerns confidentially.

## **9. Safe Practice**

9.1. Safer recruitment to deter potential abusers by setting a high standard of practice and recruitment.

9.2. All allegations against Staff or Volunteers should be brought immediately to the attention of the DCPO.

9.3. No strangers should be allowed to wander around the premises unaccompanied when children are present.

9.4. Children under the age of 10 should not be collected by people other than someone who lives in the same house unless written notification has been received in advance.

9.5. No physical contact of any degree that is deliberately intended to punish a child or that is primarily intended to cause pain or injury or humiliation is allowed.

9.6. An adult should not talk to a child alone unless they are in a place where others can easily see them.

## **10. Staff Conduct**

10.1. In order to protect children, we require Staff and Volunteers who work regularly with children at ICA to follow the code of conduct as below:

Staff and volunteers who are in contact with children should:

- Treat children with respect and recognise them as individuals.
- Try to understand and respect the child's cultural background.
- Not do anything that will damage a child's, or parent's trust, and take all reasonable care to protect the child(ren) from all forms of abuse while he / she is in their care.

- Report any suspicion to the Child Protection Officer if they suspect the child may be hurt by the abusive actions or attitudes of another person.
- Answer children's questions openly and honestly.
- Pray for each child regularly and let them know that they are cared for.

Staff and volunteers representing ICA must avoid acting or behaving in ways that could:

- Be construed as poor practice.
- Put a child at risk of abuse.
- Be potentially abusive.

In order to protect children and staff, the following code of conduct is given to protect children from abuse and staff from false accusation.

Staff and volunteers should:

- Dress appropriately and be culturally sensitive.
- Avoid questionable behaviour, which could be misconstrued.
- Be visible to other adults when talking with children, e.g., keep the door open.
- No child under 10 should be left alone.
- Never be the only adult to take care of a group of children. You may be the only adult in a particular room, but never the only adult on the premises. (For example, you may lead a group of 7 kids in a room if there is another activity with an adult happening in the same building. But never should anyone be the only adult present.).
- Be aware that children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child, rather than adults.
- Create and maintain an open culture in which any issue or concerns can be discussed.
- Be accountable to each other so that any potentially abusive behaviour can be challenged.

Staff and volunteers must never:

- Act in ways that may abuse a child or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- Physically abuse children or use physical punishment to discipline children, including hitting, slapping, spanking and no verbal abuse such as shouting, swearing or use of demeaning language.
- Touch children in a manner, which is inappropriate. A general guideline is not to touch children inappropriately in areas that would normally be covered by shorts and t-shirt, but also includes kissing and tickling in an inappropriate way.
- Engage in physical activity that is sexually provocative inappropriate, offensive or exploitative or could be construed as assault or abuse.
- Develop sexual relationships with children, or relationships that could be deemed in any way exploitative or abusive.

- Expose children to inappropriate materials such as pornographic videos and literature.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, flirtatious, offensive or abusive.
- Develop a physical or emotionally dependent relationship to develop between them and children in their care; this is often referred to as “grooming”.
- Involve children in inappropriately activities, such as gambling, smoking, drug taking etc.
- Invite children to a residence or another place where they are alone with you.
- Stay overnight at your home with a child who you are working with unsupervised unless the person’s parents or guardian and a church staff member have given permission.
- Do things for children of a personal nature that the children can do for themselves.
- Excuse, or participate in, behaviour of children, which is illegal, unsafe or abusive act in ways intended to shame or humiliate.
- Discriminate against, show different treatment to, or favour particular children while excluding others.

## **11. Procedure for Suspected Child Abuse**

11.1. Suspected child abuse cases or child abuse victims may come to the attention of any staff or volunteers.

11.2. A possible victim of child abuse should not be promised confidentiality by the staff and volunteers. Please explain to the child as there may be a need to contact professional for further help. But ensure that he / she will be supported.

11.3. When an abuse incident has occurred or is suspected, concerned staff or volunteer should report it immediately to the DCPO who will then follow it up immediately with relevant parties.

11.4. In circumstances that suggest a criminal offence may have been committed, the DCPO will report the case to the Police to safeguard the welfare of the child. Suspected abuse cases will be reported to Family Child Protective Services Unit (FCPSU), the Social Welfare Department. In case of uncertainty, DCPO may contact (FCPSU) or Against Child Abuse (ACA) for advice.

11.5. In handling child abuse cases, the paramount concern is the welfare of the child. Therefore, children should not be required to describe the abuse incident to different parties and agencies unnecessarily, as this may cause secondary trauma to the child.

11.6. Please refer to Appendix 2 for the reporting procedure.

## **12. Allegations against Staff and Volunteers**

12.1. Where there is suspicion or an allegation of abuse by a person who works with the children in ICA either paid or voluntarily, the following principles should be followed:

- When a volunteer or staff suspects an incident of child abuse has occurred or has received an allegation of such abuse, he/she must report it to the DCPO as soon as possible. In case that the child needs medical attention, contacting the Fire Services Department for ambulance service is the top urgency.
- ICA will ensure that the allegation is investigated and that any justifiable action is taken to ensure that the child / children is safeguarded.
- Upon receipt of an allegation the Child Protection Committee will request the accused suspend all paid / unpaid duties within the church until further notice.
- Enquiries must be conducted in the strictest confidence so that information can be given freely without fear of victimization and in a way that protects the rights of the staff and volunteers concerned.

12.2. Information about an allegation must be restricted to those who have a need to know in order to:

- Protect the child/children.
- Facilitate enquiries.
- And protect the rights of the alleged perpetrator.

12.3. In circumstances that suggest a criminal offence may have been committed, the case should be reported to the police by the Child Protection Committee in communication with the Senior Pastor, to safeguard the welfare of the child.

12.4. Where there is insufficient evidence to determine whether the allegation is substantiated, the outcome of enquiry should be recorded. The accused paid staff or volunteer should receive pastoral counseling and support if needed and their duties resumed if considered appropriate. Consideration should be given to support or counsel the child / children and where appropriate their parents, taking full account of a child's needs particularly if a seemingly false or malicious allegation has been made.

12.5. All parties involved in the allegation procedure should be informed of the findings of the investigation and conclusion.

12.6. A full set of documents, including incident report and investigation report should be kept in a secure place.

12.7. Please see Appendix 3 for a template of incident report.



### **13. Communications Guideline**

13.1. People who are bound by this policy, including those taking photographs or media for the church use, must abide by the following media guidelines when taking, sharing or using photographs or media in relation to ICA.

13.2. Photography and video

- The use of camera, phones, videos, recording devices and cameras inside toilets is strictly prohibited at all times.
- All photos and media of children should be respectful, appropriate, relevant to the nature of the church, and not in any way disparaging or humiliating.
- Children must be appropriately dressed when being photographed. It is never acceptable to capture any images in toilets or at any time when children are dressing. Images should be neither sexual, of an exploitative nature nor open to misinterpretation or misuse.
- Parents or guardians of children may submit a written request to not have their children photographed. Should a child wish to not have their photo taken or published, their wishes should be upheld where it is within the church's ability to do so.
- Any images or video that feature a child and will be used for the church promotional purpose must have the prior consent from the child's parent/guardian. Parent/ guardian should have full understanding of the intended use and may request for viewing prior to use. This does not apply to photos with more than 25 featured people.

### **14. Recruitment and Screening of Staff**

14.1. When ICA recruits or engages employees, independent contractors (all paid roles at the church) and volunteers who will work regularly with children at ICA, the church should take reasonable steps to satisfy itself that any individual taking up such a role is suitable to work closely with children. The following guidelines must be followed:

Any individual who is likely to be employed or engaged in relevant role should be

- Provided with this policy and required to confirm that they have read and understand this policy; and
- Requested to make a declaration in the form attached of this policy (Appendix 1: Declaration Form), confirming their suitability to work with children prior to their employment or engagement as an employee, independent contractor.

14.2. If an incomplete Declaration Form is provided, the church may require that the applicant attend an interview with the Child Protection Officer to explain why he/she was unable to complete the Declaration. The Child Protection Officer shall have the final say on whether the applicant is suitable for the applied role.

14.3. Where the church is employing an individual that will work regularly with children at ICA, it should additionally require he/she to complete a Sexual Conviction

Record Check with the Hong Kong Police, prior to the commencement, and as a condition, of their employment. Applicants may also be required to provide personal references.

14.4. For volunteers, the applicants should be a congregation member at ICA for at least six months. Applicants are required to provide personal reference, who are also the church members or a pastoral reference from a different church. The Child Protection Officer or ministry head shall contact the applicant's referees for inputs to the suitability of the applicant for the role applied

## **15. Child Protection Training**

15.1. All staff and volunteers should be educated on what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. The policy should be available to all members, either online or in hard copy. The contact details of the DCPO should be readily available to all members (including children. Those that report suspicions and concerns should be confident that these will be treated seriously and confidentially.

15.2. Actions below should be taken to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the policy:

- The Child Protection Policy should be included in the new staff induction programme.
- The Child Protection Policy should be reviewed at least once every three years by the committee. The DCPO is responsible for achieving this benchmark.
- The Child Protection Policy should be read and signed by all volunteers who work regularly with children at ICA at least once every three years. The Ministry Head who oversees the volunteers is responsible for achieving this benchmark.
- The Child Protection Policy should be available on the church website, the name and contact of the child protection officer should be stated clearly.
- Regular child safeguarding workshop should be arranged for staff and volunteers. The content should include a review on implementation, experience sharing and policy update and revision.
- The DCPO shall keep detailed records of all child protection training, organize appropriate training and updates and issue reminders when training updates are required

## **16. Implementation, Dissemination & Review of Strategies**

16.1. This policy is reviewed at least every three years or if there are any concerns by the DCPO and is approved by the Child Protection Committee and the Board of Directors

16.2. All Staff and Volunteers who work with children regularly at ICA must read and agree to the child protection policy before the start of their employment, ministry and service.

16.3. Copies of this policy to be kept and be easily accessible in the following areas:

- Tanner Road premises
- Main Sanctuary in King's Road, North Point
- Church Office in Workingberg Building, Marble Road, North Point
- Chai Wan - Chai Wan Cinema Building, 121 Wan Tsui Rd, Chai Wan
- Marble 33 - ICA Marble Road Room 209, 2/F, Marble 33, 33 Marble Road, North Point
- Wan Chai - 4/F, Queen's Centre, 58 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai