

# Te Awamutu Bible Chapel (TABC)

## Child and Youth Protection Policy

### Introduction

Being part of a Church family requires a personal responsibility and collective accountability to actively care for and protect our children and young people. This policy sets out our expectations, requirements and procedures for the safety of our children and young people. Of paramount concern in this document is the welfare and safety of children and young people that come into our care.

### Policy Summary

This policy outlines our commitment to child protection. It includes our procedures when child abuse is reported to us or is suspected by us. All staff/visitors/parents and caregivers are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

### Purpose Statement

We have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care and are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority when suspecting abuse.

We support the roles of the New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected/alleged abuse to these agencies.

We support families/whanau to protect their children.

We strive to provide a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

### Policy beliefs:

- The interest and protection of the child is our priority in all actions.
- We recognise the rights of the family/whanau to participate in the decision-making about their children.
- We have a commitment to ensure that as a church we are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and are able to take appropriate action in response.
- We are committed to supporting all church members to work in agreement with this policy, to work with church leadership/Eldership to ensure child protection policies are consistent and high quality.
- We will always comply with responsibilities of a child protection legislation.
- We are committed to discuss any concerns about an individual child with church leadership/Eldership or other appropriate person (in the case where the abusive behaviour involves the church leadership/Eldership).

### Definition of Child & Young Persons

A child is someone under the age of 14 years and a young person is someone of or over the age of 14 years but under 18 years (section 2 Oranga Tamariki Act 1989).

## Definition of Child Abuse

**Child abuse** is the harming, whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person (section 2 Oranga Tamariki Act 1989).

## Relationship Between Church Workers and Children or Young People

- **Confidentiality.** Communications between church workers and parents of children or young people shall be treated as privileged information, unless there is a clear and imminent danger to others.
- **Discrimination.** Church workers should recognize the dignity of children and young people and avoid any discrimination.
- **Abuse of Power.** Church workers shall not abuse their position by taking advantage of children or young people for purposes of personal, professional, political, financial or sexual gain.
- **Sexual Harassment.** Children and young people shall be free from the possibility of sexual exploitation or sexual harassment.
- **Responsibility.** Church workers should treat children and young people with respect, courtesy, fairness and honesty. Church workers should take appropriate action against any conduct by other church workers or church members that is contrary to this policy.

## Selection of Church Workers

All church workers in children and youth ministries shall undergo a screening process as outlined below:

- Application form
- Police vetting. (Workers **can not** start until this is cleared)
- Referee checks by ministry leader
- Interview by ministry leader
- Approval by church pastor and ministry leader

## Practical Guidelines

Church workers must work for the physical, social, educational, moral and spiritual well-being of the children and young people in their care. This means they will not do anything at any time to damage their trust or the trust of their care-givers.

Church workers shall ensure that care-givers will be adequately informed about the programme their children are involved with, and about any transport arrangements.

Church workers will avoid any and all behaviour that might lead to, or be interpreted as, sexual exploitation or abuse. This means they will not take any children or young people alone to a solitary place and if it is necessary to talk with them alone, it will be within sight and sound of other people. Church workers will not initiate any form of unwanted affection or touching, nor make suggestive comments or act in ways that are potentially sexual.

Church workers will work with children or young people to set guidelines for acceptable behaviour within their group. They will expect children or young people to act on the basis of these guidelines.

Church workers must be aware that by law:

It is a serious criminal offence to leave a child under six years of age without appropriate supervision.

Children under 14 years of age cannot be left without reasonable provision for supervision and care.

Depending on the child's age and maturity, leaving a child under 17 can be considered neglect or abuse.

## Support of Church Workers

**Training and Updating.** All church workers will be advised of any policy or law changes. One ministry meeting a year will be held to ensure all Church workers understand and adhere to this policy. Additional training will be provided where necessary.

**Policy revision.** This policy will be revised **annually** and updated as required.

## Child Abuse Reporting Procedure

The *safety of the child* will be the primary consideration and all allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly to determine whether the allegation is founded or unfounded.

Confidentiality is to be maintained throughout.

This procedure includes the responsibilities of the informant (the one to whom the allegation of abuse is first made), the procedures to be followed if a church worker is suspected of abuse, if a parent is suspected of abusing their own child, and where the suspected abuse is by someone outside of the family. The pastor to whom allegations or suspicions are reported to will be either the Senior Pastor or a pastor responsible for pastoral care.

## The responsibilities of the informant

All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. The following procedure should be followed if a child or young person discloses any abuse to you.

- Listen to the child or young person. Allow him/her to tell you only as much as they want. Do not put words into his/her mouth. Under no circumstances should he/she be questioned beyond that which he/she voluntarily discloses. Your job is not to solve the problem or find out whether it is true.
- Write down what the child or young person says. This should be factual and include the time and date of the disclosure, who was present, and where the conversation took place.
- Make sure that the child or young person understands that you accept what they say and that they will get help, but do not make any promises that you will not be able to keep i.e. you will be safe now.

- Do not panic or overreact. When children disclose it is a critical moment for them. They will be watching your reaction as to how you cope with the disclosure. Depending on your reaction they will decide how far their disclosure should go.
- Do not criticise the child or young person for not disclosing sooner or for allowing the alleged abuse to take place.
- Do not confront the alleged abuser yourself.
- Report the alleged abuse to your ministry leader as soon as possible and do not discuss the matter with anyone else.
- Check on the immediate safety of the child or young person.

### Procedure when there is an allegation that a church worker has abused a child or young person.

- The allegation is reported to the ministry leader as soon as possible, within 24 hours.
- The ministry leader, together with the informant, reports it to a pastor within 48 hours.
- If the church worker suspected of abuse is a pastor, it is reported to the chair of the elder's board who will then proceed as outlined for the Pastor in the following steps.
- The Pastor is to report it to the Chair of the elders' board within 48 hours.
- The church worker suspected of abuse may be suspended while an investigation is being done.
- The Pastor will consult with the appropriate outside support agencies in investigating the allegations e.g. the Police or Oranga Tamariki.
- If a church worker is found guilty of abuse, they will step down from their position and will no longer be permitted to work with children or young people at the church. If the church worker is found guilty of abuse is a staff member, this may result in immediate dismissal.

### Procedure when abuse by a parent or caregiver is suspected.

- The suspicion is reported to the ministry leader within 48 hours.
- The ministry leader, together with the informant, reports it to the Pastor within 48 hours.
- If child abuse is suspected, the Pastor will report it to the appropriate outside agency e.g. the Police or Oranga Tamariki.
- The parent will be informed by the police or Oranga Tamariki.

### Procedure when the suspected abuse has occurred outside the family.

- The suspicion is reported to the ministry leader within 48 hours.
- The ministry leader, together with the informant, reports it to the Pastor within 48 hours.
- The parents are informed before any further action is taken.
- In consultation with the parents, the suspected abuse is reported to the Police or Oranga Tamariki.

## Record Keeping

- The informant will make a factual record of all observations and communications related to the disclosure. It is important to only include what was said, seen, or heard, as this may become a legal document.
- This record will be made as soon as possible after the disclosure.
- The record will be concise and will include date and time of the disclosure and the informant's relationship to the child or young person making the disclosure.
- The informant should sign the record.
- This record will remain confidential to those involved in the investigation.
- A factual written record will be kept of the entire process. This will include the date and time that the incident was reported, to whom it was reported, and the name and signature of the person doing the reporting for each step of the process.
- Support will be offered through pastoral care to the victim of child abuse and their family, the alleged perpetrator and their family, the informant, as well as all church workers involved in any child abuse investigation.

Further Sources of information

<http://www.childmatters.org.nz/>

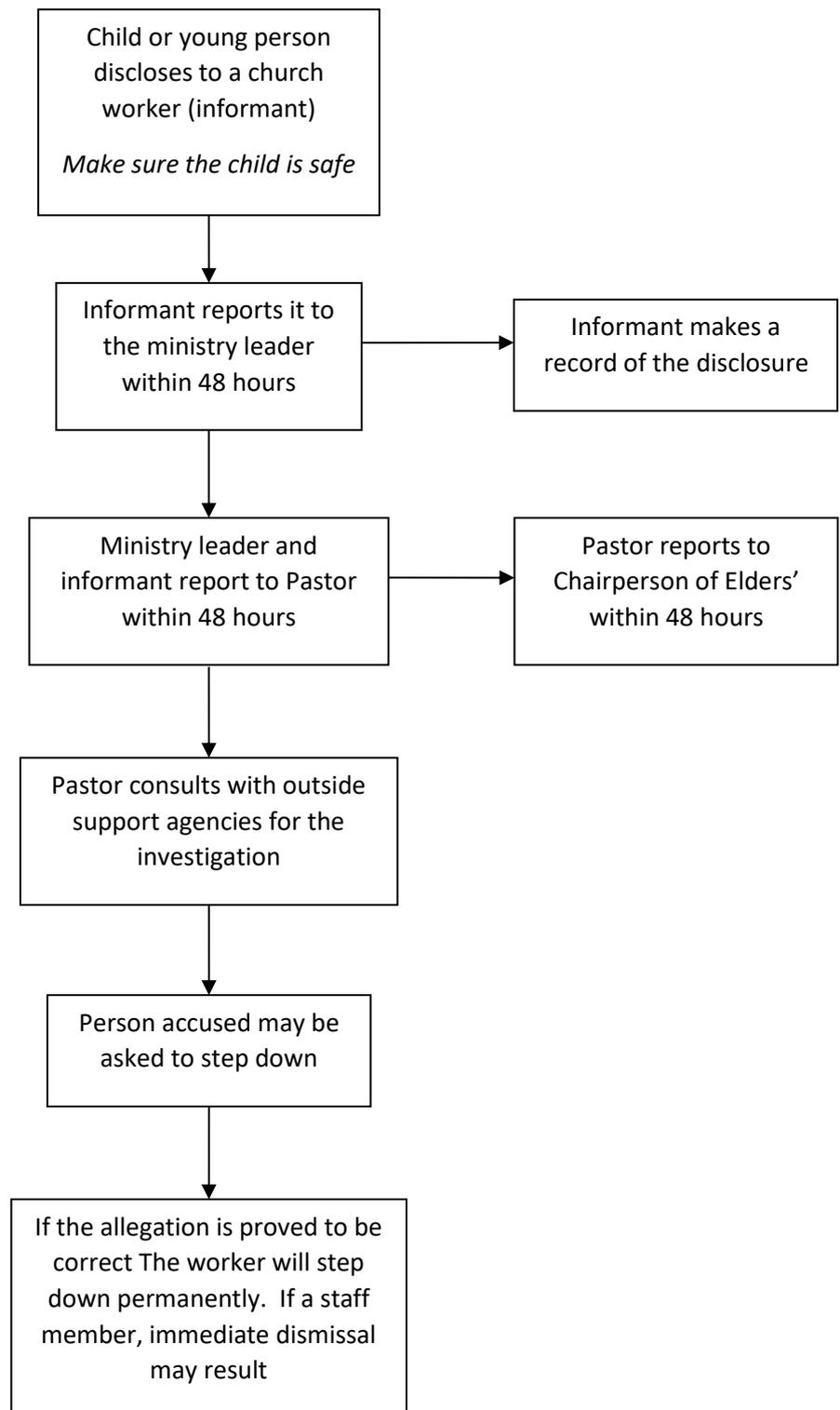
<https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/>

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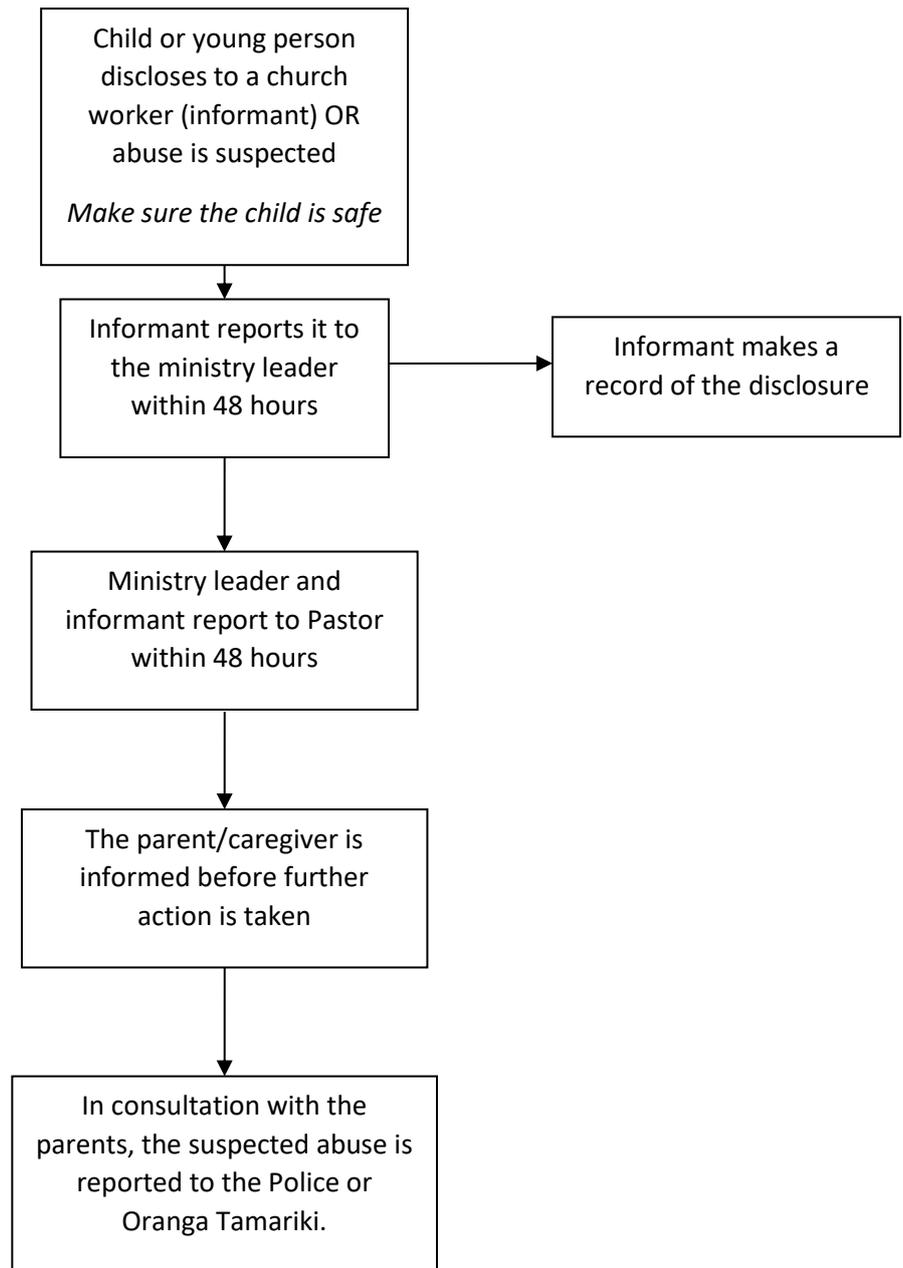
## CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURE

Disclosure to church worker about alleged abuse by another church worker



## CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURE

Procedure when the suspected abuse has occurred outside the family



## CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURE

Procedure when abuse by a parent or caregiver is suspected

