

Footscray Baptist Church Church Safety Policy and Procedure

Policy:

This Church Safety Policy was adopted by the diaconate of Footscray Baptist Church May 25th, 2020. This policy will be reviewed every two years and we undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from vulnerable adults, children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers. It applies to all staff, volunteers, children and individuals involved in our organisation.

This church is committed to promoting the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults who participate in any of its ministries or activities by protecting their rights and also protecting them from harm

This is to be achieved through the following items:

1. A policy committing the organisation to providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults. (This policy)
2. A Code of Practice covering pastors, employees and volunteers who may come into contact with children and vulnerable adults. (See FBC Safe Church Leader Code of Conduct)
3. A process for screening applicants for ministry, employment and volunteering, including referee checks and working with children / criminal record checks. (See the Screening procedure below)
4. A process for handling allegations of sexual abuse. (See FBC Reporting and Handling Allegations of Sexual Abuse)
5. A process for complying with mandatory reporting obligations. (See FBC Reporting and Handling Allegations of Sexual Abuse)
6. Training for pastors, employees and volunteers in the above policies / procedures (See Training Procedure as outlines below).

These policies and procedures are to be read and implemented alongside relevant legislation related to the protection and welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

For the purposes of this policy a child is considered anyone up to the age of 18. All children are considered vulnerable. A vulnerable adult is a person who is more susceptible to harm due to factors such as (but not limited to) advanced age, disability, illness, residency status, financial hardship and past experience of abuse.

Procedure:

Our mandate comes directly from God. God identified classes of vulnerable people who are to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (e.g. Ex 22:21-22, Deut 10:17-19, Jer 22:2-4, James 1:27).

We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety, particularly in the area of child protection. This procedure has been developed to help us live out in a practical way our Biblical mandate and our responsibilities under State and Federal legislation.

Commitment to safety

All people who come to Footscray Baptist Church and its ministries have a right to feel and be safe, to be respected and to have their views and opinions valued at all times. The welfare of the vulnerable people in our care will always be our priority and we have zero tolerance towards abuse.

- *We teach all people attending our programs about what they can do if they feel unsafe.*
- *We listen to and act on any concerns that children, parents, carers, and adults raise with us.*
- *We are intentionally inclusive, such as by including all vulnerable people and their parents and carers in planning and decision making wherever possible. We do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.*
- *Footscray Baptist Church staff and volunteers proactively encourage children and vulnerable adults to express their views and give suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them.*

Our safe church culture is embedded in all levels of our organisation. Our brief statement “Commitment to safety” is used freely in staff email signatures, bottom of an event flyer, poster at the entrance to the building, job advertisements and more.

Footscray Baptist Church is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and vulnerable adults. We have a zero tolerance policy, for abuse of any kind.

Screening process

Footscray Baptist Church applies the best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, leaders and volunteers. Our screening process helps us to minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of power within the church. It enables us to be fair and transparent in our screening processes for all staff and volunteers.

Documentation of the screening process will be kept confidential and kept secured in a password-protected data management program

We will screen and train all prospective leaders in our ministries, before they are appointed. We will screen and train all existing leaders.

Prior to recruitment the position description will be reviewed and updated if necessary. Then the position will be advertised appropriately.

Shortlisted Applicants:

- *Shortlisted applicants must demonstrate willingness to commit to the mission and values of the Church*
- *Shortlisted applicants must be interviewed by an interview panel of which must include two (or more) of the following – Senior Pastor, Deacon, Safe Church Person, as part of an accountable recruitment, selection and appointment team. One of the interview panel should be the direct supervisor of the program.*
- *The applicant must provide at least two referees and one of the interviewers must contact these referees. One of the referees must be from their immediate previous Church if the applicant is not from Footscray Baptist Church,*

Successful applicants will:

- *sign the FBC Safe Church Leader Conduct Code 2020*
- *hold a current Working with Children Check (volunteer or employee, as appropriate)*
- *undergo a National Police Criminal Record Check initially and then once every three years.*
- *Participate in a documented induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position.*

This will include being given a copy of their position description, a copy of the FBC Safety Policy 2020 (this policy), a copy of FBC Reporting and Handling Allegations of Sexual Abuse Policy and signing the FBC Safe Leader Conduct Code 2020.

They will also be instructed on how to access and complete other key documents pertaining to maintaining a safe church, including knowing who to go to for support in order to complete their tasks.

Volunteer Leaders:

Volunteer leaders are expected to have regularly attended Footscray Baptist Church for at least 6 months prior to taking up any leadership role. (Pastors are exempt from this attendance period as they undergo a more rigorous screening process.)

If offences are identified through the above process, depending on the nature of the offence/s, it will remain the discretion of the senior pastor and leadership team as to the applicant's future involvement at Footscray Baptist Church.

Sexual abuse-related offences will preclude that person from having any contact with, or responsibilities involving children/youth. In some cases, an offender may not be permitted to attend the church, or any associated program under any circumstances. The BUV Professional Standards Consultant must be contacted and consulted in this situation.

Training

Footscray Baptist Church commits to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders (including pastors, employees and volunteers).

- All leaders must agree to follow the FBC Safe Church Leader Code of Conduct 2020.
- All leaders will receive training on the requirements of the Code, before signing it, so that it is understood and put into practice by all leaders and volunteers.
- All staff, leaders and volunteers are required to be familiar with and trained in this FBC Church Safety Policy, The FBC Safe Church Leader Code of Conduct 2020 and FBC Reporting and Handling Allegations of Sexual Abuse Policy.

This training may be conducted on a one-to-one basis or as part of regular training for all leaders (pastors, employees and volunteers).

Footscray Baptist Church requires that the following leaders attend a **Safe Church Awareness Workshop** (or equivalent) within their first year of ministry and attend a refresher workshop every three years:

- *Church secretary, treasurer, pastor(s), deacons and paid staff*
- *Leaders involved in worship, bible study or children's ministry*
- *Any leader or volunteer working with children or vulnerable adults in any capacity*

Note- This training is open to all people (16 years and over), however, it is required for the above positions

This training covers a range of topics including risk management, indicators of abuse, responding to disclosures, and mandatory reporting of suspected sexual abuse.

Additional ministry-specific training will be provided as required, according to the role held. This may include but is not limited to: Church Administration Workshop, First Aid, Food Safety and Handling.

Pastors must engage with the BUV accreditation process (including attending BUV Professional standards workshops), receive training in responding to complaints and safety concerns raised, as well as some form of guided reflective practice such as: supervision, coaching, mentoring or spiritual direction.

Footscray Baptist Church leadership has the responsibility to ensure that our church programs are adequately resourced with staff and volunteers and have the required equipment for the safe and effective running of the program.

Footscray Baptist Church leadership will provide ongoing support and supervision for all staff and volunteers, to ensure they feel valued, respected and fairly-treated. Additionally, the leadership will undertake with each leader/volunteer an annual process of position review to provide an opportunity for mutual feedback and encouragement.

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