

Child Protection Policy

Written April 2019

Due for review April 2022

(Unless need arise to review earlier)



The Gateway Baptist Child Protection Policy is based upon the Policy set up by the Baptist Churches of South Australia. Access to the complete policy is on the BCSA web site.

<http://sabaptist.asn.au/>

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Introduction

All children and young people without exception have the right to feel and be safe at all times. This policy and set of clearly defined procedures have been developed for the protection of children and young people who are within Gateway Baptist Church and Community Centre.

In line with current South Australian legislation a child/young person is a person under the age of 18 years.

IMPORTANT:

This policy specifically relates to standards and procedures in relation to reporting and managing known or suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. Child Protection and awareness is an extremely complex field, and as a result this document does not contain detailed information relating to the specific identification of, and understanding of abuse. In some cases, it provides a brief overview, however the Baptist Churches of South Australia (BCSA) through the Director of Professional Standards (DPS) and CACET Global (Child Abuse Consultancy Education and Training) provide at no cost to churches, a four tier level of specifically designed child protection awareness training packages. Refer to section 18, for recommended Baptist Churches of South Australia training structure.

Tier 2 of this training incorporates the Accredited Families SA Child Safe Environments/Mandatory Notification course. This course incorporates all forms of child abuse. It also includes a number of specialist modules that address offender awareness and profiling, focusing on how child sex offenders think, groom victims, operate and infiltrate churches, with an emphasis on: Understanding and Responding to Child Abuse and Sexual Exploitation- "MAKING THE CHURCH SAFE."

Objectives

To, as far as possible, protect children by minimising the risk of abuse to children and young people within the ministries of the Gateway Baptist Church.

To ensure that all known or suspected cases are responded to in a professional, consistent and accountable manner.

To ensure all SA legislation pertaining to child protection is strictly adhered to.

Policy Statement

Gateway Baptist Church is serious about doing all within its power to create child safe environments, in order for children and young people to grow in the safe knowledge of God's love and grace. Gateway understands its responsibility, and requires that all matters be responded to in line with the procedures set down in this document. Under no circumstances will Gateway Baptist Church tolerate the abuse of children in any form, the protection of offenders, or any cover up of suspected or known cases of abuse.

Scope of Policy

All pastors/ministers, staff members and volunteer workers associated with ministry to children or youth within the ministry of Gateway Baptist will comply with this policy and associated procedures. (These persons will be designated by the terms "worker" or "notifier" throughout this policy)

The term "child/ren" also refers to and includes "youth". (Being a person under the age of 18 years)

Under the Children's Protection Act (SA) a "Mandated Notifier" is not restricted to a person or worker who works within the specific areas of youth and children's ministries.

Children's Protection Act 1993-(SA) Section 11 (2)

Legislation proclaimed on the 31/12/06 states that a person who is an employee of, or volunteer in an organisation formed for religious or spiritual purposes, is a mandated notifier.

Definitions

“BCSA”	Baptist Churches of South Australia
“CACET Global”	Child Abuse Consultancy Education and Training – Global, Consultants based in Adelaide, South Australia
“C.A.R.L.”	Child Abuse Report Line
“DPS”	BCSA Director of Professional Standards or delegate
“leader”	refers to those who have oversight, supervision or key leadership Responsibilities. Paid or voluntary.
“Church Leadership”	refers to Senior Pastor, Children & Youth Leader, Elders and Deacons.
“PSAT”	BCSA Professional Standards Assessment Team
“Pastor”	a person who has been formally appointed or endorsed by a church or denomination to exercise ministry which involves the oversight of the church and appointed ministry team.
“SEM”	BCSA State Executive Minister

What is Child Abuse?

The Children’s Protection Act 1993 (SA) defines and identifies child abuse into four categories:

Physical

Sexual

Emotional

Neglect

DEFINITIONS

PHYSICAL - 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.

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, or is unable to protect, the child.

(Should you require more detail of this definition please refer to the web page as indicated in the front page.)

EMOTIONAL ABUSE - Emotional abuse is a chronic attack on a child or young person's self-esteem. A child/young person can also be subjected to emotional abuse by exposure to a dysfunctional environment that includes domestic violence.

NEGLECT - Neglect is the failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life which can occur by deliberate action, or inaction, as well as an inability to understand and provide basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical treatment and supervision.

It is accepted that physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect may occur in varying degrees of severity, and as a result warrant differing responses according to the degree of severity. The Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA) defines the extent of physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect that the state authority intervenes in.

Responding to Abuse

Gateway Baptist will not tolerate the abuse of children in any form and directs all involved in any form of ministry/leadership (paid, voluntary, full or part time) to at all times report suspected or known cases of child abuse.

The Children's Protection Act 1993 clearly identifies individuals who are required by law to report suspected or known cases of abuse of children/young people.

It is the clear view of the BCSA and Gateway Baptist that even those who may not be "Mandated Notifiers" have a moral and ethical responsibility (a "Duty of Care") to at all times report suspected, or known cases of child abuse.

Reasonable Grounds

Under mandatory notification legislation a mandated notifier must report suspected or known cases of child abuse based on "Reasonable Grounds". Reasonable grounds may consist of a view or belief that abuse is occurring, or is likely to occur, based on personal knowledge, abuse indicators or other information at hand.

It is not essential to be in possession of information that may provide absolute proof, nor is it the responsibility of, or appropriate for a mandated notifier to investigate or make additional enquiries, that may have the potential to contaminate or hinder a professional investigation. Obviously, in order to form a view in some situations, questions might have to be asked of a child or other person claiming to have knowledge of a child at risk. Great caution should be taken in these situations.

Indicators of Abuse

Indicators of child abuse include:

- When a child tells you that he/she has been abused;
 - When a child or adult tells you that he/she knows of a child subject to abuse;
- or
- When you make observations of a child's behaviour, change in behaviour, emotional state and or injuries.

Indicators in many cases overlap and can interrelate to all forms of abuse and neglect.

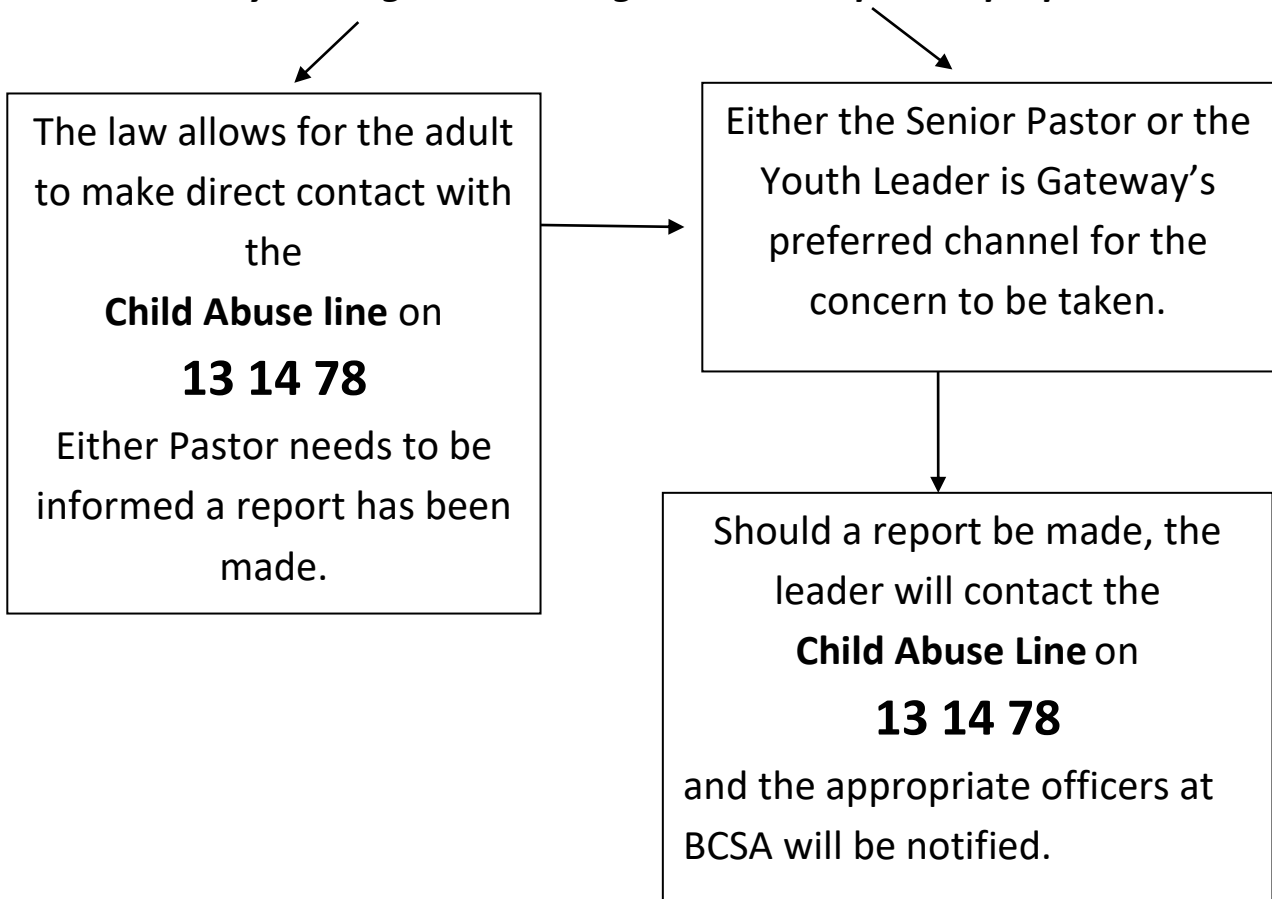
Note that:

The presence of indicators may alert us to the possibility that a child is being abused. An indicator in isolation does not automatically mean that a child is being abused.

Process to follow at Gateway Baptist Church

An observation is made that a child has been put at risk or a child has made a statement of disclosure about an action against him/her that put him/her at risk under the child protection policy.

Please note: There must be no attempt to have further conversation with the child involved. This will be done by professional people and such action may damage the case against the suspected perpetrator.



In matters of suspected criminal offences, AT NO TIME should the alleged perpetrator be confronted or advised of the allegations and subsequent report. In these matters the notifier/Church Leadership should strictly follow the specific directions of either the C.A.R.L or Police.

In non-criminal related matters where the church can offer direction and support, it may be appropriate for the Senior Pastor/Elders to meet with and discuss a particular situation with an alleged perpetrator, family member, or anyone subject to the concerns/allegations.

At an appropriate time, having regard to the investigation process and the need to prevent contamination of evidence, if the alleged perpetrator is a paid employee, that person will be stood down with pay, pending the outcome of the investigation. If the perpetrator is not a paid employee, that person will be relieved of their ministry role and responsibility pending the outcome of the investigation. The PSAT, via the SEM, will provide instruction and authorisation for this action.

YOU ARE NOT AN INVESTIGATOR ...IT IS NOT UP TO YOU TO PROVE THE CASE

In cases where victims who were subject to abuse of a criminal nature at 17 years of age or younger do not disclose abuse until they have reached 18 years of age, they should be immediately referred to, and assisted in making a formal report to, either SA Police or Families SA.

Notwithstanding the above, the procedures outlined herein shall still be followed.

Consideration must be given to the fact that whilst the person making the disclosure may not be at further risk of harm, other children/young people may continue to be at ongoing risk. As a result, those who form the view that this is, or is likely to be occurring should report the matter with, or without the consent of the person making the initial disclosure to a pastor or the appropriate agency.

Managing suspected/alleged/convicted child sex offenders within the church

Persons accused of suspected child abuse are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

However, in all cases the safety of children is paramount and all steps within the church environment must be taken in order to care for and protect the alleged and potential victim/s. The Pastors and eldership will manage this.

Suspected Perpetrators

Where an individual may be a “suspected” perpetrator of child sexual abuse, but no disclosure or clear evidence exists in order to warrant a report, or the C.A.R.L does not accept a report due to a lack of substantial information, those who suspect the abuse must nevertheless advise one of the church pastors, who can be alert to the situation and develop monitoring strategies and processes.

Co-operation with Authorities

Gateway will fully cooperate with the relevant law enforcement, child protection agencies and the DPS at all times.

This also includes any dealings with media.

Training and Development

At Gateway all the leaders and any helpers over the age of 18 who is working with children in any of our Friday night or Sunday programs, will need to undertake:

- A Working With Children Check
- A full day Mandatory Notification Training Program
- A Mandatory Notification Refresher Course every three years after the full day training course

Closing Statement

All workers who undertake appointed roles with children must recognise that they are placed in a position of privilege, trust and responsibility. To the extent that it is reasonably possible, a child has the right to expect to be safe and feel safe at all times. Workers are required to act reasonably and to actively determine to minimise the likelihood of physical injury, emotional harm, damage or loss in their interactions with young people. In addition, a worker should make every reasonable effort to avoid acting, or failing to act, in any way that unreasonably frightens or intimidates a young person or jeopardises a young person's physical or emotional safety and well-being. With this in mind, workers are exhorted to be guided by, and to implement the guidelines presented in this document. Such guidelines will help to ensure the safety of the children who are placed into Gateway Baptist Church's care and also assist workers to provide a high standard of care.

An approved children's worker at Gateway is a person who has:

1. had an interview with a pastor and eldership team
2. any given references checked
3. come with a recommendation for the position
4. undergone a National Police Check
5. taken part on the day of Mandatory Notification Training
6. read, agreed to and signed the Gateway Ministry Agreement form
7. been worshipping at Gateway for 6 months (Special circumstances may apply and include intimate knowledge of an applicant by people within the leadership/church, or impeccable references from other churches.)

It is expected at Gateway for each worker to be connected to one of our church cell groups and will cooperate with the Youth Leader/Pastor to partake in ongoing training and any church organized training and development.

While undertaking any work with children at Gateway the following policy is to be followed:

- **NEVER** be alone in a room with ONE child.
- Don't let the boys use the Men's Toilets during Church unless their father is called to go with them.
- Don't take a child to the Female's toilet. If there is parental approval, the child will go on their own. If this is not appropriate, a parent will need to take them to the respective toilet.
- **The leaders of the Sunday School classes will wear a lanyard indicating their leadership role for the day.**
- The youth leader will roster the children's workers into pairs except for the older primary school age group who will have one fully accredited leader.
- The children need to have an adult with them when they are in the playground.
- On a Sunday, children will be brought back into the sanctuary into the care of their parents
- Should ever be needed to transport children in a private vehicle, a driver will hold a current driver's licence and current registration for the vehicle.

Gateway Baptist Church Undertakes:

- To provide appropriate forms for any person in the church to use to report any suspected child abuse cases
- To follow up any reported cases
- To provide supervision for a period of a few months when new workers are accepted into children's ministry
- To provide lanyards indicating the person who is leading each Sunday School class and other suitable identification at other programs
- To keep appropriate information on appropriate medical information and pass to relevant leaders
- To follow OHS&W guidelines in provision of teaching space and any follow up of incidents that arise
- To require groups using church facilities where children will be a part of that program, provide proof that persons responsible for any program relating to the care and supervision of children, have undergone a police clearance check within the last two years

Gateway Leaders reserve the right to ask for any documentation in regard to safety of children.

The church values all people who give their time freely for the children of Gateway. To help in your spiritual walk, each week's sermon is put onto the church website.

www.atgateway.church.org.au

CHILD ABUSE REPORT LINE

24 Hrs 13 14 78

BCSA Office: 8357 1755

Emergency After Hours: Contact your Senior Pastor

**Failure to notify suspected abuse or neglect is an offence under the
Children's Protection Act 1993**

This policy will be reviewed in 2019 unless need arises earlier.