



Child/Youth Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement:

Metropolitan Community Churches seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of MCC Brisbane from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions:

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child," "children," or "youth" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Selection of Workers:

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes:

a. Six-Month Rule

No volunteer will be allowed to work with children or youth until s/he has been a member or regular attendee of MCC Brisbane for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b. Personal Interview

Prior to any work with children commencing, a face-to-face interview will be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position. This shall be conducted by a Pastor or Board Member.

c. Blue Card

All persons seeking to work with children or youth must have a current Blue Card. They must complete and sign a written Blue Card application. This will be sent to the relevant authority for vetting and approval.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for those who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Teenage workers must be at least age 14.
- Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children on premises.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, sexual, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children on behalf of MCC Brisbane becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Pastor or his/her designee for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by law. This reporting also includes any child at risk of harm.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at MCC Brisbane or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker (whether paid or unpaid) alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
3. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
4. We will immediately inform the Executive Director of Metropolitan Community Churches and shall keep the Executive Director fully informed.
5. We will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
6. We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by the authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by the relevant authorities, a team will be appointed by the Board of Directors to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or legal advisor.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth and will no longer qualify to be involved in children or youth activities, or any other leadership role within Metropolitan Community Churches.
8. The Pastor or a person designated by the Pastor will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
9. Pastoral care will be arranged for those who desire it.

Open Door Policy

Room doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of MCC Brisbane not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Pastor or his/her designee if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at MCC Brisbane. Parents and guardians are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should not be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of MCC Brisbane not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent or guardian, or a Consent form given to the church. Parents and guardians are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Pastor or his/her designee to develop a plan of action.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Training

Any person wishing to work with children at MCC Brisbane, must familiarize themselves with their duties and responsibilities of holding a Blue Card.

MCC Brisbane will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers who are assigned to work at an activity or event sponsored by MCC Brisbane and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training. All workers, especially bod, and clc members, are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

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Date Adopted by the Board of Directors of Metropolitan Community Church, Brisbane Inc.

_____ March 2014

Signed:

- x _____ Name: _____ Pastor
- x _____ Name: _____ Board member
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