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Hillsong SAFE

Policy and Procedure Manual

INTRODUCTION

Hillsong Church is strongly committed to the health and well being of all people coming to the church and throughout its community outreach work.

Hillsong SAFE

Hillsong SAFE (Sexual Abuse: Freedom & Education) provides an educational and support program for all people in the community affected by sexual abuse. Hillsong SAFE is twofold in that it aims to help people who have been affected by sexual abuse as well equipping people, parents, carers, volunteers and workers with skills and training to help prevent abuse from happening in the first place.

With training and education, Hillsong SAFE aims to help people in a practical way to receive the support they need in a caring, experienced and positive community. All Hillsong SAFE programs are offered free of charge. We believe that people should never have to pay for what they were never born to experience.

Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People

Hillsong Church is strongly committed to the safety, protection and wellbeing of all children and young people from all forms of abuse and neglect.

Hillsong Church strongly opposes any kind of child abuse and takes any incidence of abuse within the church very seriously. The following policies and procedures concerning sexual abuse and other abuses have two aims.

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The first is to provide a way for the church to increase safety and minimise risk in this area to the children and young people within the ministries of the church.

The second, for the benefit of victims, it is our goal to ensure that all cases of abuse are handled in a consistent and thorough manner.

This policy applies when

- a child (0 to under 16 years old) or young person (16 to 17 years old) who may be at risk of harm, or who may have been assaulted;
- someone else who tells you that a child or young person is at risk of harm or has been assaulted.

This policy applies to all information relevant to child protection, including:

- disclosures, incidents, allegations, complaints which relate to child protection or a child's, young person's or adult's safety, welfare or wellbeing.
- information about incidents which may have already occurred and / or suggests the possibility of a future incident
- information relating to an adult victim which may indicate a possible risk to children.

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ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This manual is set up with relevant information with regards to Hillsong Church's response to abuse, including sexual, physical, emotional abuse and neglect.

This manual is for the use of Hillsong Church. This includes its

- Church based ministries, including children's and youth ministries and extension services.
- Community based endeavours, including Hillsong Emerge, Hillsong Street Teams, SAFE etc

This manual is to be read in conjunction with existing Hillsong Church Policy and Procedure documents and relevant government legislation.

This Manual is organised in a number of sections. These include

- Human Resources
- Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People
- SAFE Programs
- Forms

Human Resources

This section refers to procedures relevant to staff and volunteers within the church and community based programs.

Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People

This section contains the procedures that might also be called 'Child Protection'. These procedures outline the necessary responsibilities and requirements of staff and volunteers should someone disclose or make an allegation of abuse. These provide a step by step process that staff and volunteers are to follow should they find themselves in this situation.

SAFE Programs

This sections outlines SAFE Programs, it aims, objectives and the relevant procedures for this area / department within Hillsong Church.

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This section contains the controlled forms that are referred to in the procedures. These are not to be altered without consent from the SAFE Office, or General Manager, Hillsong Church

Training

Training staff and volunteers ensures that people are informed and aware of their responsibilities with regard to protecting and supporting children and young people. Hence training is a vital component of the SAFE Procedure Manual. Hillsong Church is committed to ensuring that staff and volunteers are provided with the opportunity to access training.

Definitions

It is imperative that basis terms are defined so that all Hillsong Church staff and people have a common understanding of concepts referred to throughout this manual.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

‘Child abuse and neglect’, also known as ‘child maltreatment’ is the broad term for the acts or behaviour of parents, caregivers and others that endanger a child or young person’s physical or emotional health or development. Child maltreatment can be a single incident, but it is usually a pattern of behaviour that takes place over time.

How communities or countries define child abuse and neglect is dependent, in part, on cultural values and beliefs about what is appropriate childrearing and acceptable parenting. As a result what is considered to be an appropriate standard of care can vary between, and within, communities.

Child maltreatment is commonly classified into four main types: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. It is important to note that children often do not experience just one form of maltreatment; instead they often experience different forms of maltreatment in combination.

- **Sexual Abuse**

Definition

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that she or he does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is defined as sexual activity between a child and an adult, or between a child and an older child, who is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, with the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person.

Other terms for child sexual abuse include child sexual assault, child sexual victimisation, child exploitation, child sexual misuse, child molestation, child sexual

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maltreatment, child rape or incest (when a child is sexually abused by a family member). Children may be sexually abused by family members, other people they know, or by strangers. Children are most likely to be sexually abused by someone who is known to them, such as a father, stepfather, uncle, older sibling, grandparent, friend of the family, teacher, sports coach or neighbour. It is important to note that child sexual abuse does not generally include peer sexual activity, but peer sexual activity may in some circumstances constitute sexual abuse.

Peer sexual activity

In NSW the age of consent for heterosexual sex is 16 years of age. The age of consent for homosexual sex is 18 years of age. The age under which a child cannot give consent in any circumstances is 10 years of age. When it is unclear whether a particular situation involves child sexual abuse or a consenting peer relationship, advice should be sought from DoCS.

Examples

It may include fondling of the child's genitals (or getting the child to fondle the perpetrator's genitals); masturbation (with the child as either observer or participant); oral sex; vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger, or any other object; voyeurism (regular observation of the child) or exhibitionism. It can also include exposing the child to pornography, using the internet to encourage them to view pornography or as a way of meeting children to abuse them, or using the child for the purposes of pornography or prostitution.

In all cases, the offender has more power than the child and misuses that power to take sexual advantage of the child.

- **Physical Abuse**

Definition

Physical abuse refers to the non-accidental physical assault inflicted upon a child by a person having the care of a child. This can range from single or repeated incidents of bullying, inappropriately punishing a child (smacking with a cane or belt, smacking to the head or face, or smacking that leaves a mark or bruise) to serious shaking,

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punching, kicking, strangulation, scalding or burning. In extreme cases the child is permanently disabled or dies from the assault. There are many behaviours which may constitute abuse and the law takes into account the circumstances of the victim which may mean that particular instances of abuse may be regarded as a more serious assault.

- **Emotional Abuse**

Definition

Emotional abuse (also known as ‘psychological maltreatment’ or ‘psychological abuse’) is a pattern of behaviour by a person having the care of a child, that results in the impairment of, disturbance or damage to a child’s or young person’s physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural or social development including damage to a child’s self-esteem or causes the child to suffer some form of significant emotional deprivation or trauma.

Emotional abuse is based around verbal rather than physical harm. It includes patterns of

- ridiculing, denigrating, or scape-goating a child;
- threatening, or scaring;
- rejecting or ignoring a child;
- isolating a child from normal social contacts; and
- involving a child in antisocial or inappropriate behaviour, such as crime, violence or substance abuse.

These days, children’s experiences living in a household where there is domestic violence (violence between parents or intimate partners) is often considered to be a form of emotional abuse as a child may be emotionally harmed even when they have not directly witnessed the violence.

- **Neglect**

Definition

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Neglect is the failure by a person having the care of a child to provide the conditions that are essential for the healthy physical and emotional development of that child - food, clothing, shelter, emotional security, education, affection, attachments, medical care and adequate supervision. Neglect is characterised as a continuum of omissions in parental caretaking.

This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from dangerous activities. In severe cases a child may present as hungry and underweight, malnourished, developmentally delayed, dirty and not clothed appropriately for the weather conditions, left unsupervised for long periods and/or in unsafe circumstances.

- **Abuse of Children with Special Needs**

Children and young people with a disability are acknowledged to be one of the groups at greater risk of harm because:

- they may depend on others to a greater extent than the general population or personal and physical care;
- they may be less able to stop abuse from happening; and
- the disability may mask or camouflage the impact of the abuse.

- **Abuse from delaying intervention because of “cultural factors”**

Cultural issues can be seen as barriers to intervention in cases involving families of non-English speaking background, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

This may result in children and young people being unnecessarily deprived of the protection and support available under the community’s child protection laws.

Principles of social justice require that children and young people have access to the same child protection services, regardless of race or culture.

It is generally accepted that intervention within a family on grounds of suspected abuse should not be delayed by cultural considerations. But it is also generally accepted that such intervention should be culturally sensitive and informed. To delay intervention because of cultural factors, may in itself constitute a form of systems abuse, compounding the suspected abuse experienced by the child or young person concerned.

Vol ID: 4Doc ID: 4-10Page: 1 of 11**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS (CARE AND PROTECTION) ACT 1998**

The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* talks about the child protection system in NSW. It explains how children and young people, who are at risk or being abused, should be cared for in NSW and how vulnerable families should be helped.

It outlines the responsibilities of DoCS and other agencies, as well as parents, and / or authorised carers.

The Act covers things such as when to make a report of abuse or risk of harm, what happens when a report is made, and what happens when child or young person can't safely live with their family.

It outlines ways of working with children, young people and families to help them to remain safely at home, and reduce the need for them to enter care.

Principles of the Act

The Act lays out objects and principles which guide how people should put the Act to practice in child protection and early intervention. These include:

- when making a decision about a child or young person the main consideration must be their safety, welfare and wellbeing;
- the rights of children and young people to participate in decision making are recognised and there are specific obligations to put this principle into practice;
- children and young people are entitled to an explanation about actions taken to protect them;
- when taking action to protect a child or young person from harm, the least intrusive intervention is to be used;
- if children and young people can't stay in their family environment, their name, identity, cultural and religious ties are to be preserved;
- if a child or young person has to leave their family and live in out-of-home care, they should be able to keep close relationships with people who are important to them, such as family members and friends;

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- Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander families and communities are to be more involved in making decisions about the care and protection of their children and young people, in the spirit of self-determination.

Overall, the Act sees caring for children and young people as a responsibility shared by families, agencies and communities working in partnership. It promotes working with children, young people and families in flexible, responsive and innovative ways to meet their needs.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

The NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) is the leading NSW Government agency responsible for community services.

DoCS aims to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and to build stronger families and communities. In particular, they help those who are vulnerable and most in need.

DoCS helps children, young people and families across a continuum of care. DoCS' core work focuses on child protection, starting with early intervention strategies to help build stronger families and communities. They work to protect children and young people from risk of harm and to provide care for children and young people who are not able to live with their families.

DoCS provides many of these services through our community partners such as non-government organisations and government agencies.

DoCS's core activities are to:

- help protect and care for children and young people and support their families;
- provide and fund accommodation and support services for children and young people who need to live away from their families;
- regulate child care by licensing and monitoring compliance;
- fund and regulate adoption services;
- fund support services to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness;

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- help people separated from their families to trace their records;
- coordinate services to meet the basic welfare and recovery needs of people affected by natural and other disasters.

- **Child 'at risk of harm'**

Risk of harm means that you have current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person for any of the following reasons:

- the basic physical or psychological needs of the child or young person are not being met, or at risk of not being met (neglect);
- the parents, or caregivers, have not arranged necessary medical care for the child or young person and are unwilling or unable to do so;
- the child, or young person, is at risk of physical or sexual abuse or ill-treatment (physical or sexual abuse and assault);
- the parent, or caregiver's, behaviour towards the child or young person causes or risks psychological harm to the child or young person (emotional abuse);
- incidents of domestic violence at home and as a consequence, a child or young person being at risk of serious physical or psychological harm (domestic or family violence).

DoCS can also receive and assess reports in the following circumstances:

- before the birth of a child, where there may be risk of harm after the child is born;
- where a child (aged under 16) is homeless;
- where a young person (aged 16 or 17) is homeless.

Where possible, a young person should be involved in the decision to report unless there are good reasons for this not happening. Tell DoCS if the young person is against the report being made as DoCS must consider the young person's wishes when deciding to assess or investigate the report and how to do this.