

Children's Ministry Introductory Training

Training will cover:

1. Safe Ministry with Children (persons under 18 years).
2. The Blue Card System.
3. Structure and reporting chain.
4. Types of abuse/harm
5. Responding to disclosure.
6. Mandatory Reporting requirement and process.
7. Code of Conduct.
8. Expected behavior of team members and personal safety

Safe Ministry with Children

- Child abuse does occur; often perpetrated by a family member or person known to the child.
- We have a duty of care to provide a safe environment for children as we are told to love one another as God loves us - John 13:34;
- *Child Protection Act 1999, Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000, Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000;*
- PCQ Safe Ministry with Children Policy, Procedures and Code of Conduct

The Blue Card System

The Blue Card System is a legislated structure that aims to prevent child abuse and harm to children through:

1. Identifying previous offenders;
2. Screening out those who might offend and establishing clear standards of behavior;
3. Training people in safe practices, a compassionate response, and clear reporting;
4. Activity risk assessment, safe activities.

PCQ Safe Ministry with Children Structure

Level	Detail	Blue Card	Appointment Agreement	Training
Risk Management Officer	Assembly appointment overseeing system	Paid Blue Card	Yes	SMO Coordinator & RM Modules & PCQ Training
Session and Managers	Directing and approving children' ministry leaders and helpers and activities	Volunteer Blue Card	Yes	SMO Team Member Modules or PCQ Training
Ministers and specialized workers	Leader of children's ministry	Paid Blue Card	Yes	SMO Team leader Modules or PCQ Training
Children's Ministry Coordinator/Admin	Coordinates children's ministry and Blue Card system	Paid Blue Card	Yes	SMO Team Member modules or PCQ
Team leader – Sunday School, Youth Group	Teaching ministry or activity leaders	Paid Blue Card	Yes	SMO Team leader Modules or PCQ Training
Team Member or Helper - Adult volunteers	Providing assistance in teaching and activities	Volunteer BC	Yes	SMO Team Member Modules or PCQ Training
Parents attending with in the program	Providing assistance in teaching and activities	Not required	Yes	PCQ Training
Junior Helpers – helpers under 18 years	Youth volunteers working with children	Not required	Not required	Age appropriate PCQ training

In addition to legislation, PCQ Policy requires a person (unless exempt by legislation) to be the holder of a Blue Card, complete Children’s Ministry Training, agree to abide by the PCQ Code of Conduct, and undertake the PCQ Appointment Agreement process prior to commencing Children’s Ministry.

The Blue Card system also requires the implementation of a system to manage risks to children. Generally activities undertaken in Children’s Ministry will be low risk activities. However it is important that safe standards are followed for activities to reduce the possibility of children being harmed. All Children’s Ministry activities are to be approved by Session and any high risk activities are to be approved by the Safe Ministry with Children Risk Management Officer.

A set of standards have been developed when conducting Children’s Ministry which:

- Describe the risk or hazard the activity may present;
- Identify the consequence and likelihood of the risk;
- Evaluate the risk and controls to implemented to manage the risk .

Types of abuse/harm

People involved in Children’s Ministry should be aware there are many types of abuse which occur and result in harm to children. These include:

Abuse	Resulting Harm	
Physical Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting and shaking • Burning/scalding • Bruises or fractures caused by excessive discipline • Poisoning • Giving children alcohol, illegal drugs or excessive medication • Domestic and family violence 	Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruising • Fractures • Internal Injuries • Burns 	
Psychological or emotional abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scapegoating • Persistent rejection or hostility • Constant yelling, insults or criticism • Cultural affronts • Teasing and bullying • Domestic and family violence 	Psychological and Emotional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and development delays • Impaired self-image • Depression • Poor self esteem • Fear/anxiety 	
Neglect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not giving a child sufficient food, housing, clothing, enough sleep, hygienic living conditions, health care and adequate supervision • Leaving children unattended • Children missing school 	Neglect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malnutrition • Poor hygiene • Constant tiredness • Frequent lateness • Inappropriate clothing 	
Sexual abuse or exploitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner • Exposing a sexual body part to a child • Exposing children to sexual acts or pornography • Making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child • Sexual relations with a child under 16 years 	Child Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distrust of adults • Biting excessively • Bedwetting • Aggressiveness • Low self esteem • Being tired • Sleep difficulties • Feeling suicidal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being withdrawn • Unexplained injuries • Being withdrawn • Reluctance to go home • Substance abuse • Creating stories about abuse • Sexualized conduct

Responding to Disclosures

In every preventative or protective action relating to harm to a child, the welfare and best interests of the child will always be a primary consideration. By calmly and empathically listening and offering support, you are helping the child or young person.

All people involved in Children's Ministry should:

- Remain alert to any warning signs;
- Pay close attention to changes in a child's behavior;
- Make written notes in a non-judgmental and accurate manner;
- Assure a child they can come and talk when they need to, listen to them and believe them when they do;

Any one observing or receiving disclosure of harm or other concern for a child's welfare should:

- Remain calm and listen attentively;
- Ensure there is a private place to talk;
- Encourage the person to talk in their own words and ensure leading questions are not asked
- Ensure the person is advised that the disclosure cannot remain a secret and it will be necessary to tell someone to obtain help;
- Reassure the person that they have done the right thing in talking about the harm;
- Document the disclosure including:
 - dates, times and locations of matter disclosed
 - any first person statements made,
 - any questions asked, and
 - actions taken following the disclosure
- Not attempt to investigate or mediate an outcome

Mandatory Reporting

"Any allegation, or reasonable suspicion of, or suspicion of risk of harm or abuse to a child or young person is to be referred to the Queensland Police Service without delay" [PCQ Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct].

Child neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence and psychological harm are all reportable offences [Child Protection Act 1999]. You do not need to have proof to report any concerns you have about the safety of a child. Indicators that represent reasonable grounds to report a suspected offence include:

- A child or young person discloses that he or she has suffered or is suffering non accidental physical injury or sexual abuse
- Someone else advises you that a child or young person has been sexually abused or non-accidentally injured, or
- Your own observations of the child or young person's physical condition or behaviors lead you to reasonably suspect that the child or young person has suffered or is suffering non-accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.

If you suspect child abuse has occurred YOU MUST REPORT IT.

Reporting chain

Person with Concern → Minister or Team Leader → PCQ Safe Ministry with Children Risk Management Officer → Police.

If a member of the reporting chain is suspected of offending then report to the next higher level.

Offences requiring immediate attention:

→ Police on 000, or

→ Child Safety Services: 1800 811 810 (during normal business hours) or
1800 177 135 or 07 3235 9999 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

As well as verbal reporting you should complete the Elvanto abuse/complaint notification form and make detailed notes of observations and conversation. PCQ has an Emergency Response Team that can be deployed to support the management of serious incidents.

Code of Conduct

These principles provide guidance on the expected behaviour to create a safe environment and ensuring children are protected from harm and abuse:

- Become familiar with and act in accordance with the Safe Ministry with Children Policy and Safe Ministry with Children Procedures for Sessions and Committee;
- Act according to the highest standards in their personal life and relationships;
- Only engage in appropriate actions and activities with children;
- Treat all people with respect and dignity regardless of age, culture, gender, religious/denominational affiliation, sexual orientation or personal circumstances;
- Accept responsibility for the appropriate duty of care for all participants;
- Understand that any perpetration of verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse or harassment is unacceptable and will be treated seriously and sensitively, and must be reported in accordance with the Church mandatory reporting Policy and Procedures;
- Act with courtesy, consideration and good judgement, in interpersonal relationships;
- Carry out their role in accord with the doctrines and values of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland;
- Engage only in lawful activity and never assist persons engaged in illegal activities.
- Respect the authority of leaders and act in accordance with reasonable directions ;
- Complete training as required by the Church in relation to Children's Ministry roles;
- Care for equipment and resources used in Ministry.

The Church agrees to:

- Educate and train those involved Children's Ministry in their duties and responsibilities;
- Support those involved in Children's Ministry as they carry out their roles;
- Provide policies and procedures for best practice and high levels of safety and care;
- Adequately insure approved programs, events and activities

As a Code of Conduct cannot explain every situation where discernment is required, those involved in Children's Ministry should seek advice if placed in a position of uncertainty.

Breaches of policy, procedures or the Code of Conduct are considered non-criminal behaviors which do not meet the standards expected when working with children. Breaches however, left unchecked, can lead to incidents which impact on the safety of children and the integrity of the Church. It is therefore of the utmost importance the conduct of persons involved in children's

ministry is monitored to ensure standards are maintained and procedures and protocols are followed.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct and procedures are to be reported to the Minister who will consult with church leaders on the appropriate course of action

Expected behavior of team members and personal safety

The following points provide guidance to safe and appropriate behavior when in contact with children and youth.

Do:

- Behave in a manner consistent with your position as a positive role model to children and as a representative of the organization.
- Follow the PCQ Children's Ministry Policy and procedures.
- Treat all children with respect and take notice of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner.
- Take care as to the degree of physical contact with children. Even though it's common for children to initiate hugs and other contact, those involved in Children's Ministry should quickly redirect children to other activities.
- Allow children to determine the degree of physical contact they have with you, without showing favoritism.
- Report disclosures, allegations or belief regarding abuse to your Team Leader or Minister.
- Alert a Leader if you find yourself in a situation where a member of the opposite gender is required.
- Report all concerns, issues and problems to your Team leader or Minister, as soon as possible.

Don't:

- Engage in inappropriately rough physical games.
- Use any physical means to control or discipline a child, other than restraint by holding to prevent injury.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch children in an inappropriate and / or culturally insensitive way.
- Make sexually suggestive comments, even as a joke.
- Assist children to do things of a personal nature that they can do for themselves, such as going to the toilet or changing clothes.
- Enter the sleeping accommodation of members of the opposite gender, except in emergencies. Be aware of situations where children might be changing, showering or using the toilet.
- Spending time alone with a child where you can't be observed by others (e.g. taking a child to your home, meetings outside of the program activity).