



## **POLICY AND PROCEDUES**

### **Safe Ministry Incident Management Policy**

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## 1. OVERVIEW

- a) Wilson Gospel Chapel (WGC) is committed to providing physical, emotional, and spiritual environments that are safe and secure and that will protect its members and those accessing its ministries from abuse of all kinds. We believe that such abuse is contrary to God's standards for how we ought to live and therefore has no place in any of our activities. We affirm that all people have the right to emotionally and physically safe and respected.
- b) We also recognise that we live in a fallen world, and as such we should be prepared to manage incidents if they should ever occur. We are committed to every member of WGC looking out for vulnerable people and understanding how to appropriately raise concerns.

## 2. PURPOSE AND AIMS

- a) The purpose of this policy is to assist WGC to meet its obligations for reporting behaviours of concern against vulnerable people in our community by ensuring an appropriate incident response is followed. It outlines responsibilities, principles, and processes to follow. It forms an important part of our commitment to creating a culture of safety and protection of vulnerable people and should be read in conjunction with our Safe Ministry Policy and Code of Conduct.
- b) This process should be followed by the Safe Ministry Contacts when they receive a report of an incident relating to the safety or mistreatment of a person participating in a WGC ministry. Responding to incidents on a case by case basis allows Safe Ministry Contacts the ability to ensure their course of action is suitable for the incident, without having to work through fixed steps which may be unnecessary. It allows them to develop particular steps more suitable for the persons and incident raised.
- c) This policy applies to all people accessing WGC ministries. It should be made easily accessible to children, vulnerable people, leaders, volunteers, and families.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

- a) **Abuse** means the maltreatment of a person resulting from the actions or inactions of another. Abuse can be categorised in five ways:
  - i. Physical
  - ii. Sexual
  - iii. Emotional
  - iv. Psychological
  - v. Neglect



- b) **Child** means an individual or group of individuals who are under the age of 18 years. In the absence of positive evidence as to age, a child is a person who appears to be under 18 years of age.
- c) **Child abuse** means maltreatment done by a person who has responsibility to care for a child.
- d) **Incident** means an event, or a concern that an event is or has taken place, in which there is a high likelihood of traumatic effects or invoking unusual or unexpectedly strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with the ability of an individual or group to function either at the time of the event or later.
- e) **Leader** means anyone who has some responsibility at Wilson Gospel Chapel. This responsibility may include a delegation of authority, the care or supervision of others (including children), the ability to recruit others, or being able to make decisions that will affect ministry participants. A Leader acts as a representative of Wilson Gospel Chapel.
- f) **Ministry** means the services, programs and any other activities organised and run by Wilson Gospel Chapel.
- g) **Oversight** means the management committee of Wilson Gospel Chapel Inc. The Oversight consists of the Elders of the Assembly and a Deacon appointed as Treasurer.
- h) **Reasonable suspicion:** means fair and practical reason to believe an incident of abuse has occurred or is ongoing either by verbal communication, hearsay, rumour, or observance of behaviour.
- i) **Sexual abuse** means behaviour or activities that expose or subject a person to sexual activity. It includes using bribery, coercion, threats, exploitation or violence towards these ends. Victims of sexual abuse typically have less power or control in the situation (such as children, aged adults or people with a disability)
- j) **Sexual harassment** means sexual or sexualised behaviour, innuendo, or remarks that are unwelcome, humiliating, or intimidating and that creates an uncomfortable environment for the recipient.
- k) **Sexual misconduct** means inappropriate or unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature.
- l) **Vulnerable person** means:
  - i. a Child or Children; or



- ii. an individual aged 18 years and above who may be unable to take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves against abuse, harm or exploitation due to their age, illness, trauma, financial hardship, ethnicity, disability, or any other reason.

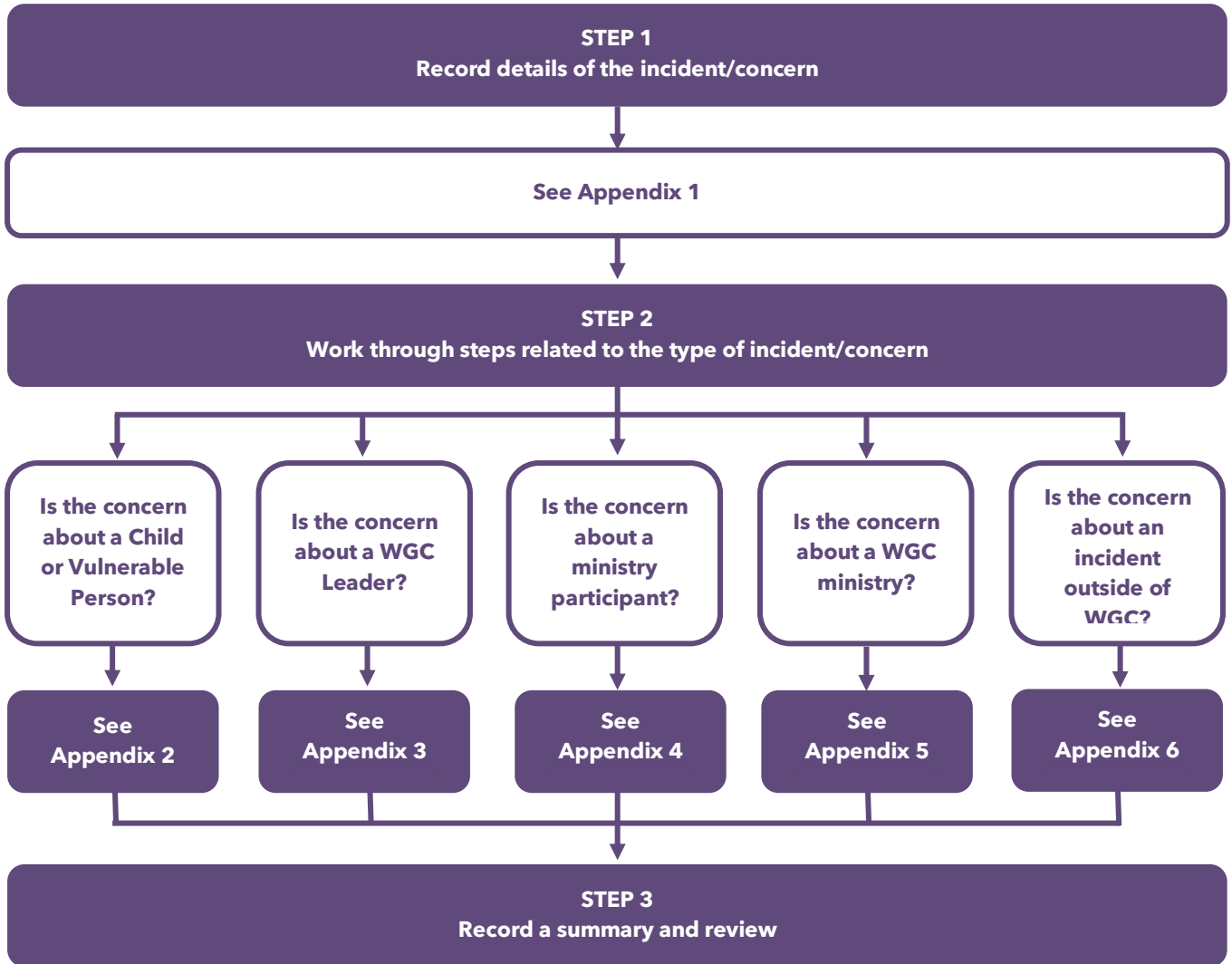
#### **4. REPORTING PRINCIPLES**

- a) When incidents are reported, our response will be guided by the following key principles:
  - i. All reports will be taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly;
  - ii. Our response will protect the confidentiality, dignity, health, and wellbeing of all individuals involved (including any individuals suspected of behaving inappropriately);
  - iii. Special consideration will be given to protecting the interests of children (if they are in any way involved). We recognise that this may require expert involvement to assist the incident response.
  - iv. We will promote a culture where all leaders, volunteers, and participants are encouraged to raise concerns and report incidents as they happen. We will make this process accessible to everyone and ensure we meet our reporting obligations (e.g. to regulators, law, insurance) on every occasion.
  
- b) Regarding complaints and/or reasonable suspicions of sexual abuse, it is a requirement that these are reported to:
  - i. Police and/or other authorities in compliance with mandatory reporting obligations;
  - ii. WGC Oversight;
  - iii. WGC's insurer.
  
- c) At each point in the process, the Safe Ministry Contact(s) will need to:
  - i. agree on a reasonable course of action based on the information at hand and apply the principles on a case by case basis; and
  - ii. ensure the incident and outcomes are thoroughly documented and saved as a record of their decisions and any actions they have determined to take. This includes clearly outlining roles and responsibilities and follow up.
  
- d) In all cases where an incident or concern is raised, copies of any reports made are to be submitted to the Oversight, which the Oversight will regularly review and, where necessary, implement risk management strategies which focus on preventing, identifying, and mitigating risks to children and vulnerable people.



## 5. PROCESS

### 5.1 Flowchart



### 5.2 Step 1 - Record Details of the Incident/Concern

The Incident Management Process should be initiated when a Safe Ministry Contact receives a concern or a report of an incident. See Appendix 1 for a list of significant elements to include when recording an incident/concern.



### **5.3 Step 2 - Work through the Steps Related to the Type of Concern**

- a) Share the incident/concern details with the other Safe Ministry Contact(s), then together work through each type of concern, only skipping if all Safe Ministry Contacts unanimously agree it can be skipped. If the type of concern is applicable, record the next steps that need to be taken, and take those steps.
  
- b) Is the concern about a Child or Vulnerable Person? (see Appendix 2):
  - i. Are there reasonable grounds for this belief?
  - ii. Are there external agencies who need to be contacted?
  - iii. What next steps are appropriate?
  
- c) Is the concern about a WGC Leader? (see Appendix 3):
  - i. Are there reasonable grounds for this belief?
  - ii. Are there external agencies who need to be contacted?
  - iii. How should this be investigated?
  - iv. Should the Leader be suspended?
  - v. What next steps are appropriate?
  
- d) Is the concern about a ministry participant? (see Appendix 4)
  - i. Are there reasonable grounds for this belief?
  - ii. Are there external agencies who need to be contacted?
  - iii. How should this be investigated?
  - iv. Should any actions be taken towards the Participant?
  - v. What next steps are appropriate?
  
- e) Is the concern about a WGC ministry? (see Appendix 5):
  - i. Are there reasonable grounds for this belief?
  - ii. How should this be investigated?
  - iii. Should any actions be taken regarding the Program?
  - iv. What next steps are appropriate?
  
- f) Is the concern about an incident outside the Church? (see Appendix 6):
  - i. Are there reasonable grounds for this belief?
  - ii. What actions should be taken regarding the concern?



#### **5.4 Step 3 - Record a Summary and Review Regularly**

After the concern has been appropriately managed and responded to, the Oversight must ensure the summary details are included in its next meeting agenda for review, and that any ongoing actions or commitments are properly in progress.

### **6. APPENDIX 1 - RECORDING THE CONCERN**

- a) When someone raises a concern or reports an incident it is important to record as much detail as possible. The details of those reporting should be kept private and confidential and only made known to the Oversight and to individuals and organisations who are legally required to know those details (i.e. in the case of abuse).
  
- b) Some significant elements to record include:
  - i. name of the Safe Ministry Contact who received the report;
  - ii. date the concern was received;
  - iii. name of person who raised the incident/concern;
  - iv. initial details of the incident/concern, including the date it allegedly occurred (record as much of the incident/concern as can be remembered. If possible, ask the reporter to email their concern);
  - v. further details of the incident/concern - it might be important to ask further questions of the person raising the concern as below; however, if the person reporting is the alleged victim it might be important to seek external advice before asking further questions:
    - When exactly did the incident occur? Time of day, etc.
    - Who else was there?
    - What happened before/after the incident/concern?
    - Where was the reporter when it happened? Were there things they couldn't see?
    - Have you seen something similar before or since?
    - Has anything else happened in relation to this incident since this event?

### **7. APPENDIX 2 - INCIDENT/CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD OR VULNERABLE PERSON**

- a) This step should only be used when there is a concern about a particular child. If the concern is not about a particular child, but rather about a program involving children or a leader of children, please skip this step.
  
- b) Determine if there are reasonable grounds to suspect a particular child or vulnerable person was/is at significant risk of being harmed.



- c) Record any notes or reasons for your determination - it is possible that the details of a concern could be nonsensical, or the claims could be such that no reasonable person would consider them worthy of further review; nevertheless, they should be recorded and the report taken seriously.
- d) Determine which external agencies or organisations (if any) need to be contacted. This step might include:
  - i. providing the name of the person responsible for taking those steps in the record of the incident/concern;
  - ii. making an official report to the Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support (this might be actioned through helping the reporter contact the Department or by another person);
  - iii. contacting the Police to inquire if they need to be informed;
  - iv. making a Police Report;
  - v. contacting the insurance provider;
  - vi. contacting an Elder Abuse Helpline or National Aged Care Advocacy Line on 1800 700 600
  - vii. contacting the National Disability, Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1800 880 052
  - viii. contacting the State Ombudsman to inquire if there needs to be a formal notification;
  - ix. contacting the WGC Oversight to arrange support to the child and carers.
- e) Record and make plans regarding any further steps, processes, or guidelines any of the above agencies recommend taking. Include the name of the person responsible for taking each of these steps.

## **8. APPENDIX 3 - INCIDENT/CONCERN ABOUT A LEADER**

- a) A **leader** means anyone who has some been given some responsibility at WGC. This responsibility may include a delegation of authority, the care or supervision of others (including children), the ability to recruit others, or being able to make decisions that will affect ministry participants. This means a leader could be an Elder, Deacon, Sunday School teacher, program leader, volunteer, or even a helper. If the concern/incident relates to the behaviour of a leader, then WGC may bear the responsibility for that leader's actions.
- b) Note:
  - i. If multiple leaders have been implicated in the incident/concern, the Safe Ministry Contacts should go through this process for each leader individually.
  - ii. If no specific leader is able to be identified it may be appropriate to treat the issue as a 'Ministry Concern' (Appendix 5) which relates to the general behaviour of leaders within a ministry.





- c) If there are concerns raised about a leader:
- i. Determine if there are there reasonable grounds to suspect a leader has behaved inappropriately.
  - ii. Record any notes or reasons for your determination - it is possible that claims made about leaders could be accurate, but not describe inappropriate behaviour, or the claims could be such that no reasonable person would consider them worthy of further review.
  - iii. Determine if outside agencies should be contacted about the alleged behaviour of the leader. It may be suitable to contact the Police if the suspected behaviour could be considered illegal. Other possible agencies could be your insurance provider, denominational support teams, organisation partners, or possibly the Leader's employer if this is deemed appropriate. Record who will contact which agency and any details or recommendations coming out of that contact. This may be done with or through the person who originally made the report.
  - iv. Determine what steps should be taken to investigate the alleged behaviour. The appropriate method of investigation will depend on the circumstances and the severity of the suspected behaviour and on the suspected Leader's role at WGC:
    - If the alleged incident occurred outside the responsibility of WGC, and in which the suspected leader was not acting (or could not be reasonably thought to be acting) as a representative of WGC, it may not be appropriate for WGC to conduct an investigation.
    - If the alleged behaviour is severe misconduct or the position of the leader is at a high level within WGC, it may be appropriate to arrange an independent investigator to investigate the suspected behaviour with a level of transparency and separation from WGC. The independent investigator should provide a report and recommendations to the Oversight for its review and action.
    - Otherwise, it may be appropriate to appoint a person within WGC to investigate the alleged behaviour.
    - In some circumstances it may be appropriate to temporarily remove the suspected Leader from various responsibilities during the investigation (see item (d) below).
  - v. Record what steps should be taken, including who will action those steps and what will be expected as a result.
  - vi. Record any resulting decisions or recommendations provided by an investigator (if applicable).
  - vii. Inform the Oversight so they can provide appropriate pastoral care.
- d) Determine if the suspected Leader should be temporarily suspended from some or all of their responsibilities. There may be reasons to consider removing the suspected Leader from their duties or responsibilities, and to what extent:



- i. It may be appropriate to remove the Leader from all responsibilities if the severity of the suspected behaviour is such that it warrants concerns about the ongoing safety of other persons at WGC.
  - ii. It may be appropriate to remove the Leader from responsibilities where they would be brought into any or substantial contact with the alleged victim.
  - iii. It may be appropriate to not remove the Leader, but to reduce their responsibilities for a time to ensure they are aware of the appropriate behaviour of a Leader in their role.
  - iv. It may not be necessary to take any actions related to the suspected Leader.
- e) Record the decision and what, if any, steps needs to be taken, and who is responsible for taking those steps. They may include:
- i. communicating with the suspected Leader;
  - ii. communicating with the suspected Leader's supervisor;
  - iii. communicating with the Oversight;
  - iv. communicating with the alleged victim.

## **9. APPENDIX 4 - INCIDENT/CONCERN ABOUT A MINISTRY PARTICIPANT**

- a) A **participant** means someone who attends a ministry run by WGC, and may or may not be an Assembly member.
- b) Note:
- i. Only follow this step if there is a concern raised about the behaviour or conduct of a particular person which occurred in the context of a WGC ministry. If the concern is regarding someone's behaviour outside the context of a WGC ministry, treat the issue as per Appendix 5.
  - ii. If multiple participants have been implicated in the concern, the Safe Ministry Contacts should go through this process for each participant individually.
  - iii. If no specific participant is able to be identified, it may be more appropriate to treat the issue as a 'Program Concern' (Appendix 4) which relates to the general behaviour of Leaders within the program.
- c) If there are concerns raised about a participant:
- i. determine if there are there reasonable grounds to suspect the Participant has behaved inappropriately; and
  - ii. record any notes or reasons for your determination. It is possible that claims made about a participant could be accurate, but not describe inappropriate behaviour; or the claims could be such that no reasonable person would consider them worthy of further review.



- d) Determine if the alleged behaviour is of such a nature that any State, Federal or other organisation might need to be notified - it may be appropriate to contact the Police if the alleged behaviour could be considered illegal. Other possible agencies could be your insurance provider, denominational support teams, organisation partners, or the participant's employers (if known and appropriate). Record who will contact which agency and any details or recommendations coming out of that contact. This may be done with or through the person who originally made the report.
- e) Determine what steps should be taken to investigate the concerns. It may be appropriate to investigate the suspicion further. Depending on the nature of the incident or the relationships between the parties it may be appropriate to appoint an independent investigator. The independent investigator should provide a report and recommendations to the Oversight for their review and action. Otherwise (if appropriate) decide who, within WGC, will investigate and record their report.
- f) Determine what steps, if any, should be taken regarding the alleged incident and participant. Depending on the suspected or potential severity of the incident, there may be a range of options to consider taking in response to the concern:
  - i. It may be appropriate to appoint someone to speak with the participant about standards of behaviour expected for WGC participants (refer to Code of Conduct).
  - ii. It may be appropriate to set out some particular standards of behaviour for this participant to ensure future behaviours are appropriate.
  - iii. It may be appropriate to request the participant does not attend various programs for a time, or until various criteria are met;
  - iv. Inform the Oversight so they can provide appropriate pastoral care.
- g) Record what steps should be taken, including who will action those steps and what will be expected as a result. Record any resulting decisions or recommendations provided by an investigator (if applicable).

## **10. APPENDIX 5 - INCIDENT/CONCERN ABOUT A MINISTRY**

- a) A ministry means the services, programs, and any other activities organised and run by WGC. This can include an event, group, or session which is run by WGC leaders or other volunteers. It includes its spaces, environments, and culture. It may also include any online environments used for the ministry by leaders or participants.
- b) If a concern is raised about leadership in general, or the general behaviour of participants, it might be suitable to use Appendix 3 or Appendix 4 to respond.



- c) If there are concerns raised about a ministry:
  - i. determine if there are reasonable grounds to suspect a ministry is unsafe; and
  - ii. record any notes or reasons for your determination. It is possible that claims made about a ministry could be accurate, but not describe inappropriate culture or an unsafe environment; or the concerns could be such that no reasonable person would consider them worthy of further review.
- d) Determine what steps will be taken to investigate the concerns. Record what steps should be taken, including who will action those steps and what will be expected as a result. Record any resulting decisions or recommendations.
- e) Determine what steps, if any, should be taken regarding the ministry concerns. Depending on the severity of the concerns about the ministry and the result and recommendations of any investigation, there may be a variety of steps to consider taking:
  - i. It may be appropriate to gather some or all of the ministry leaders to re-establish appropriate standards and acceptable behaviours.
  - ii. It may be appropriate to gather some or all of the ministry participants to increase awareness of standards and appropriate behaviours.
  - iii. It may be appropriate to conduct a risk assessment of the ministry in question.
  - iv. It may be appropriate to recommend updated systems or processes to be used within the ministry by the Leaders.
  - v. Inform the Oversight so they can provide appropriate pastoral care.
- f) Record what steps should be taken, including who will action those steps and what will be expected as a result.

## **11. APPENDIX 6 - INCIDENT/CONCERN OUTSIDE OF WGC**

- a) If the concern relates to an incident which occurred outside the context of a WGC ministry, and the person of concern was not acting as a representative of WGC, the concern is most likely outside the direct responsibility of WGC.
- b) However, as responsible members of our community, there may be appropriate steps to take in response to external concerns. Many of these steps should have already been captured in Appendix 1 if the concern was about a child or vulnerable person by contacting various agencies.



- c) If there are concerns raised about an external incident:
  - i. determine if there are there reasonable grounds to suspect the concern is valid; and
  - ii. record any notes or reasons for your determination. It is possible that concerns raised about an external incident could be such that no reasonable person would consider them worthy of further review.
  
- d) Determine what, if any, steps should be taken about this concern. Depending on the severity of the concern, it may be appropriate to one or several of the following:
  - i. contact CrimeStoppers, the Police, or other emergency services;
  - ii. contact the Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Services;
  - iii. if there is a concern about a person who is in a position of influence in another organisation, it may be appropriate to help the reporter raise their concern through the appropriate channels in that organisation;
  - iv. inform the Oversight so they can provide appropriate pastoral care.
  
- e) Record what steps should be taken, including who will action those steps and what will be expected as a result.