

## **KEEPING YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE**

In recent years, the body of Christ has suffered a loss of respect within the secular community through allegations of misconduct and abuse claims. All leadership positions, whether minister of religion, youth leader or voluntary worker, carry a heavy responsibility. Whilst there is a tendency to concentrate on the issue of child abuse, it should be remembered that wherever there is a position of trust established, there exists the potential for abuse of this position.

It is important to adopt practices within your ministry to protect your employees and volunteers by training them to recognise situations which may frighten or even intimidate those to whom they minister. All churches need to have in place a strategy to minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur. Legislation alone isn't enough to protect children. A caring community and effective workplace practices will also help to ensure that children and young people have a safe environment, free from the risk of abuse.

### **INSURANCE IMPLICATIONS**

Most insurance policies come with a general exclusion, which in effect removes any ability to claim for molestation, sexual or other forms of abuse. There is good news however, for those churches and organisations that do implement an effective safety program.

Ansvr is willing to replace the general abuse exclusion with a 'known offenders' clause. That is, where you have acted reasonably to keep your young people safe, your organisation will be covered in the event of a claim against a leader.

#### **Who are leaders?**

A leader is any person (whether paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the safety of any young person placed in their care, and holding a recognised position of ministry.

A leader might include but is not limited to: Counsellors, Youth Leaders, Sunday School Teachers, Teachers, Helpers, Kid's Club Leaders, Ministers of Religion, Scripture Teachers, Music, Drama or other Ministry Leaders, Sports Coaches or Event Organisers.

#### **How do I get the Abuse exclusion changed?**

Changing to the abuse exclusion is at the discretion of Ansvr, however they do have a standard checklist that they will review in considering any request. This checklist is not intended to be a comprehensive risk management program, but a basic starting point for reviewing your risk management program.

### CHECKLIST FOR ABUSE RISK MANAGEMENT

	Yes	Needs work
Do you have an organisational policy statement with commitment to providing a safe & secure environment and response taken should abuse occur?		
Is there clear selection / screening process for leaders/staff including:		
details of candidates past experience obtained?		
a minimum of 2 referees checked?		
a check of most recent employment/ministry as to suitability?		
a personal interview process for all candidates?		
police checks / working with children checks?		
Do you have a new leader induction and ongoing training policy and process?		
Do you have a standard where a minimum of 2 leaders must be present at all times when working with young people?		
Do you have a policy for disciplining children that prevents administering any form of physical, emotional or mental discipline?		
Do you have an adequate reporting process including:		
Independent person appointed to investigate incident?		
Documented reporting & escalating procedures?		
A process of reporting to police if reasonable grounds to suspect child abuse?		

The following sample resources are available to assist you to keep your young people safe:

- Sample Child Protection Policy
- Volunteer leaders application template
- Sample Interview questions
- Incident report template
- Risk assessment template

Please contact us if you would like a copy of the resources or for any further information.

***Important note:** This document is designed as a guide for information only. It is not intended to give specific legal or risk management advice, and does not take into account your specific circumstances. Please contact us should you require information specific to your organisation.*