

A grayscale photograph of a woman sitting on the floor, smiling and holding a small object in her hands. Two children are sitting in front of her, one with their back to the camera and another to the side. The background shows a wooden chair and a bookshelf.

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CHILD SAFETY

Last Updated 31/10/2021



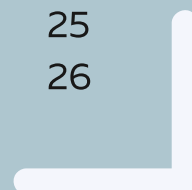
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CHILD SAFETY POLICY AND PROCEDURE GUIDE

Gracehouse is committed to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment. Gracehouse adopts the ChildSafe (SP3) system and is committed to sound implementation of it.

This Policy **MUST** be followed by every person involved in Children and Young People (under 18 years) ministries at Gracehouse. A ministry is ANY activity authorised by Gracehouse.

This policy references fundamental elements for Safety and Risk Management based on State Indicators and Risk Management approach for community organisations for care of children, young and other vulnerable people.



RISK MANAGEMENT OFFICER

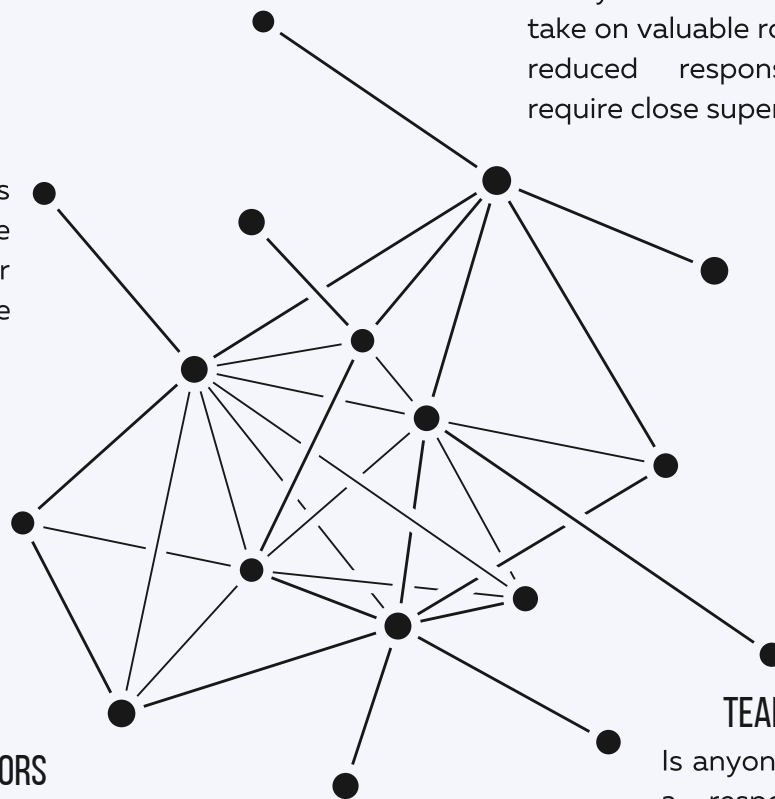
The RMO is responsible for setting the agenda for safety and care, for overseeing the integration of ChildSafe SP3 into Gracehouse as a whole, and reporting Bi-Annually to Gracehouse Eldership on this.

JUNIOR TEAM MEMBERS

Is anyone under 18 years, can take on valuable roles but carry reduced responsibility and require close supervision.

OVERSEERS

The church overseers accept ultimate responsibility for ensuring Gracehouse is child-safe.



COORDINATORS

Monitor safe practice and assesses risk management plans. Each Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the implementation of ChildSafe SP3 into their ministry areas, and reporting Bi- Annually to the RMO on this.

TEAM LEADERS

Has the responsibility for a team (Team Members) and for the conduct of a particular program or event in Church ministries. Team Leaders are accountable to their Coordinators.

TEAM MEMBERS

Is anyone who engage in a responsible role at Gracehouse, usually within the context of a team. Team Members are unpaid people (volunteers) who are invited by Team Leaders to assist them in their ministry. A Team Member must be 18 years or older.

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ACCOUNTABILITY

At Gracehouse, we take accountability very seriously. No one is accountable to themselves. Everyone is accountable to someone else.

A team Member or Team Leader cannot go ahead with an activity unless Permission to Proceed has been granted by the Coordinator using the Permission to Proceed Procedure, Point 6.



APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE AND SCREENING

Great care will be taken by Gracehouse when appointing an RMO, Coordinator/s, Team Leader/s and Team Member/s. The process of appointing people will include:

- An Application Form
- Referee checks
- Interview
- Working with Children Check – Blue Card

A person MUST have a valid Working with Children Check (Blue Card), and be screened (including reference-checked) in accordance with the Appointment Procedure before serving in any ministry position listed in Point 9.

A person who has been charged with a violent or sexually related offence (whether convicted or not) cannot be involved in child-related programs or work in immediate proximity to child-related programs.

A newly - appointed Team Leader or Team Member will receive induction and training and they will be expected to read, understand and agree to Gracehouse policies and procedures.

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TRAINING



Gracehouse adopts the ChildSafe (SP3) system when training a RMO, Coordinator, Team Leader and Team Members. All of them **MUST** be trained (face-to-face and/or online) in accordance with the Training Procedure, Point 3 and 4.

The RMO must maintain a training register. Refresher training must be held every 12 months.

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RISK MANAGEMENT

Gracehouse will strive to create a safe environment for all involved by implementing the SP3 guides based on established ISO risk management standards to identify and mitigate risk, Point 6.

Allegations of abuse or any form of harm are very serious and require a high degree of care when handling. Children should be believed. Incidents must be reported in accordance with the Incident Reporting Procedure and where applicable investigated in accordance with the Investigation Procedure, Point 5. Steps must be taken to ensure the safety of children while an investigation is underway.




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RECORD-KEEPING

Information and documents that contain personal information will be stored confidentially and securely in accordance with the Gracehouse Privacy Policy, Point 4.





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RULES OF CONDUCT



EVERY CHILD MATTERS

Every person involved in ministry at Gracehouse will treat the safety and care of children as paramount in importance. Each person involved in ministry at Gracehouse, including every Team Member, Team Leader and Coordinator, must comply with the Code of Practice as outlined below in Point 2.

MEDIA RELATIONS

The only people authorised to speak to the media in relation to any Gracehouse ministry are the overseers. No other person should speak to the media.

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REVIEW

SECTION	ELEMENTS OF CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS	HOW GRACEHOUSE MEETS REQUIREMENTS
1	A statement of commitment to child safety principles with policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Policy • Guides for Roles at 4 Levels • Appointment declaration
2	A child safety code of conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChildSafe SP3 Code of Practice • 8 elements expanded for expected behaviours
3	Policies for recruiting, selecting, training and managing employees and volunteers with effective screening tools.	<p>ChildSafe SP3 framework for Screening, Appointment & Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening: effective tools including but not relying solely on WWC cards. • Appointment: clear induction and expectation. • Training: relevant to all levels of responsibility • SP3 guides for roles and training at 4 levels. • SP3 Procedure forms. • Safety Management Online (SMO) tool guides practice.

SECTION	ELEMENTS OF CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS	HOW GRACEHOUSE MEETS REQUIREMENTS
4	Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective support, supervision and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChildSafe SP3 framework to reliably integrate and monitor a culture of safety in the organisation and guide a sustainable implementation process. • SP3 review and audit guidelines • SP3 guides to aligned integration of safety practice. • SP3 guides for safety at 4 levels of responsibility. • SMO as effective record keeping as well as Gracehouse Documentation System. • SP3 Procedure and Gracehouse templates • Commitment to keeping any information on Team Members, Team Leaders and children in ministry programs, personal information private.
5	Effective practice to deal with concerns or complaints about harm or abusive behaviours towards a child. Clear awareness of jurisdiction requirements to report.	<p>ChildSafe SP3 emergency and reporting framework for definitive response and reporting of abuse and harm.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SP3 emergency and response procedures • SP3 Incident response form • Work with Children (Blue card) approval

SECTION	ELEMENTS OF CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS	HOW GRACEHOUSE MEETS REQUIREMENTS
6	Risk management standard approach over programs and activities to identify, mitigate and ward against harm to provide safe environments.	<p>ChildSafe SP3 guides based on established ISO risk management standards to identify and mitigate risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SP3 Permission to proceed – a fundamental risk approach. • SP3 Safety information and Risk assessment plan. • SP3 Training to identify risk, harm and abuse.
7	Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.	<p>SP3 Activity Management and SP3 Code of Practice promotes communicating expectations and child feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SP3 Code of Practice • SP3 Team Member Guide • SP3 Training Modules
8	The Risk Manager Officer (RMO) at Gracehouse:	Wendy Pretorius/Felipe Borja
	The Coordinator/s at Gracehouse:	Wendy Pretorius
	Team leader/s at Gracehouse:	Juanita Pretorius – Creche and Sunday School
9	People that MUST have valid Working with Children Cards and screened:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All paid employees • Overseers • Deacons • Anyone volunteering in Creche, Sunday School or Youth under the age of 18 years. • Anyone helping to transport children/ youth under the age of 18 to and from church or church organised events.

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CHILD HARM, ABUSE & COMPLAINTS POLICY



Gracehouse is committed to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment, which includes ensuring that children, personnel or families who wish to report allegations or abuse or child safety concerns know how to report abuse allegations and are encouraged to do so.

Abuse often occurs in environments where trust is involved, where a person in a position of trust and/or authority misuses their position to harm another. Often the recipient of the abuse is vulnerable due to their personal circumstances or because the abuse is in a position of power or authority. Abuse is a serious concern and it is the responsibility of leaders within Gracehouse and all those who work with children to do everything possible to prevent and/or minimise the risk of abuse.



Gracehouse adopts the ChildSafe SP3 system and Policies and is committed to sound implementation of it. This policy is intended to help Gracehouse achieve this. The policy must be followed by every person involved in Gracehouse working with children. For the purpose of this policy a child is a person under the age of 18 years.

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MAKING COMPLAINTS

Any child, parent, child's trusted adult representative, independent support person, staff member, volunteer or adult survivor may make a complaint about abuse or inappropriate behaviour undertaken by any person involved in Gracehouse.

Abuse can involve neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence, and bullying.



Inappropriate behaviour (that can be sexual in nature) includes but is not limited to:

- Showing favours to one child over others.
- Baby sitting
- Taking photos of a child who is in the care of Gracehouse outside of official duties
- Repeatedly visiting a child and/or their family at their home for no professional reason
- Providing gifts or favours to a child or their family
- Arranging to meet a child alone away from the institution when there is no professional reason for doing so.
- Sharing phone numbers with a child except as allowed by Gracehouse's formal communication policy.
- Creating situations to be alone unsupervised with a child
- Wearing inappropriate clothing around children
- Using sexual language or gestures
- Making written or verbal sexual advances
- Sharing sexual photos or videos or other photos of the child
- Sharing details with a child of one's own sexual experiences
- Taking a child to one's house to be alone with the child
-
- Asking children to keep a relationship secret
- Showering or dressing or undressing with the door open (for example, on excursions and in residential situations)
- Not respecting the privacy of children when they are using the bathroom or changing.

Note: While it is understood that the first seven actions outlined above normally occur within the contexts of family and some pre-existing relationships, it remains the safety policy of the organisation not to engage in these ways, in the context of the organisation's activities.

Below are examples of conduct, which if proven, would constitute a criminal offence:

- Obscene exposure (for example, an adult masturbating in front of a child or exposing their genitals)
- Having, attempting to have, or facilitating any kind of sexual contact with a child
- Possessing, creating or exposing children to pornography
- Giving goods, money, attention or affection in exchange for sexual activities or images
- Voyeurism
- Sexting
- Grooming offences (as defined by law in most jurisdictions)

Inappropriate behaviour complaints, or complaints about abuse may realistically be disclosed to anyone in Gracehouse. However, the ordinary reporting process is that complaints are made to Gracehouse Eldership through your Coordinator, using the Incident Report form.

Complaints should ideally be made in writing but this is not always possible. If a complaint is made verbally, the person to whom the complaints is made should record it in writing as soon as possible.

Complainants should be encouraged to report their allegations to the Police where the conduct is criminal. Individuals should also be informed of their right to also complain to an independent body (such as the Child Protection Ombudsman).

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RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

If a complaint is made by a child (and is not subject to Police processes), the most important thing is to listen and tell the child that they are not to blame. Do not press for information or push the child to reveal the details of the abuse. Do not ask leading questions, rather listen carefully and if possible, take notes. Reassure the child that they are right to tell you the information and that what they say is taken very seriously, but do not promise them that no one else will be informed about the complaint.

Complaints may be made by someone who witnesses abuse towards a child or is informed about abuse that has allegedly occurred. These complaints should be taken just as seriously as if the complaint was coming from the child directly.

Gracehouse should respond promptly and consistently to all complaints.

People attending Gracehouse must be mindful of diversity and the cultural norms and expectations that are within the group of people coming into contact with Gracehouse. It is important to be educated about the specific diversity needs within Gracehouse. Additional safeguards may be required to meet the needs of children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, or children who live in out-of-home care.

The response to the complaint should not just be about the factual circumstances of the allegation but should take into account the psychological and other effects on the complainant regardless of whether the complaint has at that stage been formally upheld. Prompt referral to trauma-based counselling including funding of such treatment should occur (where possible and not provided by government systems like the mental health plan for psychologists) to ensure that the potential damage to the victim is minimised.

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RISK ASSESSMENT

Upon receiving a complaint of child sexual abuse an initial risk assessment must be conducted to identify and minimise any risks to children. This should include:

- Assessing the safety of the complainant and other children.
- Considering what action should be taken about the accused including supervision, removal of contact with children, being stood down or termination. If a complaint of child sexual abuse against a person within Gracehouse is plausible, and there is a risk that person may come into contact with children in the course of their work, the person should be stood down from their position while the complaint is investigated.
- Considering whether it is necessary to report to another agency and if so, report to that agency, including the police and child protection authorities.
- Considering who, if anyone, should be informed of the complaint
- Considering whether there are any restrictions to informing others, for example, whether the disclose bypasses the Privacy Act by being required by law or not.
- Determining to implement the decisions made as a result of the risk assessment.
- Supporting those affected including the child or children involved (or the person who made the complaint).

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INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

Gracehouse must investigate all complaints of conduct that does not reach the criminal threshold but may be inappropriate and/or a breach of Gracehouse's code of conduct. If there is any doubt about whether the criminal threshold has been reached, the allegation should be reported to the relevant authorities.

The person investigating may be an employee of Gracehouse, a contractor to it or independent of it, depending on the incident type and its gravity.

The investigator must ensure that they:

- Are impartial and objective, applying a consistent treatment of allegations regardless of who they come from and who they are against
- Have no conflict of interest with the proper investigation of the complaint
- Have training, skills and experience in investigating child abuse
- Follow steps to meet the requirements of procedural fairness
- Eldership of Gracehouse should oversee the investigation, demonstrating impartiality and objectivity.

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INVESTIGATIONS

If a plausible complaint of child abuse exists against a person who is a Gracehouse Member, RMO, Coordinator, Team Leader, Team Member in the Church's ministry or any one on the Church Management Committee, and there is a risk that that person may come into contact with children in the course of their ministry, the person must be stood down from ministry while the complaint is investigated by the Board of Elders and Committee of Management.

However, Gracehouse applies the same standards for investigating complaints of child sexual abuse whether or not the subject of the complaint is a person in a ministry position.



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SUBSTANTIATED FINDINGS

LEADERS

Any person in Gracehouse ministry who is the subject of a complaint of child sexual abuse which is substantiated on the balance of probabilities or who is convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse, must be permanently removed from ministry. All necessary steps must be taken by the Board of Elders and Committee of Management, Coordinator and Team Leaders to effectively prohibit the person from holding himself or herself out as being a person with religious authority in Gracehouse in any way.

Any person in religious ministry who is convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse must be dismissed, deposed or otherwise effectively have their religious status removed.

CHURCH ATTENDEES

If Gracehouse becomes aware that any person attending any of its religious services or activities is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse, or has been convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse the Board of Elders and Managing Committee must:

- Assess the level of risk posed to children by that perpetrator's ongoing involvement in the community of Gracehouse and
- Take appropriate steps to manage that risk, which may include:
 - Ensuring that adequate supervision of that is undertaken at all times by the members of Gracehouse, the RMO, a Coordinator or Team Leader
 - Restricting the events, the person is allowed to attend
 - Implementing an ongoing behavioural management program for that person, reviewed regularly.

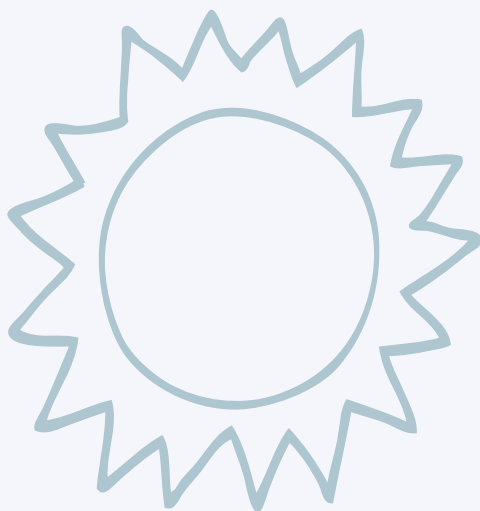


OUTCOMES

All outcomes and decisions made must be accurately recorded, including the reasons for the decisions.

Gracehouse shall consider how to put into effect any decisions, including informing the complainant and other interested people, institutions or other agencies.

Gracehouse may consider the need to conduct a systemic review or root cause analysis, if necessary, and consider the need to recommend changes from that process outlining the continuous improvement system that is in place – including analysis of complaints to identify and address systemic issues.





EXTERNAL BODIES

Gracehouse will report concerns, allegations and disclosures relating to children to external authorities, namely the Police and Child Protection or other relevant authority (such as the Commissioner for Children and Young People or the Department of Health and Human Services).

People attending Gracehouse are always able to make a report directly to the Police or Child Protection before going through this complaint process. However, afterwards Gracehouse must be notified of the report made, in order that Gracehouse can take appropriate safety measures and support the parties involved.

If the Police are investigating or deciding whether to investigate an allegation, any communication undertaken by Gracehouse might interfere with the Police investigation or undermine possible criminal proceedings. If Gracehouse considers urgent action is required to protect the children in its care, it should consult the Police or Child Protection agency about the action. If Gracehouse wishes to communicate with children, parents or staff about the matter, it should do so only in consultations with the Police or Child Protection agency.

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DOCUMENTATION

A complaints register shall be kept by Gracehouse which shall detail all complaints, information obtained, the action taken and findings.

All steps taken in the complaint handling process must be documented including:

- Receipt of the complaint
- Contact with the complainant
- Contact with witnesses
- Contact with the accused

Evidence obtained during the investigation, including witness statements, must be retained. The identity of the author of the record, the reason for their involvement and the date the record was made shall be documented.

Documents are to be kept secure in a complaint register which is contained in a locked storage office, the RMO shall be responsible for safeguarding the documentation located on the Gracehouse site, and only the RMO shall be permitted access to them.



Gracehouse should ensure that victims are looked out for even after a complaint is resolved as the effect of child abuse, especially sexual abuse, are lifelong. The practice of finalising a complaint and excluding someone from an organisational community should be avoided. At the same time Gracehouse should not hold up the healing of the victim by remaining entangled with the victim in the long term.

