

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
AND
PROCEDURES**

**Herrick Presbyterian Covenant
School**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy Statement

Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School (HPCS) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its Employees, Volunteers, Parents and particularly to children. HPCS Policy & Procedures aims to reduce the risk of abuse occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

1.2 Scope

The Policy & Procedures apply to:

- All service organisations or subsidiary bodies authorised by or under the control of HPCS including those undertaken at HPCS premises or undertaken away from those premises.
- All Employees, Volunteers, Parents and Students within HPCS or engaged by HPCS.

1.3 Authority

These are the Policy & Procedures of HPCS and were adopted for use by Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School Association Incorporated on 26 December, 1991. Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School Association Incorporated is committed to implementing the Policy & Procedures and training our Employees, Parents, Students and Volunteers in its content and application.

1.4 Definitions

Child: Any person under the age of 18.

Abuse: Can consist of one or more of but is not restricted to the following:

Physical Abuse: Any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as: Hitting, punching, kicking (marks from belt buckles, fingers). Shaking (particularly babies). Burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair. Alcohol or other drug administration.

Sexual Abuse: Any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.

Emotional Abuse: The chronic attitude or behavior of one person which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child's development, self esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviors may include: Devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child's presence.

Neglect: Characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's development.

Organisation: Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School located at Main Road Herrick

Volunteer: Any unpaid person over the age of 16 who is invited by the Principal or a staff or board member to assist in the school.

Staff Member: Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of members placed in their care whilst holding a formal position at HPCS. A staff member could include but is not limited to:
Principal, Teachers, Aides, Board Members.

Members: Any person, including children, who attends or participates in the HPCS activities, objectives or strategic plan.

2. POLICY REVIEW

The Policy & Procedures will be reviewed annually at the appropriate School Board meeting. The School Board will inform all interested parties when the date of review will occur, and any changes recommended by the interested parties should be submitted in writing to the School Board for consideration one month before the review date.

Any proposed changes will be submitted to the appropriate School Board meeting for approval before being implemented.

3. OBLIGATIONS

3.1 Responsibility

The core expectations of any responsible Organisation require us to treat all people with fairness and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

3.2 Legal

All relevant organisation's within Australia are bound by Federal and State Child Protection legislation and principles established through common law.

3.3 Ethical

Some actions may not be regarded as Abuse, but are unacceptable behavior for HPCS These include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature.
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature.
- Suggestive gestures or remarks.
- Jokes of a sexual nature.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Inappropriate literature
- Recording or filming without prior consent
- Acts of violence committed by a leader in the course of an activity.

The age of individuals is recognised as one of the determinants in deciding what acceptable and unacceptable behavior is. HPCS governing body will ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

4. SELECTION & SCREENING

4.1 Staff

Staff must be carefully selected and screened. Prior to staff commencing the following precautions will be taken:

- Staff will be Members of the Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School Association Inc.
- All Staff will complete an application form which requests details of relevant past experience, positions held, details of two referees and permission to contact them (see Appendix 2).
- Referees will be checked and spoken to, using an agreed set of questions which have been drafted by the school board of HPCS. The questions will seek to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position and the conversation will be documented and retained on file.
- Short listed Staff will be interviewed by an experienced and responsible member of the school board of HPCS prior to being accepted as a Staff member.
- A Police and/or Community Services and/or Working with Children check which complies with the legislative requirements of Tasmania will be requested and received prior to the staff commencing their proposed role.
- Where HPCS has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence, they can not under any circumstances, be considered for any position at the school.

4.2 Volunteers

- Volunteers are expected to have an awareness of the content of the Child Protection Policy & Procedures of HPCS and be prepared to work within them.
- Any Volunteer who provides assistance must be supervised by a Staff member at all times and will be accountable to that Staff member.
- Staff members who accept the assistance of a Volunteer must be satisfied of the Volunteer's maturity and their suitability for work with children.

5. TRAINING

- All Staff will be issued with a copy of this policy and training in;
- The content and application of HPCS's Member Protection Policy & Procedures, Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements
- In addition, Board Members responsible for recruiting Staff will undertake further education on Child/Member Protection.

6. A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Incidents of Abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations.

For these reasons,

- Staff should endeavour wherever possible never to be alone with a child.
- Wherever practicable, all personal counseling is to be carried out within sight of another Staff member.
- When transporting Children, Staff should endeavour wherever possible never be alone with a child in a car. Where this is not practical, Leaders will take Children directly to and from arranged venues and will not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements.
- Staff will respect a Member's feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact (e.g. sport) of any kind.
- Adults and Children are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes (e.g. change rooms at the pool).
- Staff will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations.
- No staff will be alone in a room with a Child while either is changing.
- All aspects of the school life will be open to observation by parents/guardians.
- Staff have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at Child-related activities to leave.
- Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

7. DISCIPLINING CHILDREN

It is the responsibility of the staff of HPCS to deal with behaviour deemed inappropriate by the parents and as directed through the School Board. If a Child does not abide by the rules set down by the School Board, or is an obstruction to the care of other Children or may cause harm to other Children, the Child will be handled in accordance with the school's behaviour management policy and referred on to their parent or guardian. At no time will a Staff member administer any form of physical, emotional or mental abuse.

8. REPORTING PROCEDURES

- An independent person will be appointed by the Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School Board of Management with the specific duty of dealing with any allegations that arise.
- The name, address and contact telephone number will be freely available to all leaders.
- Documented reporting and escalation procedures will be established by the Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School Board of Management for handling allegations of abuse.
- If there are reasonable grounds to suspect a Child has been or is suffering abuse, the Police and the Organisation's Insurer will be contacted immediately.
- The phone number for the Police is: 6336 3701
- The phone number for Ansvr Insurance Insurer: 1300 650 540

Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:

1. A Child discloses that he or she has been abused, and/or
 2. Someone close to a Child (e.g. sibling, relative, close friend) discloses on behalf of that Child.
- The Police will also be notified if a Child discloses an incident of Abuse that has occurred somewhere other than HPCS premises, (e.g. home).
 - If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:
 1. Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be swept under the carpet.
 2. Not pushing the Child to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
 3. Assuring the Child that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
 4. Reporting the abuse to the police and HPCS's insurer.
 5. Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator. If the Leader is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it may be advisable for another person to assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation.
 6. If the alleged assault has taken place recently, clothing worn by the Child should be retained and handed to the police for forensic examination.
 7. Maintaining confidentiality.
 - Any disclosures by a Child, reports of suspected abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.
 - HPCS reserves the right to carry out disciplinary procedures in accordance with the constitution of the Organisation.
 - Where an allegation is made the accused Leader will be removed from all children's activities and programs pending the outcome of all investigations.

10. ALCOHOL & DRUGS

- The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on HPCS grounds or during an activity is not to be allowed or condoned by any Leader.
- Any Child found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counseled and the parents/guardians contacted so the Child can be returned home immediately.
- Any Child required to take prescription medication will provide a letter from their parents/guardians to HPCS.

APPENDIX 1 – Legal Obligations

Below is a précis of legislative requirements with respect to Child Abuse that apply in Tasmania. Every attempt has been made to ensure this information is accurate however a review should be undertaken regularly to ensure the information remains correct and current.

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

The Commissioner for Children Tasmania released a consultation paper in 2005 discussing proposals to introduce policies and procedures for Tasmanian organisations to screen individuals who seek to work with children in a voluntary or paid capacity. However, at present there are no legal requirements for people working with children to undergo a police check. Criminal history record checks can be obtained through the Tasmanian Police Department.

MANDATORY REPORTING

The following people are legally required to report reasonable suspicions of abuse:

- Medical practitioners, dentists, psychologists and nurses
- Teachers, school principals, kindergarten teachers, and child care worker
- Law enforcement officers and probation officers
- Child welfare officers
- Persons concerned in the management of a child care service
- People employed by, or volunteering in, government agencies or organizations funded by the Crown that provide health, welfare, education, residential services or care wholly or partly for children

REPORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO:

Department of Health and Human Services
Children and Families Division
Level 4, 34 Davey, Street
Hobart Tas, 7000
Phone Number: 1300 737 639
1800 001 219
URL: www.dhhs.tas.gov.au

SOURCES

Department of Health & Human Services – www.thelaw.tas.gov.au
Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997
Mandatory Reporting – “Summary of Grounds & Contacts for Notification of Abuse”
Herbert Greer & Rundle (Lawyers), Choose with Care (Childwise), National Child
Protection Clearinghouse <http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/index.html>
www.childcomm.tas.gov.au

APPENDIX 2

WORKING WITH CHILDREN APPLICATION FORM

Position Applied For: _____

Personal Details

Full Name: _____

Residential Address: _____

Home Ph.: _____

Mob Ph.: _____

Work Ph.: _____

Email Address: _____

Please list all *organisations or institutions* that you have attended regularly in the last 3 years:

Date (Approx.) _____

Organisation _____

Date (Approx.) _____

Organisation _____

Date (Approx.) _____

Organisation _____

Date (Approx.) _____

Please list any *qualifications* you have that relate to working with Children:

Date _____ **Qualification** _____

Institution _____

Date _____ **Qualification** _____

Institution _____

Please provide any *experience* you have had that relates to working with Children:

Date _____ **Organisation** _____

Position _____

Date _____ **Organisation** _____

Position _____

References. Please provide details of two people we can contact, who can comment on your suitability for this position:

First Referee

Full Name: _____

Residential Address: _____

Home Ph.: _____ Mob Ph.: _____ Work Ph.: _____

Email Address: _____

Position & Organisation: _____

Second Referee

Full Name: _____

Residential Address: _____

Home Ph.: _____ Mob Ph.: _____ Work Ph.: _____

Email Address: _____

Position & Organisation: _____

Declarations

Have you:

1. Read and understood Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School's Child/Member Protection Policy & Code of Conduct? **Yes / No**
2. Ever been in serious breach of any Child/Member Protection Policy & Code of Conduct? **Yes / No**
3. Had someone express concerns about your behavior towards a child? **Yes / No**
4. Ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of an investigation relating to the abuse of a child or inappropriate sexual behavior. **Yes / No**

I confirm that the information provided on this application form is true and correct.

I consent to a National Police Record check and the release to Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School of any matters deemed to be relevant which are recorded against my name.

Applicants Signature

Date
8.

APPENDIX 3

WORKING WITH CHILDREN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions asked in this interview may make you feel uncomfortable but they are a necessary part of our child safety policy and must be answered. The answers you provide will be kept confidential where possible but may be divulged to other Leaders within the Organisation.

1. Why have you applied for this position and why do you feel you are suitable for the role?
2. Please describe any positive experiences you have had with children or young people.
3. Please describe any negative experiences you have had with children or young People.
4. Have you ever been in a situation where you have disciplined a child or young person? If so, how did you handle this situation?
5. Have you ever been investigated for violent or sexually related offences? If so, what were the circumstances?
6. Is there any other information relating to your suitability for this position that we should be aware of?