



Code of Conduct for Volunteers, Overseers and Ministry Staff

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Code of Conduct for Volunteers, Overseers and Ministry Workers

God calls His people to live in holiness, love for others and to care for those people who are at risk of harm within our church community.¹ It is expected that all volunteers, overseers and paid ministry workers are responsible for creating and maintaining an environment that promotes the spiritual, physical, and emotional safety of vulnerable people.²

To care for vulnerable people well, leaders must be aware of the inherent power imbalance that exists between themselves and ministry participants, and to act in the best interests of those that they serve. Leaders must also be aware of the potential for the abuse of this power, and to take responsibility to respond properly if this has been identified.³

The positive behaviours outlined in this *Code of Conduct* promote transparency, accountability and integrity in these relationships, to minimise the risk of harm. It also identifies behaviours that are unacceptable. These are a breach of this *Code* and may result in disciplinary action. This *Code* also provides some examples of concerning leader behaviour. On their own, they may not constitute a breach of this *Code*, but together may indicate a pattern that poses a risk to the safety of children and other vulnerable people.

Code of Conduct

I Will

- Be committed in the ministries I have been appointed to, being faithful to my appointed tasks and acting in the best interests of those I serve
- Treat children, young people and adults with respect and value and without favouritism
- Commit to ensuring that the spaces and activities I am responsible for are safe and do not put people at risk of significant harm

¹ Deuteronomy 10:17-19 and Mark 12:31

² A vulnerable person is someone who is at risk of greater risk of experiencing harm, exploitation or abuse due to their age, personal circumstances, ethnicity, illness or disability.

³ Abuse can take many forms – Appendix A provides descriptions of various types of abuse and other behaviours which are considered unacceptable.

- Interact with transparency and integrity (including wise use of electronic communication). This includes ensuring, as far as possible, that another adult is present or within eyesight when I am with a child.
- Commit to listening to people's concerns with a willingness to support and help them
- Adhere to Orange Evangelical Safe Church policies and procedures, including the Safe Church Guide for my relevant ministry area
- Commit to reporting any concerns or suspicions about harmful behaviours and significant risks to the Orange Evangelical Church Safe Ministry Contacts
- Submit to disciplinary steps if I am found to violate these commitments or act in an otherwise inappropriate or illegal manner at Orange Evangelical Church

I Will Not

- Condone or participate in illegal, unsafe or abusive behaviour towards anyone, including bullying, physical, sexual, psychological or spiritual abuse, ill-treatment, neglect or grooming
- Ignore, disregard or trivialise child abuse issues
- Use hurtful, discriminatory or offensive behaviour or language with anyone
- Offer young people alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs
- Encourage a child or youth to communicate with me in a private setting (physical or electronic)
- View, possess, produce or distribute material containing sexual acts or nudity; and never view, possess, produce or distribute any form of child pornography or child exploitation material
- Take unauthorised photos, movies or recordings of anyone, especially of a child or young person on church property or at church activities without church authorisation and the consent of the child's parents or guardians

I understand the following types of behaviour may be of concern:

The nature of church relationships means that interactions with people we lead will inevitably occur outside of the ministry program or event. This needs to be approached with wisdom, transparency and with reference to the Safe Church Guide for your particular ministry area, especially in situations where you might be alone with a child.

Reporting Concerns

All Volunteers, Overseers, Ministry Staff and Community Members are urged to respond if they have concerns about an individual or a program's safety to a Safe Ministry Contact.

An adult in child-related work in an organisation will commit an offence if they know another adult there poses a serious risk of abusing a child (under 18 years) and they have the power to reduce or remove the risk and they negligently fail to do so.

All adults in NSW are required to report information to police if they know, believe or reasonably ought to know that a child (under 18 years) has been abused.

Complaints about a breach of this *Code* must be reported to a Safe Ministry Contact:

Ed Springer	ed@oechurch.org.au	M: 0419 277 408
Kerryn Hanratty	kerryn@oechurch.org.au	M: 0408 724 801
Karina Blanch	karina@oechurch.org.au	M: 0438 698 496
Chris Holding	chris@oechurch.org.au	M: 0404 110 238
Rachel Crane	rachel_k_morgan@yahoo.com.au	M: 0404 209 238
Baden Bogdanovs	bbogdanovs@gmail.com	M: 0405 109 635

Breaches of the *Code* by Volunteers, Overseers and Ministry Staff

Some breaches of this *Code* may need to be reported to the NSW Police, the Department of Communities and Justice and the Office of the Children's Guardian. Our Safe Church Policy provides more information about our reporting obligations to external authorities as well as describing protections and confidentiality provisions for anyone making a report. The policy can be found on our website: www.oechurch.org.au/safeministry

Volunteers, Overseers and Ministry Staff who breach this *Code* may also be subject to disciplinary action. This is outlined in *Responding to Code of Conduct Breaches (Disciplinary Policy)* and can be found on our website: www.oechurch.org.au/safe-ministry.

Appendix A: Definitions of abuse & unacceptable behaviours related to children (under 18)

<p>Physical Abuse: The intentional or reckless use of physical force against a child that results in harm to their health, development or dignity, or which has the high likelihood of resulting in such harm. It may also include the threat of abuse where the child reasonably fears it may occur.</p>	<p>Eg. Hitting, striking, punching, kicking or slapping a child; engaging in rough physical games; throwing items or using items to hurt a child; dragging or pushing a child; threatening to hurt a child through words/gestures, regardless of whether the person actually intends to apply force; using hostile force towards a child and seriously inappropriate physical contact.</p>
<p>Sexual Abuse: any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. This can include both sexual offences (a child-related criminal offence of a sexual nature) as well as sexual misconduct (conduct sexual in nature but is not a sexual offence).</p>	<p>Eg. sexual touching of a child; sexual contact with a child; masturbating in front of a child or exposing genitals; possessing or creating abuse material; sharing sexually explicit photos of a child; exposing a child to pornography or other incident material; giving a child gifts, food, money, attention or affection in exchange for sexual activities or images; not respecting the privacy of a child while they are dressing, bathing, or using the bathroom; comments that express a desire to act in a sexual manner with a child; using sexual language or gestures in the presence of children; sexual comments, conversations or communications with a child.</p>
<p>Emotional Abuse: behaviour towards a child that is likely to damage their self-esteem or social competence.</p>	<p>Eg. teasing, yelling at or bullying a child; persistent criticism and discrediting of a child; persistent rejection of or a hostility towards a child; refusing to acknowledge a child's worth and a legitimacy of their needs; deliberately preventing a child from forming friendships; encouraging a child to engage in destructive, antisocial behaviour; exposing a child to family violence; making a child feel unloved, worthless or frightened.</p>
<p>Neglect is behaviour by a person responsible for the care of a child (such as a parent, carer or staff member if the child is in their care) that constitutes a failure to act in ways consistent with accepted community standards about what is necessary to meet the developmental needs of a child.</p>	<p>Eg. depriving a child of necessities such as food, drink, clothing, critical medical care or treatment or shelter; failure to protect a child from abuse (such as failing to report abuse when a child discloses it or when a staff member observes it); exposing a child to a harmful environment; failure to adequately supervise a child, resulting in injury or harm.</p>
<p>Ill-treatment is conduct towards a child that is unreasonable and seriously inappropriate, inhumane or cruel.</p>	<p>Eg. Making excessive demands and /or degrading demands of a child; disciplining or correcting a child in a seriously inappropriate or improper manner; repeated hostility towards a child; seclusion and other types of restrictive practices; locking a child up in a room.</p>
<p>Grooming is engaging in unauthorised contact with a child in person or online, for the purposes of developing a sexual relationship.</p>	<p>Eg. Using a computer, mobile phone, camera or other device to exploit or harass a child; personal communication that explores sexual feelings or intimate personal relations with a child, sharing details with a child of one's own sexual experiences; inappropriately extending a relationship with a child outside of work; giving a child special attention or isolating them from their peers with the intention of making it easier to access the child for sexual activity; making close physical contact, like inappropriate tickling and 'play' wrestling.</p>
<p>Other unacceptable behaviour Condoning or participating in behaviour with a child that is illegal, unsafe; ignoring or disregarding any concerns, suspicions, or disclosures of child abuse; exaggerating or trivialising child abuse issues; using hurtful, discriminatory or offensive behaviour or language with a child; failing to report information to policy if they know, believe or reasonably ought to know that a child has been abused.</p>	

Some definitions of unacceptable behaviours relating to adults

Adult sexual abuse: the sexual assault, sexual exploitation or sexual harassment of an adult.	It includes the use of force or threats to engage a person in sexual activity without their consent and any unwelcome sexual advances or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature.
Domestic and Family Violence: a pattern of behaviour by one person to gain and maintain power over another person with whom they are in close personal or family relationship.	This can include (but not limited to) emotional, verbal, social, financial, psychological, physical or sexual abuse. Such behaviour often seeks to control, humiliate, dominate or instill fear in the victim.
Spiritual Abuse: the mistreatment of a person by actions or threats when justified by the appeal to God, faith or religion.	Eg. using a position of spiritual authority to dominate, manipulate another person or group or seek inappropriate deference from others; isolating a person from family or friends; using biblical terminology to justify abuse.
Bullying: Behaviour directed to a person or persons which is repeated, unreasonable and creates a risk to their health and safety.	This can include victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.

Appendix B: Relevant Legislation and OEC Policies

Legislation

Crimes Act, 1900

Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act, 1988

Child Protection (Working with Children) Act, 2012

Children's Guardian Act, 2019

Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021

OEC Policies

Responding to Code of Conduct Breaches (Disciplinary Policy) outlines the consequences for breaching the *Code of Conduct*.

Safe Church Policy outlines our commitment to the safety of vulnerable people and how this will take place through appropriate leader screening, code of conduct, risk management and incident reporting policies.

Safe Church Guides give practical guidelines to apply our Safe Church Policy to particular ministry areas.

Safe Ministry Incident Management Process is the procedure for managing concerns about the safety of an individual, a leader's behaviour or ministry program.

Our policies can be found at www.oechurch.org.au/safe-ministry

Contact Details

Orange Evangelical Church

PO Box 2406, Orange NSW 2800

www.oechurch.org.au

OEC Administrator (admin@oechurch.org.au)