



SAFE MINISTRY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE



INTRODUCTION

The Incident Management Procedure is an important part of Orange Evangelical Church's commitment to creating a culture of safety and protection of vulnerable people. It should be followed by the Safe Ministry Contacts when they receive a report or concern relating to the safety or mistreatment of a person within our programs.

Where appropriate, a summary of incidents and responses should be regularly reviewed by the Overseers. They will be informed promptly where incidents pose and organisational risk to OEC. All individuals involved in the formal investigation with actual or perceived conflicts of interest should remain separate from the procedure.

PROCEDURE FOR SAFE MINISTRY CONTACTS

1. Immediate Action and Safety
 - 1.1. Ensure Immediate Safety: Take any immediate action required to ensure the safety of the child or vulnerable person involved. This may involve separating individuals or temporarily suspending those accused from their roles.
 - 1.2. Confidentiality: Maintain the confidentiality of all parties involved, sharing information only with those who need to know to ensure safety and compliance with legal obligations.
 2. Incident Reporting
 - 2.1. Documentation: Ensure the person reporting the incident completes an Incident Report Form, detailing what was observed, heard, or disclosed. This form should be securely stored and accessible only to authorized personnel.
 3. Assessment and Decision Making
 - 3.1. Initial Assessment: The Safe Ministry Contact team should assess the report to determine the immediate risk and whether external authorities need to be notified (e.g., police, child protection services).
 - 3.2. External Reporting Obligations: Based on the assessment, decide whether the incident meets the criteria for mandatory reporting to external authorities and make the report as required by state or territory legislation.
 4. Action Plan
 - 4.1. Develop an Action Plan: Depending on the nature of the incident and whether it's been reported externally, develop an action plan that may
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include internal investigation, support measures for the victim, and engagement with external authorities.

- 4.2. Support and Care: Ensure that appropriate pastoral care and support are offered to all parties involved, including the victim, their family, and the accused (where appropriate).

5. Investigation

- 5.1. Internal Investigation: If applicable and not in conflict with external investigations, conduct a thorough internal investigation following **procedural fairness principles***. This may involve interviews with involved parties, gathering additional information, and reviewing relevant documents.
- 5.2. Outcome of Investigation: Based on the findings, determine the appropriate outcome, which may include disciplinary actions, policy changes, or additional training requirements.

6. Review and Reflection

- 6.1. Policy and Procedure Review: Regularly review and update safeguarding policies and procedures, including the incident management procedure, to reflect learnings from incidents and changes in legislation.
- 6.2. Training and Education: Use incidents as opportunities for learning and reinforcing the importance of safeguarding within the organization. Ensure ongoing training for all staff and volunteers.

7. Documentation and Record-Keeping

- 7.1. Secure Records: Maintain secure and confidential records of all safeguarding concerns, actions taken, and outcomes. Ensure compliance with privacy laws and record retention policies.
 - 7.2. Monitoring and Reporting: Develop mechanisms for monitoring compliance with the incident management procedure and reporting to the organization's leadership or board.
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***Procedural fairness principles**, also known as natural justice principles, are fundamental to ensuring fair and unbiased processes, especially in the context of investigations and decision-making. They are designed to protect the rights of all individuals involved, ensuring that decisions are made impartially, transparently, and based on evidence. In the context of incident management within organisations, adhering to procedural fairness involves several key elements:

1. Right to be Heard

Every individual whose rights or interests may be significantly affected by a decision has the right to be heard. This includes the opportunity to make submissions, respond to any allegations, present evidence, and counter evidence presented against them.

2. Right to a Fair Hearing

The procedure should be conducted without bias or conflict of interest. Decision-makers must be impartial, and there must be an assurance that no decision is made until all relevant evidence is considered. This may involve separating the investigation and decision-making roles between different individuals or committees.

3. Reasonable Notice

Individuals involved should be given reasonable notice of the proceedings, including any meetings or hearings they are expected to attend. This notice should include details of the allegations or concerns raised, so they can adequately prepare their response.

4. Fair and Transparent Procedures

The processes for investigation, decision-making, and any resulting actions should be clearly outlined and made available to all stakeholders. Procedures should be consistently applied and should allow for an investigation that is thorough and considers all relevant material.

5. Reasons for Decisions

Decisions, especially those that adversely affect an individual, should be accompanied by reasons. This transparency helps to ensure that decisions are based on evidence and the applicable rules or policies, and it provides an opportunity for review if procedural fairness is questioned.

6. Review or Appeal Process

An effective incident management procedure should include a mechanism for review or appeal, allowing decisions to be challenged if there's a belief that procedural fairness was not observed.
