ev/church

Code of Conduct for Working with Children & Youth 05-011 PO

Approved Date: 12/2/24	ApprovalBy:Andrew Mitchell	Author: Philip Hayes

Introduction

Children and youth are very precious to the Lord and to us. It is of the highest importance that as we teach and instruct children in the way of the Lord, that we do it safely and with the utmost care. We are deeply concerned to preserve the safety and wellbeing of children we have responsibility for. We value the role of leaders and mentors in the lives of children. In order to promote trust and confidence in the Church and its programs, EV Church pursues transparent and accountable relationships.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This code of conduct has been created by EV Church to ensure that EV Church is a safe environment for children and youth and to comply with government requirements. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is as a guide to be followed by all staff and volunteers working with children and youth at EV Church.

As this is a code of conduct its provisions are not exhaustive and a circumstance may arise that is not detailed in this document and in any such event the overriding principles as outlined below should apply.

Overriding Principles:

- EV Church values the well-being of all children and youth and as such should always feel and be safe and healthy; physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually
- EV Church values the best interests of children and youth and where there is an apparent conflict their best interests has priority
- EV Church values compliance with current government regulations and all staff and volunteers working with children and youth shall comply with government regulations

For the avoidance of doubt, the rest of this Code of Conduct is to be read in line with these overriding principles.

(In this document *child or children* includes youth and refers to those under 18 years old)

Reportable Conduct.

According to Children's Guardian Act 2019 the following conduct is unacceptable and reportable to government authorities:

1. Sexual offense or misconduct
2. Grooming offense
3. Assault
4. Neglect
5. Ill-treatment
6. Psychological harm
7. Failure to report disclosed or observed reportable conduct.

More extensive definitions and examples can be found in 05-012 PO Definitions of Reportable Conduct

By adhering to this code, all volunteers and staff in EV Church who are working with children will be promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, which includes encouraging the prevention and reporting of abuse.

Behaviours

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This code identifies **positive child safe behaviours** (*I will* statements*)*. They are encouraged in all adults. Failure to exhibit positive behaviour is not necessarily a breach of the code of conduct but may result in further training or supervision.
This code also identifies behaviours that we consider misconduct (*I will not* statements) and so are **unacceptable**. Engagement in any unacceptable behaviour is a breach of this Code of Conduct and, while not necessarily reportable, may result in disciplinary action and possibly a report to NSW Office of Children's Guardian depending on the behaviour.

Because EV Church expects all leaders to minister out of a healthy relationship with God, **I will**

- join regularly in the life and ministry of the Church.
- study the Scriptures in private and in groups.
- pray regularly in private and in fellowship for the people and ministries of the Church.
- support and respect the leadership of the ministries and church.

In ministry to children **I will**

- Behave as a positive role model to children.
- Treat all children with respect.
- Refrain from showing favouritism.
- Help provide an open, family-friendly environment for children by welcoming all children and their families and carers.
- Organise a working with children check (WWCC) and keep it current.
- Listen to children and respond to them appropriately.
- Take a child seriously if they disclose harm or abuse.
- Take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- Participate in the required Safe Ministry Training for the position held.
- Report suspicions of child abuse, breaches of this code or other risks to child safety to a ministry leader and/or safe ministry contact.
- Be aware that activities like baby-sitting, mentoring and tutoring, where the only relational connection is my ministry to children at EV can, without appropriate safeguards, increase my personal risk.

In ministry to children **I will not**

- Condone or participate in any illegal, abusive or unsafe behaviour towards children.
- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse.
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- Use derogatory, demeaning, offensive or profane language or behaviour with or towards or near children or persistently denigrate or criticise a child.
- Remain in a confined or secluded space with a child. (Always ensure you are in the company of another or in direct sight of another adult who is not your spouse unless specifically authorised by an EV kids or Youth staff member).
- Engage in inappropriately rough physical play with a child.
- Touch a child in an age/culturally inappropriate or unwarranted manner.
- Change a nappy or assist with toileting if I am male.
- Use sexual language or gestures or make sexually suggestive comments to or in the presence of a child, including 'compliments' about their physical appearance.

- Show or share sexually suggestive material or experiences to a child in any form such as e-mail, text, movie, sound, or picture file.
- Assist children to do things of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.
- Use physical means (as corporal punishment), or verbally assault or create a climate of fear to discipline or control a child.
- Offer children cigarettes, alcohol or other drugs.
- Encourage a child to meet in a private setting.
- Engage in private electronic or phone communication that is intimate, harassing, exploitative or has sexual content.
- Take or invite a child to my home/residence, or encourage private meetings outside of church-sponsored activities, unless allowed by specific policy or permission of the ministry leader, (for instance an organised event at my home).
- Take unauthorized photos, movies or recordings of a child on church property, or at church activities, without permission of the ministry leader.
- Transport a child alone without consent of parents (or carers) and\ leaders. (Consent should include clear parameters around frequency, other people present, modes and routes).

Reporting
All staff, volunteers and families are encouraged to speak up if they have concerns about the safety of children. Complaints about breaches of this Code of Conduct must be reported to one of our Safe Ministry Contacts which can be found on EV Website.

Important note
All adults in NSW are required to report information to Police if they know (or should know) that a child has been abused.
It is a **criminal offense** for an adult, in child-related work in an organization, despite knowing that another adult poses a serious risk of abusing a child and having the power to reduce or remove that risk, nevertheless fails to do so.

Some breaches of this Code of Conduct may need to be reported directly to the NSW Police, Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) or the Office of Children's Guardian. EV Church Safe Ministry Contacts are available to assist in the reporting processes but we acknowledge that any community member can report a child who is at risk of harm or abuse and this includes contacting Police (000) directly if there is an immediate risk of harm.
Staff and volunteers who breach this Code of Conduct may also be subject to disciplinary action. This can include suspension from ministry, increased supervision, appointment to alternative roles, or termination of employment.

Next review date: Jan 2027
Responsible Pastor: Executive Pastor