

Diocese of Singapore Child Protection Policy

Reasons for a Child Protection Policy

1. The Diocese of Singapore is blessed to be entrusted with the care of tens of thousands of children and youth in our churches, schools and community services, both in Singapore as well as the Mission Deaneries.
2. The Biblical mandate to let children come to Jesus unhindered (Matt 19:14) and without stumbling (Matt 19:6 NASB), as well as the teaching to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God (Micah 6:8) requires us to do all we can to protect children under our care from all forms of abuse that will affect their healthy growth and development.

Policy Statement

3. The Diocese of Singapore shall respect all the laws of the Republic of Singapore, including the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA).
4. The Diocese of Singapore and our constituent parishes and ministries are committed to a five-point Child Protection Policy:
 - 4.1. We will not tolerate any form of child abuse in our ministries for children.
 - 4.2. We will not permit any person with any record of child abuse, or who admits to having committed sexual abuse on a child, or who is known to have a propensity to act inappropriately toward children, to serve with our children or youth ministries.
 - 4.3. We will play our part in the community effort to advocate for and protect children from abuse at home and other places of care.
 - 4.4. We will support the recovery of both victims and perpetrators of abuse.
 - 4.5. We will always act in the best interest of the child in all our decision-making.

Definitions and Applicability

5. The Diocese's Child Protection Policy defines child abuse as follows:
 - 5.1. **Physical Abuse:** Any act that causes physical injury, which is not accidental in nature, to a child. It includes deliberately causing bruises, burns, cuts and broken bones by a range of actions such as beating, shaking and excessive discipline.

- 5.2. **Emotional and Psychological Abuse:** Any act that harms a child emotionally or psychologically. The acts can be repeated or be an isolated extreme incident.
- 5.3. **Neglect:** Neglect occurs when a child is harmed because a parent or caregiver fails to provide adequate supervision, food, medical care and/or clothing appropriate to the child's age and level of development. It may include situations when the parent or caregiver exposes the child to unsafe and/or unhygienic living conditions.
- 5.4. **Sexual Abuse:** Any act where a child is used for sexual pleasure or is taken advantage of sexually. It also includes exposing a child to sexual acts or pornography. Sexual grooming is any act whereby a person gets close with a child to gain their confidence and trust, such as private text messaging of an inappropriate nature, spending private time alone with a child, etc, setting the stage for abuse to happen without raising any alert.
6. The Diocese's Child Protection Policy shall cover the conduct of church employees and volunteers working with young people up to the age of 18 because we have a duty to care for the moral, emotional and spiritual development of our young people.
7. This Child Protection Policy covers all Ministries of the Diocese of Singapore, in Singapore as well as the Mission Deaneries. These include parishes, congregations, youth organizations, school chaplaincies, church-run co-curricular activities, kindergartens, childcare centres and community services.
8. Where there is a difference in the definitions and standards of Child Protection between this Policy and the policy of Partner Organizations (for example, schools), the more stringent standard in the best interest of the child shall apply.
9. When in doubt as to whether a reported act is considered an act of abuse, advice should be sought from the Diocese.

Responsibility and Accountability Structure

10. The Child Protection Policy adopted at the Synod of the Diocese of Singapore shall be implemented at Diocesan and Parish levels.

At Diocesan Level

11. At Diocesan level:
 - 11.1. The Diocesan Bishop shall appoint a clergyman to be the **Child Protection Coordinator (CPC)**. He shall:
 - (a) Lead a **Diocesan Child Protection Team (CPT)** appointed by the Diocesan Bishop to update this policy as required;

- (b) Develop a **Child Protection Manual**, training programmes and other resources to support the parishes and Mission Deaneries;
- (c) Prepare an annual budget for the Diocese for Child Protection;
- (d) Report the progress of Child Protection to the Diocesan Bishop;
- (e) Be the liaison with government and community agencies for Child Protection.

11.2. **The Archdeacon of Singapore and the Mission Deans** shall be responsible to:

- (a) Report to the Diocesan Bishop any occurrences of child abuse;
- (b) Oversee their Ministries to implement their Child Protection Procedures;
- (c) Ensure that the Ministries comply with the Diocese's Child Protection Policy and their respective Child Protection Procedures.

11.3. **The Chancellor, Secretary of Synod and Registrar** shall provide legal advice for the development of this policy as well as for Incident Management as required.

At Parish Level

12. At Parish level:

12.1. **The Vicar** is responsible to:

- (a) Provide leadership to implement the **Diocesan Child Protection Policy** for the whole parish;
- (b) Adopt **Parish-specific Child Protection Procedures** in accordance with the guidelines of the Diocesan Child Protection Policy and the Child Protection Manual; these procedures shall be adapted to the nature and conditions of each ministry of each parish;
- (c) Ensure that all personnel involved in ministry to children and youth comply with these procedures.

12.2. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) shall annually appoint a lay leader to be the **Child Protection Representative (CPR)** who shall:

- (a) Serve as the **point of contact** between the Parish and the Diocesan Child Protection Team
- (b) Assist the Vicar in the design and implementation of the Parish-specific Child Protection Procedures at the ground level;
- (c) Assist the Vicar and Church Wardens in the investigation and follow-up actions in the event of a complaint or report of suspected child abuse in the parish.

- 12.3. The respective **Ministry Leaders** for children and youth ministries shall:
- (a) Ensure that all personnel involved in ministry to children and youth in the parish understand and comply with the Diocese Child Protection Policy and the Parish-specific Child Protection Procedures;
 - (b) Provide feedback and suggestions to the Child Protection Representative for the ongoing improvement;
 - (c) Be the first point of contact for any complaint or report of suspected child abuse in the ministry.

Parish-level Child Protection Procedures

13. Each parish shall implement operational Procedures addressing the following areas:

- 13.1. Screening of Personnel**
- 13.2. Child-Safe Practices**
- 13.3. Vigilance in Child Protection**
- 13.4. Incident Management**
- 13.5. Recovery and Rehabilitation**

14. Policy for the Screening Procedure:

- 14.1. Volunteers shall pass a continuous six (6)-month period of active attendance with interactions with ministry leadership before being approved to serve with children and youth.
- 14.2. Each staff and volunteer working with children and youth shall be registered with the church office, with their personal particulars and two (2) character references who vouch for their suitability to care for and work with children and youth.
- 14.3. Each staff and volunteer shall complete a self-declaration. They shall indicate truthfully whether they had ever sexually abused a child, been accused or convicted in a court of law for any inappropriate conduct toward children, or displayed any propensity for the same.
- 14.4. The declaration should also indicate if the candidate had previously served in another parish in the Diocese, to facilitate due diligence checks as necessary.

15. Policy for Child-Safe Practices:

- 15.1. Child-safe practices, including appropriate touch, toilet assistance, responsibility of supervisors, etc, may be found in the **Child Protection Manual**.

15.2. The Parish shall consider the nature of its children ministry or ministries, and incorporate in its **Parish-specific Child Protection Procedure** appropriate practices that ensure the protection of the children and youth participating in activities both on-site and off-site (e.g., outings, camps).

16. Policy for Vigilance in Child Protection:

16.1. All employees and volunteers shall be given a copy of this **Child Protection Policy** and the **Parish-specific Child Protection Procedures** upon joining the ministry.

16.2. They shall **read and sign** on a register to indicate they are familiar with the current Policy and Procedures whenever these are updated.

16.3. All employees and volunteers working with children shall attend periodic update **briefings and training sessions** on Child Protection conducted by the Child Protection Representative and/or the Diocesan Child Protection Team.

17. Policy for Incident Management:

17.1. Upon receipt of a complaint or report of alleged child abuse, a **Child Protection Review Team (CPRT)** shall be formed comprising the Vicar, the Church Wardens, the Child Protection Representative and the Ministry Leader concerned. Other suitable persons may also be co-opted into the CPRT.

17.2. All complaints and reports of alleged child abuse shall be taken seriously by the Child Protection Review Team.

17.3. The Child Protection Review Team shall collate the pertinent facts as soon as possible, and take the appropriate steps accordingly.

17.4. All substantiated complaints or reports shall be reported to the Archdeacon or the respective Mission Dean in an **initial incident report** as soon as possible. The Archdeacon/Mission Dean shall oversee the management of the incident, and participate in it as he deems fit.

17.5. If the alleged abuse is **sexual in nature**, the parish shall refrain from conducting any further interviews or investigations. The case shall be promptly reported to the Police or the relevant authorities.

17.6. If the alleged abuse, regardless of its nature, **took place at home**, the Child Protection Review Team shall assess whether the safety of the child at home is at risk due to the incapacity of both parents to provide adequate protection. If the child is deemed to be at risk at home, the case shall be referred to the Child Protection Services or relevant agencies for advice and necessary follow-up.

- 17.7. If the alleged abuse, regardless of its nature, **involves a church staff member or a volunteer**, that person shall be suspended from any further ministry involvement until he/she is exonerated. Paragraphs 17.4 and 17.5 remain applicable.
- 17.8. If the alleged abuse is **non-sexual in nature and involves a church staff member or a volunteer**, and the parents are deemed capable of protecting the child, the Vicar shall encourage the parents, in the best interest of the child, to find an appropriate conclusion to the incident. Regardless of the parents' decision, the Vicar and the Wardens shall determine what disciplinary measures are appropriate for the person responsible.
- 17.9. A **management review** shall be carried out by the Child Protection Representative and the Ministry Leader under the supervision of the Vicar and Church Wardens to ascertain if any remedial and preventive follow-up actions are needed in the Child Protection Procedures of the parish.
- 17.10. At the end of the whole process, a **final incident report** shall be submitted by the Vicar to the Diocesan Bishop through the Archdeacon or Mission Dean as appropriate.

18. Policy for Recovery and Rehabilitation:

- 18.1. In the aftermath of an abuse incident, the Vicar and his team shall provide **pastoral care and support** to the victim, the perpetrator and their families, with referral to professional counseling agencies as required.
- 18.2. The Diocesan Child Protection Team will maintain in the Child Protection Manual an updated resource list of **recovery and rehabilitation services**.

Conclusion

19. This Child Protection Policy states the commitment of the whole Diocese to provide a safe and trusted environment in which we will minister to child and youth in Singapore and the Mission Deaneries.
20. It provides the framework for Parishes to develop their respective Child Protection Procedures in tandem with Diocesan agencies.
21. This Policy will be updated as required for continual improvement.

Approved by the Standing Committee
Of the Synod of the Diocese of Singapore
On 25 April 2017