



## Child Safe Training

# OP-SHOP VOLUNTEERS



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



Secretariat

Culture of Safety

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Welcome to the Synod's Child Safe Training for volunteers who serve in activities connected to congregations, but who do not attend and participate in the congregational worship services on a regular basis.

The contribution of many non-congregant volunteers across the Synod is a vital and important part of serving our communities. This training is designed to educate our non-congregant volunteers on creating and maintaining child safe environments within the various activities in which they serve.

This training can be completed by an individual on their own, reading through this booklet and following along with the slides OR completed in a group setting with other volunteers, reading through this booklet and following along with the slides.

### **Completion Information**

It is vital you have your completion of the training recorded by Synod. The leader of the service or activity in which you volunteer (this may be a manager, supervisor or co-ordinator) must ensure you complete this training. Please make sure that the co-ordinator of your service records your completion and forwards this information to the Culture of Safety Unit via email [cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au)

## **Your safety when engaging with the child safe training**

This training includes some content regarding child sexual abuse. If you feel you, would like support at any time including before or after the training, please reach out. Support may include connecting with your Volunteer Co-ordinator or Supervisor or calling:

- Lifeline – 13 11 14 Lifeline is a national charity providing 24 hour crisis support services
- Blue Knot Foundation – 1300 657 380 (9am-5pm AEST). Blue Knot Foundation provides support for people who have experienced childhood trauma.

## **Introduction to child safe training**

Thank you for taking this time to raise your awareness of how we can be a child safe Synod together. As a community, every one of us has a role in creating our shared culture. Child safety is a key part of being safe and welcoming for children, young people, families and other vulnerable people.

Please note a child is a person under the age of 18 years. In this training "child" refers to a person under 18 years of age, which includes teenagers aged 13-17 (sometimes referred to as a "young person" or "young people").

We show we care not just in our words but also in our actions as a whole community.

### **What we believe**

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people, including children, are made in the image of God.

As a Christian community we believe that God reaches out to us in love and acceptance, and that our relationships with each other should express love, care and respect.

*(Safe Place Position Statement developed by the UCA Commission on Women and Men in 1997)*

Central to living out the gospel is to love God and to love others. As a community of faith, we are committed to provide safe environments for all people including children, so that they may live life in all its fullness.

We also acknowledge the rights of children as detailed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1990, Article 49) that States shall protect children from physical or mental harm and neglect, including sexual abuse and exploitation.

## **Cultural considerations**

Issues about child safety may need to be discussed in different ways in different cultural contexts.

The Synod is keen to ensure that the Child Safe Training is culturally respectful and relevant. However, there is no room for variations in the requirement that everyone across the life of the Synod must support the Church's commitment to being a safe place for children and young people.

How we talk about child safety can be influenced by our upbringing and life experience, our culture, education and the community around us. The place of children and young people is also different across cultures. In our multicultural church, you are likely to encounter views about children that are different to your own and this is an opportunity for cross-cultural learning. Parts of this Child Safe Training may be different to what you understood before. It is important we all have shared understandings and expectations in our congregations and communities about what child safe means and what it looks like. This helps each one of us to contribute to being a safe church for all people, especially children and young people.

## **Why is child safe training relevant to me in my volunteer role?**

All people, especially children and young people, who are involved in any of the Uniting Church's activities, services, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Synod is committed to providing safe environments where children and young people are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained. All adults have a role in living out that commitment in all engagements with the community within and beyond the Uniting Church, in-person and online. If all adults, as well as leaders, continuously model a positive attitude to the importance of being child safe, the whole community is more likely to embrace a child safe culture.

**A child safe Uniting Church is a shared commitment to the ongoing shaping and reshaping of our processes and culture.**

**The UCA strives to be a place where people of all ages can find belonging and meaning, and flourish into the people God calls them to be.**

## **Principles of a child safe Synod**

As volunteers in a congregational activity, such as an Op Shop, within the Synod, we are called to be a safe church and all children have the right to participate safely in the life of the Church in all its services and activities.

In addition to complying with the relevant Child Safe Standards in Victoria and Tasmania, the Synod has adopted the Principles for a Child Safe Uniting Church in Australia:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
4. Diversity is respected and equity is promoted
5. Our people are suitable for work with children and committed to the values of child safety and wellbeing
6. Child focussed complaints processes
7. Our people are provided with ongoing education and training on child safety
8. Our physical and online environments promote safety
9. Policies and procedures document child safety
10. Review and continuous improvement of policy, procedure and practice.

## Child safe code of conduct and requirements

All volunteers serve within a context and commitment to child safety and as such are expected to:

- adhere to the Child Safe Code of Conduct and the child safe policies and procedures in place in the Synod
- be aware of the requirements of being a child safe service or activity and report any concerns to the service or activity co-ordinator

Our position in the Uniting Church is that all adults have a moral and ethical obligation to report concerns about the safety of a child or young person, regardless of whether the applicable State or Territory legislation mandates a report.

As a volunteer you are expected to understand and report all forms of child abuse, including any disclosures or concerns. This training aims to help you in meeting these expectations in practice as you serve in your volunteer role.

## Code of conduct

As a volunteer you are required to adhere to the Child Safe Code of Conduct:

**(Name of congregation/ entity) expects all employees, appointed leaders, volunteers and people in specified ministries to abide by this Code of Conduct.**

**Employees, volunteers and people in specified ministries will:**

- Consider the safety and needs of children as paramount.
- Treat all children with respect, embracing diversity and demonstrating a zero tolerance of discrimination, acting on any incidents of racism.

- Read and abide by relevant policies and procedures for keeping children safe.
- Behave in a manner which is consistent with the values of the Uniting Church in Australia.
- Encourage open communication between all children, parents, staff, vulnerable adults, volunteers and people in specified ministries through the use of empowering and supportive language.
- Enable children to participate in the decisions that affect them.
- Support and encourage children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.
- Model appropriate behaviours and redirect unwanted behaviours of children, at all times using appropriate behaviour management strategies.
- Respond to any concerns or suspicions of child abuse, and speak up if you see colleagues behaving in ways that concern you.
- At all times be transparent in our actions and whereabouts, and remain aware of each child and the adults who are with the children.
- Seek advice, support and assistance for child protection matters where needed.
- Participate in required training so as to understand our role in ensuring a safe environment for children.

**Employees, volunteers and people in specified ministries will not unless otherwise formally authorised<sup>1</sup>:**

- Be alone with a child.
- Sleep in the same room as a child.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes.
- Without prior parental/guardian consent, seek to make contact and spend time alone with any child outside program times, including through personal social media networks or face-to-face and phone contact.
- Photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians.
- Disclose information unless specifically required by law or policy.

**Employees, volunteers and people in specified ministries will not under any circumstances:**

- Engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children.
- Use inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory language when speaking with a child.
- Sleep in the same bed as a child.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary, uninvited, or culturally insensitive way in public or isolation.
- Behave provocatively or inappropriately with a child and/or in a way that could be considered as 'grooming'.
- Develop a sexual relationship with a child or a relationship with a child that may be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour of a child which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.

- Act in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of a child.
- Smack, hit or physically assault a child.
- Physically restrain or remove/isolate a child or children unless the child's or children's behaviours endanger themselves or others.
- Have inappropriate conversations with a child either in person, through social media or in any other way.
- Use the Entity's computers, mobile phones, video and digital cameras inappropriately or for the purpose of exploiting or harassing a child.
- Make a complaint that they know to be untrue, malicious or improper.

If you have any questions regarding this please contact the Culture of Safety Unit [cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au) or 03 9116 1438.

Breaches of this Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary measures, termination of volunteer role, or, if required by law, reporting to the authorities.

## Duty of care

In all environments we interact in - physical and online, when we approach people or when individuals approach us – we have a responsibility to take care to protect people from harm, especially children and young people. We must be intentional in how we discharge our duty of care and be able to clearly show others what we do in this regard. That is part of the reason churches have clear policies and procedures for caring for children and young people.

You may be more familiar hearing the term duty of care in relation to workplace safety, rather than church safety, however the origins of our broader community understanding actually come from Jesus' teaching to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31) and similarly "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34).

Duty of care applies to planning, running activities and communication to prevent and manage risks to physical, emotional, and spiritual environments.

Fulfilling our duty of care is a key part of serving in a congregational activity such as an Op Shop.

## Child safe legislation

Victoria and Tasmania both have significant legislated child safety requirements for organisations including churches, and also upon individuals. These child legislated requirements include:

- mandatory reporting obligations regarding reporting of child abuse to police and child protection services in each state
- Failure to Disclose – failing to disclose reasonable concerns of sexual abuse of a child to police and/or child protection authorities, is criminal conduct
- Failure to Protect – individuals - the failure of leaders in organisations to protect children from a known risk of child sexual abuse within those organisations, is criminal conduct
- Failure to Protect -organisations – in civil claims of child abuse suffered within an organisational setting, organisations must prove that all reasonable steps were taken to

- prevent child abuse within that setting and context
- Working With Children or Vulnerable People Checks/Registration
- Age of consent laws
- Grooming, child sexual contact and child abuse material are criminal offences
- Child Safe Standards; and
- Reportable Conduct Schemes.

The Synod complies with the child safety legislation in both Victoria and Tasmania and reserves the right to remove any volunteer from any service or activity connected to any congregation within the Synod where the Synod holds reasonable concerns that the volunteer may pose a risk to the safety of children from harm and abuse.

All volunteers must maintain a current Working With Children Check (Victoria) or Registration to Work with Vulnerable People (Tasmania) – if you become aware that your Check or Registration is suspended, or subject to an interim or permanent Exclusion, you must immediately notify your service co-ordinator, cease in your volunteer role and contact the Culture of Safety Unit [cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au) or 03 9116 1438.

If you have a concern about any volunteer in any service or activity connected to any congregation posing a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults, please contact the Culture of Safety Unit [cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au) or 03 9116 1438.

## Self-care is needed

The next section deals with the definition of child abuse and contains information that may be distressing. Please remember to take a break as needed and practice self-care. Remember you can seek help from Lifeline 13 11 14 or Blue Knot 1300 657 380 as needed.

## What is child abuse?

The World Health Organization defines child abuse and neglect as:

**“All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”**

**The perpetrators of the abuse can include adults, young people and older children. The behaviour may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (something not done, e.g. neglect). Our own perceptions can impact on whether we see something as abuse. This will be influenced by our own life experiences, our community and culture.**

## Understanding child abuse

Child abuse can be generally defined as:

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Exposure to Family Violence



- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Grooming

## Physical Abuse

*The child has suffered or is at significant risk of suffering serious physical trauma or inflicted injury due to the actions of their caregiver.*

**An injury is considered 'inflicted' if it was alleged to be caused wilfully or as a result of punishment.**

Behaviours and Indicators may include:

- threatening to harm or kill
- kicking, punching, hitting (including using objects) and the frequency and force used was significant enough that an injury was likely
- shaking (particularly of young babies)
- burning, biting, pulling out hair
- alcohol or other drug administration or misuse (prescribed and illicit drugs)
- fabricated or induced illness
- female genital mutilation
- exposure to extreme temperatures for sufficient duration to cause serious harm.

## Sexual Abuse

*Sexual abuse is any sexual activity or behaviour that is imposed on a child or young person by someone else. Sexual abuse occurs when someone in a position of power uses that power to involve the child or young person in sexual activity.*

Online child sexual abuse can cause additional harm to children and young people beyond the abusive experience itself. Due to digital technology and communication, distributing material is easy and the product is permanent, leading to ongoing fear of images resurfacing. This is also reason to explain to children and young people in age appropriate ways not to take or share explicit images of themselves, even if they think it's just to someone they trust.

**The long term impact of that trust being broken is too high a cost.**

Behaviours and Indicators may include:

- exposing a child to pornographic material or using them in the production of child sexual abuse material
- those suggestive of grooming
- fondling, kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner
- talking in a sexually explicit way that is not age or developmentally appropriate
- child prostitution – engaging in, supporting, or coercing
- exhibitionism, mutual masturbation, oral sex or penetration
- persistently intruding on a child's privacy
- making obscene calls, text messages or emails to a child or young person.

## **Exposure to Family Violence**

*Domestic/Family violence refers to violence, abuse and intimidation between people who are or have been in an intimate relationship. The perpetrator uses violence to control and dominate the other person. This causes fear, physical harm and/or psychological harm.*

Children can be adversely affected by violence whether they witness it, hear it or are exposed to the consequences of emotions post the violence.

**They do not have to be directly involved.**

Behaviours may include:

- killing or attempting to kill a household member, use of a weapon or displaying a weapon in a threatening manner
- seriously threatening to harm a child or young person, other adult or self (including threats to kidnap and hold hostage)
- the child or young person was in close enough proximity to be psychologically impacted or physically harmed during the incident
- sexual assault, fractures, internal injuries, disfigurement, burns, death and/or any injury that may require hospitalisation
- using excessive discipline and punishment.

## **Neglect**

*Neglect is characterised by serious, ongoing failure to provide for a child's basic needs, to the extent that the child is not receiving the care and supervision necessary to protect them from harm, has suffered serious physical injury or illness, or there is risk of serious harm to the child's wellbeing and development.*

Neglect can be unintentional rather than a deliberate act. Behaviours of neglect toward a child or young person include:

### **Physical neglect**

- them having no safe place to stay, or current sleeping arrangements pose serious danger or risk
- hygiene significantly compromised to the extent that physical health is compromised or at risk of being compromised
- food/ fluids – withholding as punishment, is inappropriate, or insufficient.

### **Medical neglect**

- medical illnesses, disability, injury or mental health condition being left unattended/ unaddressed or treated contrary to medical guidance/ treatment.

### **Supervisory neglect**

- child or young person is left alone for an inappropriate length of time, or the quality of interaction is not sufficient for their safety.

## **Emotional Abuse**

*The child's social, emotional, or cognitive development is impaired or seriously at risk as a direct result of persistent caregiver behaviour or attitude towards the child, whereby the child's self-esteem and social competence are undermined or eroded over time.*

Emotional abuse is defined as abuse that occurs when a person is subjected to behaviours or actions (often repeatedly) aimed at preventing or controlling their behaviour, with the intent to cause them emotional harm or fear through manipulation, isolation or intimidation.

Behaviours may include:

- violence
- terrorising
- parental alienation
- exploiting or corrupting behaviour
- parent or carer isolates the child or young person or denies emotional responsiveness hostility
- rejection or withdrawal of love
- degrading the child's worth, including frequent verbal putdowns, negative prediction (e.g. 'you'll never amount to anything') and negative comparison (e.g. 'Why can't you be more like your sister?').

**We can all take a role in child safety by being aware of what behaviour constitutes child abuse, and the indicators that a child is at risk of harm or being harmed.**

## **Grooming Behaviours**

*What is grooming (also known as child sexual grooming)?*

Grooming is a term used when a person tries to build a trusting relationship with a child or a child's family so that they can sexually abuse the child. Grooming involves the person building connection and trust with a child and family over days, weeks, months or years. For example, the person might befriend a family and seem to have an amazing connection with the child. The person might gradually spend more and more time with the child. This lays the groundwork for sexual abuse at a later time.

Sexual grooming can include conditioning parents, other adults and church leaders to consider the relationship with the child to be 'normal.' Grooming often begins with what appears to be a legitimate, condoned relationship with a child. Initially, conduct might appear to be innocent—even commendable—but it progresses over time and escalates.

### **What are the signs of grooming? –**

Indicators of grooming include an adult or, sometimes, an older adolescent/youth doing things such as:

- giving extra praise and attention to a child/young person
- making a child/young person feel special through gifts and treats

- sending text, voice, email, or online messages to a child/young person on a regular basis
- asking the child/young person for personal information
- increased touching such as tickling, wrestling, sitting the child on their knee, playing with the child's hair
- spending time alone with a child/young person
- talking about sex and sexuality with a child/young person
- sharing secrets with a child/young person.

**These behaviours escalate over time and include more secrecy until a child or young person is trapped into silence and continues to be subjected to the abuse.**

### **What should I do if I suspect grooming?**

While most people have normal interactions with children, all parents, congregation members and leaders should be aware of the possibility of grooming. If an adult feels a sense of unease or concern about a person's interaction with a child/young person or their parent/carer, they should discuss this with a trusted person, such as the service co-ordinator, or contact the Synod Culture of Safety Unit. If a child reports a concern about a person's interaction with them, or with another child, it is important that adults listen and take the concerns seriously. Seek advice from a qualified person as to the necessary follow up response.

### **Bullying**

Bullying refers to any intentional and repeated behaviour which causes physical, emotional or social harm to a person who has, or is perceived to have, less power than the person who bullies. Bullying is a complex issue and comes in many forms, occurs in various settings, and affects many population groups. Bullying can impact victims, perpetrators, witnesses, and the community. Bullying can be physical, verbal or social.

If you have any concerns regarding bullying in the context of the congregational service or activity, speak to the service co-ordinator, or contact the Synod Culture of Safety Unit.

## **Disclosures and concerns**

In your volunteer role you may receive a disclosure from a child or adult which gives you cause for concern that a child may be being harmed or abused or is at risk of harm or abuse. A disclosure is the sharing of facts or information by a person who has experienced harm or abuse, or by someone who observed the harm or abuse. The disclosure may happen soon after the harm or abuse occurred, or many years later.

**Every disclosure, whether from a child, young person, or adult must be taken seriously, reported and handled with care for all involved.**

You could also form a concern about a child's safety from harm and abuse by your own observations.

You should always take child safety concerns seriously and speak up about them so these can be considered and responded to as necessary.

## Reporting child abuse

Our position in the Uniting Church is that all adults have a moral and ethical obligation to report concerns about the safety of a child or young person, regardless of whether the applicable State or Territory legislation mandates a report. As a volunteer in a service or activity connected to a congregation, you must report concerns about safety of a child or young person.

Remember:

- You do not have to prove that abuse has taken place; you only need reasonable grounds, which is when there's a reasonable basis to believe that abuse is being or has already been committed.
- When reporting a concern regarding abuse/neglect within a family, you do not need permission from parents/caregivers to make a notification; nor do they need to be informed that a notification is being made.
- If you make a notification in good faith, you cannot be held legally liable – regardless of the outcome of the notification.

To make a report contact the Culture of Safety Unit [cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au) or 03 9116 1438.

## Thank you for completing this training

For any questions or concerns, or to make a report, contact the Culture of Safety Unit [cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au) or 03 9116 1438.