

Mandatory Reporting for Lay Workers, Lay Preachers and Volunteers

C/2.1.2.12

When to follow this process

This process applies to all lay preachers, appointed leaders, helpers, volunteers and employees in children's ministry activities conducted by the Synod, presbyteries and congregations within the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod. This process must be followed each time a leader, volunteer, lay preacher or lay staff member:

- Receives information, has knowledge of, or reasonably suspects that a child under the age of 18 years:
 - has been sexually abused or is being groomed for sexual abuse by any adult or child
 - has been subject to, or is at risk of, any other abuse or neglect
- Becomes aware of spiritual abuse, boundary violations, bullying or criminal misconduct
- Holds serious concerns and/or information about the behaviour of appointed leader, ministry agent or church council member or any other church member, adherent, or attendee at church events.

New Reporting Laws

New laws start on **5 July 2021** which target behaviour that ignores or hides the sexual abuse of children pursuant to the *Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020*. These new laws mean:

- all adults must report sexual offending against children to the police unless they have a reasonable excuse
- adults in an institutional setting (e.g. a school, church or sporting club) must protect children from the risk of a sexual offence being committed against them.

Section 1: B.E.C.A.L.M. Process and checklist

Note: the order of the steps may vary depending on the particular circumstances and situation.

- **Breathe:** Using a quick calming technique can help you engage your thinking brain. Suggest the child "take a deep breath" and count for them as they breathe in and out a few times
- **Calm:** Calm the person. The words you use will have a profound and lasting impact on the person. Use words like "You've done the right thing by telling me", "I'm glad you told me", "I believe you", "It wasn't your fault".
- **Assess:** Assess whether there is any immediate or imminent danger. If there is, or if in doubt, call 000 and ask for Police to attend.
- **Let:** Let the person know what your obligations are. Explain you have a responsibility to report child abuse concerns and allegations. You could use words like: "I will need to tell someone about this so that we can get some help for you. I'm going to have to make a report."
- **Make a report:** Make a report immediately. Make a note of your concerns and report them to your ministry agent straight away, respecting the privacy and dignity of all parties. You **must** make a report to the police in all cases where:
 - sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
 - you suspect that sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
- Keep a copy of your notes and who you've spoken with in a secure location, and provide a copy of the report to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer at the Synod office – safeministrywithchildren@ucagld.com.au or call 0491 491 227. If the concern is about your ministry agent

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or their family member, report your concern to your presbytery chairperson and the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer. If your concern is about your presbytery chairperson or their family member, report your concern to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer. You may also report your concerns online Complaints@ucaqld.com.au.

Section 2: What to do if you are aware of spiritual abuse, boundary violations, bullying or criminal misconduct

Scenario 1

Are you aware of spiritual abuse, boundary violations, bullying or criminal misconduct committed by your ministry agent or a member of your church council?

Do you have serious concerns about the behaviour of your ministry agent or a member of your church council?

Action plan

Make a note of your concerns/information and report them to your presbytery chairperson and the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer at the Synod office. You **must** make a report to the police in all cases where:

- sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
- you suspect that sexual abuse or grooming has occurred.

Keep a copy of your notes and who you've spoken with in a secure location. If the concern is about the presbytery chairperson or their family member, report it to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer at the Synod office – safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au or 0491 491 227, or via Complaints@ucaqld.com.au

Scenario 2

Are you aware of spiritual abuse, boundary violations, bullying, or criminal misconduct committed by an appointed leader, helper, volunteer, employee, member or adherent within your congregation?

Do you have serious concerns about the behaviour of any other church member or attendee at church events?

Action plan

Make a note of your concerns/information and report them to your church council chairperson and the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer at the Synod office. You **must** make a report to the police in all cases where:

- sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
- you suspect that sexual abuse or grooming has occurred.

Keep a copy of your notes and who you've spoken with in a secure location. If the concern is about the church council chairperson or their family member, report it to your presbytery chairperson and the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer at the Synod office – safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au or 0491 491 227.



Revisions

Document number		C/2.1.2.12			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
3.0	30.06.2021	Risk and Compliance Manager	30.06.2021	ED Risk and Assurance	Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer
Next scheduled review		30.06.2026			