



Obligations for Ministry Agents

C/2.1.5

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline specific obligations held by ministry agents of the United Church in Australia, Queensland Synod (the Synod) in relation to [C/2.1 Safe Ministry with Children: Providing Safe Ministry Policy](#) (SMC Policy) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (the Regulation). This document provides guidance in four sections as follows:

1. Ministry agents in a placement, paid stipend or providing supply
2. Ministry agents working in another organisation
3. Ministry agents engaged as employees
4. Ministry agents engaged as volunteers

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.

This means that 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,

Scope

This procedure applies to ministry agents in the United Church in Australia, Queensland Synod. The definitions are outlined below.

Definition – lay preacher

It has been determined that the role of lay preacher requires a blue card, as under the Act you are considered a 'religious representative'. Therefore, the following definition of a "lay preacher" is provided below:

5. Available for supply (including a retired minister that is now available for supply) and does supply on **more than** 7 days per calendar year; or
6. Performs the following ministerial functions (paid or unpaid) on **more than** seven days in a calendar year:
 - a) Preach and/or lead worship in their own congregation; or
 - b) Preach and/or lead worship in any other worship services (including weddings and funerals); or
 - c) Preside at the sacraments; or
 - d) Perform any systematic pastoral care

For more information about the requirements and obligations for [Lay Preachers](#) please refer to the following documents:

- Guidance Notes for Lay Preachers
- Guidance Notes for Retired Ministry Agents



- Obligations for Lay Workers, Lay Preachers and Volunteers
- Mandatory Reporting Process for Lay Workers, Lay Preachers and Volunteers
- Blue Card Guidance Notes for Lay Workers, Lay Preachers and Volunteers

Definition – volunteer

A person is considered to be a volunteer under state legislation if that person undertakes a volunteer activity on a regular basis, such that:

1. The person undertakes a volunteer task, on **more than** 7 calendar days per year; or
2. The person is scheduled to undertake a volunteer activity or task on a regular basis, ie is part of a roster for that volunteer task or activity

For more information please refer to the following documents:

- Guidance Notes for Retired Ministry Agents
- Guidance Notes for Volunteers
- Obligations for Lay Workers, Lay Preachers and Volunteers
- Mandatory Reporting Process for Lay Workers, Lay Preachers and Volunteers
- Blue Card Guidance Notes for Lay Workers, Lay Preachers and Volunteers

Ministry Agents in a placement, paid stipend or providing supply

1. Obligations

- 1.1. All ministry agents are required by law to comply with the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (the Regulation).
- 1.2. Irrespective of whether you are paid or are a volunteer, under the Regulation you are classified as an employee. It has been determined that the roles of lay preacher and ministry agent both require a blue card, as under the Act these roles are defined as a **‘religious representative’**.
- 1.3. All ministry agents must complete and sign a Ministry Agent Statement of Commitment annually.

2. Blue cards

- 2.1. Ministry agents remunerated or eligible to be remunerated by stipend, including retired ministers who are available for supply and ministry agents awaiting placement - due to your covenantal relationship with the Church you are determined under the Regulation as conducting your own regulated business as a religious representative. Therefore, you are required to hold a business blue card, including for periods where you are providing supply.
 - 2.1.1. You **must** hold a business blue card i.e. apply using the BCB application. On the application form, you should list the details of the General Secretary in the ‘Organisation’s contact person’ section.
 - 2.1.2. You are requested to complete a ‘Consent to discuss information’ form (formerly known as the ‘Authority to liaise with an authorised person’ form) allowing Blue Card Services to liaise with the General Secretary on matters relating to suspension or cancellation of your blue card.
- 2.2. All ministry agents are required to hold a current, valid, appropriate blue card. The General Secretary reserves the right to stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a current positive notice.
- 2.3. For more information, refer to Blue Card Guidance Notes for Ministry Agents.



3. Training

- 3.1. All ministry agents **must** complete Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) training for ministry agents annually. All ministry agents **must**:
 - 3.1.1. Enrol in Module 1 of the SMC ministry agent training as soon as practicable upon commencing supply or commencing an initial placement.
 - 3.1.2. Complete all three (3) modules of SMC ministry agent training, to be eligible to enrol in Refresher Training in subsequent years.
 - 3.1.3. Complete any other training appropriate to your engagement with the Church, for example, complete Code of Ethics training annually.
- 3.2. Ministry agents are also encouraged to complete the SMC Lay Training modules particularly Modules 7, 12 and 13.

4. Reporting abuse

- 4.1. All ministry agents **must** report suspicions or knowledge of abuse. Due to the new reporting laws, you **must** also make a report to the police in **all** cases where:
 - 4.1.1. sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
 - 4.1.2. you suspect that sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
- 4.2. Ministry agents **must** follow the mandatory reporting process for ministry agents. All ministry agents must complete [C/2.1.5.4 Complaints and Allegations Statement Template](#) and must provide a copy of this completed Complaints and Allegations Statement to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer via safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au or 0491 491 227, and provide a copy to the Presbytery Minister.
- 4.3. For suspicions or knowledge of abuse involving the Presbytery Minister, then a copy of this completed Complaints and Allegations Statement must be sent to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer via safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au or 0491 491 227. Advice should be obtained from the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer in relation to the matter.

Ministry agents working in another organisation

For example, a ministry agent employed by Education Queensland as a Chaplain

5. Obligations

- 5.1. All ministry agents are required by law to comply with the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (the Regulation).
- 5.2. Irrespective of whether you are paid or are a volunteer, under the Regulation you are classified as an employee. It has been determined that the roles of lay preacher and ministry agent both require a blue card, as under the Act these roles are defined as a **'religious representative'**.
- 5.3. All ministry agents must complete and sign a [Ministry Agent Statement of Commitment](#) annually.

6. Blue cards

- 6.1. All ministry agents working in another organisation must hold a current, valid, Paid Blue Card, **and** must also comply with any specific blue card requirements when working with that organisation. Failure to do so may result in further penalties from the organisation. For example, a fine.
 - 6.1.1. As an example - you may be stood aside from your role as a ministry agent for the Uniting Church, and also receive a fine from the organisation which had employed you.



6.2. All ministry agents are required to hold a current, valid, appropriate blue card. The General Secretary reserves the right to stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a current positive notice.

6.3. For more information, refer to [Blue Card Guidance Notes for Ministry Agents](#).

7. Reporting

7.1. All ministry agents must report suspicions or knowledge of abuse. The safety of the child must be the priority in all reports. Noting that under new reporting laws, you **must** make a report to the police in **all** cases where:

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

7.2. All ministry agents working in another organisation **must**:

- 7.2.1. Complete training with that organisation, around the organisation's reporting obligations and requirements,
- 7.2.2. Comply with the organisation's reporting requirements,
- 7.2.3. Report all suspicions or knowledge of abuse, following the reporting guidelines of that organisation,
- 7.2.4. Keep written records of all instances where they have complied with these reporting obligations - for example, a ministry agent employed by Education Queensland as a Chaplain, must follow the Education Queensland guidelines for reporting suspicions or knowledge of abuse

8. Training

8.1. All ministry agents working in another organisation **must** complete Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) training for ministry agents annually. All ministry agents **must**:

- 8.1.1. Enrol in Module 1 of the SMC ministry agent training as soon as practicable upon commencing their role.
- 8.1.2. Complete all three (3) modules of SMC ministry agent training, to be eligible to enrol in Refresher Training in subsequent years.
- 8.1.3. Complete any other training appropriate to your engagement with the Church, for example, complete Code of Ethics training annually.
- 8.1.4. Complete Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) training for Ministry Agents annually, along with other training required by the Church, for example Code of Ethics training.

8.2. All ministry agents working in another organisation, **must also** ensure that they complete all other training required by the organisation.

Ministry agents engaged as employees

This section refers to ministry agents who are not in a placement but are engaged as an employee and paid a wage.

9. Obligations

9.1. All ministry agents are required by law to comply with the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (the Regulation).

9.2. Irrespective of whether you are paid or are a volunteer, under the Regulation you are classified as an employee. It has been determined that the roles of lay preacher and ministry agent both require a blue card, as under the Act these roles are defined as a '**religious representative**'.

9.3. All ministry agents must complete and sign a [Ministry Agent Statement of Commitment](#) annually.



10. Blue cards

- 10.1. All ministry agents engaged as employees **must** hold a current, valid, Paid Blue Card i.e. apply using the blue card application. On the application form, you should list the details of your Presbytery Chairperson in the 'Organisation's contact person' section.
- 10.2. You are required to complete additional blue card linking forms if you work in more than one part of the church. For example, if you work for an agency in addition to your local congregation, complete the 'Link an applicant/card holder to this organisation' form, listing the details of the person nominated by the agency in the 'Organisation's contact person' section.
- 10.3. The General Secretary reserves the right to stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a current positive notice.
- 10.4. For more information, refer to [Blue Card Guidance Notes for Ministry Agents](#).

11. Training

- 11.1. All ministry agents engaged as employees **must** complete Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) training for ministry agents annually. All ministry agents must:
 - 11.1.1. Enrol in Module 1 of the SMC ministry agent training as soon as practicable upon commencing their role.
 - 11.1.2. Complete all three (3) modules of SMC ministry agent training, to be eligible to enrol in Refresher Training in subsequent years.
 - 11.1.3. Complete any other training appropriate to your engagement with the Church, for example, complete Code of Ethics training annually.
 - 11.1.4. Complete Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) training for Ministry Agents annually, along with other training required by the Church, for example Code of Ethics training.
- 11.2. Ministry agents are also encouraged to complete the SMC Lay Training modules particularly Modules 7, 12 and 13.

12. Reporting abuse

- 12.1. All ministry agents **must** report suspicions or knowledge of abuse. Due to the new reporting laws, you **must also** make a report to the police in **all** cases where:
 - 12.1.1. sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
 - 12.1.2. you suspect that sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
- 12.2. Ministry agents **must** follow the mandatory reporting process for ministry agents. All ministry agents must complete [Complaints and Allegations Statement Template](#) and must provide a copy of this completed Complaints and Allegations Statement to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer via safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au or 0491 491 227, and provide a copy to the Presbytery Minister.
- 12.3. For suspicions or knowledge of abuse involving the Presbytery Minister, then a copy of this completed [Complaints and Allegations Statement](#) must be sent to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer via safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au or 0491 491 227. Advice should be obtained from the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer in relation to the matter.

Ministry agents engaged as volunteers

This section refers to ministry agents who are not in a placement but are who are engaged on a volunteer basis.

13. Obligations

- 13.1. All ministry agents are required by law to comply with the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (the Regulation).



13.2. Irrespective of whether you are paid or are a volunteer, under the Regulation you are classified as an employee. It has been determined that the roles of lay preacher and ministry agent both require a blue card, as under the Act these roles are defined as a '**religious representative**'.

13.3. All ministry agents must complete and sign a Ministry Agent Statement of Commitment annually.

14. Blue cards

14.1. All ministry agents engaged as volunteers must hold a current, valid, Volunteer Blue Card i.e. apply using the blue card application. On the application form, you should list the details of your Presbytery Chairperson in the 'Organisation's contact person' section.

14.2. You are required to complete additional blue card linking forms if you work in more than one part of the Church. For example, if you work for an agency in addition to your local congregation, complete the 'Link an applicant/card holder to this organisation' form, listing the details of the person nominated by the agency in the 'Organisation's contact person' section.

14.3. The General Secretary reserves the right to stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a current positive notice.

14.4. For more information, refer to Blue Card Guidance Notes for Ministry Agents.

15. Training

15.1. All ministry agents engaged as volunteers **must** complete Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) training for ministry agents annually. All ministry agents **must**:

15.1.1. Enrol in Module 1 of the SMC ministry agent training as soon as practicable upon commencing their role.

15.1.2. Complete all three (3) modules of SMC ministry agent training, to be eligible to enrol in Refresher Training in subsequent years.

15.1.3. Complete any other training appropriate to your engagement with the Church, for example, complete Code of Ethics training annually.

15.1.4. Complete Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) training for Ministry Agents annually, along with other training required by the Church, for example Code of Ethics training.

15.2. Ministry agents are also encouraged to complete the SMC Lay Training modules particularly Modules 7, 12 and 13.

16. Reporting abuse

16.1. All ministry agents **must** report suspicions or knowledge of abuse. Due to the new reporting laws, you **must also** make a report to the police in **all** cases where:

16.1.1. sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,

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

16.2. Ministry agents **must** follow the mandatory reporting process for ministry agents. All ministry agents must complete Complaints and Allegations Statement Template and must provide a copy of this completed Complaints and Allegations Statement to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer via safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au or 0491 491 227, and provide a copy to the Presbytery Minister.

16.3. For suspicions or knowledge of abuse involving the Presbytery Minister, then a copy of this completed Complaints and Allegations Statement must be sent to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer via safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au or 0491 491 227. Advice should be obtained from the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer in relation to the matter.



Revisions

Document number		C/2.1.5			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
4.0	30.06.2021	Manager, Risk and Compliance	30.06.2021	ED Risk and Assurance	Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer
Next scheduled review		30.06.2026			