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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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PURPOSE

Geneva Christian College is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for its employees, visitors, volunteers, and particularly to students, and vulnerable people. This policy aims to reduce the risk of harm occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken, should harm occur. This policy is designed to provide guidelines for the staff who are involved in planning the school's programs and working with children. The Geneva Board are committed to implementing the Child Protection Policy and to training staff, external educators and volunteers in its content and application through the school's induction process. The staff Contract of Employment contains information regarding holding and maintaining a Working with Vulnerable People Registration.

RESPONSIBILITY

The core expectation of any responsible organisation requires that all people be treated with fairness and dignity and caring for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection. All relevant organisations within Australia are bound by Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law. Duty of Care is a common law concept that refers to the responsibility of the school and individuals to provide children with an adequate level of protection against harm. It is the duty of the school and its individuals to protect children from all reasonably foreseeable risk of harm. Geneva Christian College is committed to adhering to all relevant legislation. This policy will be communicated to the school community. Board Members, all employees and volunteers must be aware of and adhere to this policy.

DEFINITIONS

Child, any student enrolled at Geneva.

Harm can consist of, but is not restricted to one or more of the following:

Physical Abuse is any non-accidental physical injury or harm resulting from abusive practices

Sexual Abuse is any assault or abuse of a sexual nature, sexual molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation.

Grooming is the act of forming a special or power-based relationship with children with the intention of getting close to them in order to sexually abuse them.

Online Grooming is the act of sending an electronic message with indecent content to a recipient who is under 18 years of age, with the intention of procuring the recipient to engage in or submit to sexual activity with another person, including but not necessarily the sender.

Emotional Abuse is the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a person's self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include insulting, bullying, devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or other extreme acts in the vulnerable person's presence.

Negligence is failure to provide proper and adequate care which may result in the harm of a child.

Reasonable suspicion means fair and practical reason to believe an incident involving any type of abuse has occurred, based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumour, observance of behaviour or by any other indicator.

IMPLEMENTATION

Selection & Screening

Employees, external educators, volunteers and visitors involved in activities or programs with children, must be carefully selected and screened. Prior to commencing employment, the following precautions will be taken:

- All prospective employees must take part in an interview from which information will be gathered about relevant past experience, positions held, details of referees and permission to contact them.
- Referees will be checked and spoken to. Geneva will seek to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position.
- An employment level Working with Vulnerable People registration, distributed by the Tasmanian Government department "Consumer, Building and Occupational Services" (CBOS) will be requested and received prior to the employee commencing their proposed role. During employment, should an employee be charged, convicted of, or found guilty of any offence that will affect their ability to hold this clearance, they must notify the employer immediately. If an employee's criminal history changes since they first registered, they must let the Department of Justice know within ten (10) working days of being charged, convicted of, or found guilty of a relevant offence. A relevant offence is outlined in the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013.

Prior to participating as a volunteer at Geneva, the following checks will be taken:

- All volunteers over the age of 18 are required to have a current Working with Vulnerable People (WVP) registration.
- Geneva Christian College must be a nominated organisation on the submitted registration for the volunteer to participate in programs with young people under the age of 18.
- A record of volunteer WVP registrations will be recorded at the front office.
- Where the school has identified that a potential employee / volunteer has previously committed a violent crime or sexually related offence, they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for employment or voluntary work at Geneva.

A Safe Environment

Incidents of harm or abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, it is recommended that staff and volunteers work in pairs in the presence of children / vulnerable people, when possible. Wherever possible, employees and volunteers will not visit vulnerable persons in their homes unless a friend or relative is present or another employee or volunteer accompanies them.

If transporting a child or children in a private vehicle is required, permission from the parent is compulsory. A clear and concise travel route must be established. Detours or additional arrangements can only be made if prior parental consent is given.

Adults and children are expected to respect each other's privacy during times that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. No staff will be alone in a room with a child while either is changing clothes. If a child requires help with personal hygiene, a second adult should be present. Employees / volunteers have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at such activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave. Visitors must be accompanied by a volunteer or employee at all times when visiting Geneva. Contractors who have not provided the school with a WVP Card, must be accompanied by an employee at all times if working when a school program or activity is taking place. In situations where employees are required to communicate with students via social media, the guidelines in the Geneva Electronic Communication Guidelines and Contract must be adhered to.

Reporting Procedures

In keeping with the schools' Mandatory Reporting Guidelines, employees and/or volunteers must report reasonable suspicions of harm or abuse to the Principal or a Board member. Upon investigation, if required a report will be made to Child Safety Services - Department of Health & Human Services. If a report is not made and the teacher is not satisfied with the response from the school, and has formed a belief that a report should be made to Child Safety Service, he/she is still mandated to report and should do so.

Geneva Christian College is committed to building an environment where either a victim or employee / volunteer feels able to report such abuse. Please refer to the Mandatory Reporting Guidelines. Reasonable suspicion means a fair, well-founded and practical reason to believe an incident involving abuse has occurred based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumour or observation of behaviour.

If there is reasonable suspicion that a person has been or is suffering abuse, the Police and the school's insurer will be contacted immediately.

An independent person will be appointed by Geneva Christian College with the specific duty of dealing with any allegations of harm or abuse that may arise. The details of those reporting abuse will be kept private and confidential. Geneva Christian College has established procedures for handling allegations of harm or abuse.

The procedures will be as follows:

- any person whilst under investigation by the school, or by the police, for committing abuse will be suspended from all work and other duties within Geneva Christian College. The person in question, if employed, will be on full pay and will be provided with support while investigations take place.
- if the person is found guilty of committing abuse, either by internal investigation or by a court, it will result in automatic termination of their employment and involvement with Geneva Christian College.

The Police will also be notified if a person discloses an incident of abuse that has occurred somewhere other than the school's premises (e.g. on an outing). If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure.

This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be "swept under the carpet".
- Not pushing the claimant to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the person that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Reporting the alleged abuse to the Police and the school's insurer.
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator. If an employee or volunteer is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it may be advisable for another person to assume this responsibility for the duration of the investigation.
- If the alleged assault has taken place recently, clothing worn by the alleged victim should be, if reasonably practical, retained and handed to the Police for forensic examination.
- Maintain confidentiality. Any disclosures of abuse, reports of suspected abuse and all the details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.

SCRIPTURAL GUIDELINES

Live by the Golden Rule. "Do unto others as you would wish them to do unto you."

REFERENCES

Mandatory Reporting Guidelines
Code of Conduct – Staff
Code of Conduct – Students
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
Strong Families, Safe Kids