Child Protection Policy
Australia and New Zealand

Purpose

- Adults interacting with children occupy a position of trust and influence. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety and protection of children whilst in the care of BSF and its leaders, members or volunteers.

The BSF Children’s Program operates with the following safeguards:

- Ongoing supervision by a children’s supervisor (CS) trained in BSF policies and procedure.
- Safety monitoring by a trained assistant CS, and oversight of CS’ responsibilities if a CS is absent.
- Extensive training for children’s leaders before assuming teaching duties and weekly training throughout a BSF class year.
- Compliance with Child Protection Policy monitored by trained Area Personnel overseeing classes.
- Established lockdown procedures and yearly evacuation drills with children and volunteers.
- Children may only attend when their enrolled registered adult is on the host church premises.
- Full compliance with local and government laws requiring working with children background checks.
- Clearly defined check-in and check-out procedures for each child with their enrolled registered adult.
- Children may not be taken off church property during the BSF program.
- Contact with children outside the BSF setting, including email/telephone/social media is prohibited.
- No photos/videos of children are allowed without the consent of the parent/guardian.
- Emergency contact information maintained for immediate access.
- Action plans for each child with potential emergency medical needs.
- Instructing leaders in procedures for suspected child abuse.

As leaders or volunteers, we are responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

We will:

- Uphold BSF’s Two-Adult Policy, where a child is never left alone with one leader or volunteer.
- Respect other people’s minds, emotions and bodies.
- Acknowledge and accept the trust granted to us by those who are taking part in activities, their families and the wider community. We commit to ensure all our actions are morally upright.
- Strive for truth and confidentiality. We will ensure, as far as possible, that a compassionate response is the first priority in all allegations, even when it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate. We will help, protect and care without passing judgement or prejudicing the rights of the alleged offender. We acknowledge that concealing the truth is contrary to God’s character, unjust to victims and a disservice to offenders.
- Understand and value the need for support to all parties involved in an allegation, including the aggrieved person and the alleged offender. We will actively seek to provide this support.
▪ Acknowledge the personal and public difficulties that a false, misconceived, malicious or vexatious allegation can cause for the person accused. We will take whatever steps are possible to address these difficulties.

▪ Ensure, as far as possible, that all people in positions of authority and/or working with children and young people are aware of the appropriate standard of conduct and boundaries. We require those who work on behalf of BSF to indicate their agreement with our Child Safe Code of Conduct and work towards providing an environment that prevents abuse.

▪ Create a place of safety and refuge for children, young people and others, where they should be and feel safe from any threat when involved in activities. We will be a place where people can disclose abuse and the CS coordinates any appropriate reporting.

▪ Follow a prevention strategy that includes sound recruitment and selection procedures, clear boundaries, risk identification and management, support, supervision and training.

▪ We affirm that it is never appropriate to take part in sexual activity or romantic activity of any kind with a child, regardless of the child’s age. All people in a position of authority, be it real or perceived, paid or unpaid, have the moral and spiritual responsibility towards those over whom they have authority.

▪ Ensure all allegations will be notified to the appropriate external authorities and investigated thoroughly.

**Background Screening**

▪ All leaders and volunteers working with children must undergo the background screening process when they are initially engaged by BSF. Leader or volunteer engagement will be conditional on a satisfactory background screening.

▪ All current leaders and volunteers must have their police vets renewed before their current screening expiry date.

▪ The process for vetting a prospective leader or volunteer is outlined below
  - A prospective leader or volunteer will be asked to complete a background screening form and provide two forms of suitable identification.
  - Leader or volunteer engagement does not occur until a successful background screening has been obtained and validated.
  - If the leader or volunteer does not “pass” the background screening check then they will not be allowed to work with children.

The information which is obtained as a result of background screening will be treated as confidential. Personal information supplied by the applicant must be handled in accordance with BSF’s obligations under the Australian Privacy Act 1988 and the New Zealand Privacy Act 1993.

**Reporting of Alleged Exploitation or Abuse**

▪ Any issues of suspected child abuse must be taken seriously and handled in an appropriate manner that ensures the child’s safety.

▪ It is mandatory for all BSF leaders and volunteers to report to CS or AP immediately any suspected or alleged case of child abuse, exploitation or non-compliance by anyone within scope of the policy to the CS or AP who will then follow reporting protocol in the CS Manual.

▪ The CS is responsible for ensuring that the procedure for reporting child abuse is prompt and effective.

**Breaches of this Policy**

▪ Any allegation against any member, leader or volunteer of BSF that has behaved in an inappropriate or unsafe manner towards any child or has breached this policy in any way must be taken seriously and the safety of the child must be the most important consideration in this situation.
- BSF will refer suspected situations of child abuse by BSF members, leaders or volunteers to the local Police and
  - In Australia, the relevant State/Territory government department governing child safety and protection,
  - In New Zealand, the Ministry for Children.
- Allegations will be treated in such a way that the rights of adults and the stress upon the accused are also taken into consideration.
- The CS must ensure that the person accused of child abuse is advised of and respects BSF protocol and does not have any further access to the child or other children in BSF while the allegation is being investigated. It is the policy of BSF that any person accused of child abuse step out of BSF until the allegation is formally investigated and adjudicated.

**Emergencies**

- If there is an emergency and leaders or volunteers suspect a child is at serious risk, or a crime against a child has been committed call 000 (AUS) or 111 (NZ) immediately.
- In other instances where it is not an emergency or leaders or volunteers have a suspicion, the CS should be contacted. The CS will then decide whether the matter should be escalated. If the CS is not available, then the assistant CS should be contacted.