

Reformed Church of New Plymouth

Child Protection Policy

Last updated: 28/03/2024

Statement of Commitment

1. NPRC believe that children are a precious gift from God. God loves our children and expects us to value, honour and protect them for the reputation of Christ and his church. ¹

Definitions

- 2.1. "NPRC" refers to New Plymouth Reformed Church.
- 2.2. "Child[ren]" means anyone under the age of 18.²
- 2.3. "Session" refers to the Elders of the New Plymouth Reformed Church (NPRC).³
- 2.4. "Volunteer(s)" refers to all members and non-members participating in and/or for NPRC.⁴
- 2.5. "Child abuse" means the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child.
- 2.6. "NPRC CPP" refers to **New Plymouth Reformed Church - Child Protection Policy**.

¹ Ps 127:3; Pr 31:8-9; Ps 82:3-5; Mk 10:16; Mt 18:6; 18:10. RCNZ Guidelines; 195A of the Crimes Act 1961.

² The definition of "Child[ren]" is chosen specifically for age simplicity and to avoid adding in extra terms.

³ The Reformed Churches of New Zealand Church Order article 36 defines the Session as the Elders (ruling and teaching).

⁴ "Members" refers to communicant and baptised members of NPRC; see the Reformed Churches of New Zealand Church Order articles, 58 and 60. Non-member refers to everyone else who is not a member of NPRC. "Participating in and/or for NPRC" is any member or non-member at any NPRC event or programme that the Session has authorised.

2.7. “RCNZ Guidelines” refers to the 2014 Reformed Churches of New Zealand Guidelines for Sessions having to deal with sexual abuse against children.

Policy Scope

3.1. The NPRC CPP shall cover all children who are attending NPRC or an NPRC event or program(s) that the Session has authorised.

3.2. The specific programs that Session has authorised include:

3.2.1. Sunday worship service crèche

3.2.2. Sunday School

3.2.5. Cadets Program

3.2.6. Youth Group

3.3. The NPRC CPP shall apply to all volunteers.

General

4.1. The Session shall inform all volunteers that they have an active part to play in protecting children from harm and humiliation.

4.2. Whilst the Session shall recognise the rights of volunteers who are parents or caregivers wanting to work with their own children, volunteers must have the Session’s approval prior to them working with other children.

4.3. Volunteers that have not received the Session approval or do not agree with the NPRC CPP are able to work with their own children but not work with other children.

4.4. The Session shall ordinarily vet all volunteers prior to them working with children and ordinarily be a communicant member at least two years.

4.5. The Session shall endeavour to ensure that volunteers are ordinarily not placed in situations that render them vulnerable.

4.6. Each program shall ordinarily be run in an open setting. Volunteers and the children in their care shall be visible. The Session shall take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that the facilities used for activities allow for compliance with this.

In the Event of an Allegation, Suspicion or Confession of Child abuse

- 5.1.** Volunteers shall report all allegations, suspicions or confessions of child abuse to the Session, ordinarily to the Pastor(s), and / or the Chairman / Vice Chairman of the Session, or to another appropriate person. [Nothing in this paragraph is intended to discourage reporting to the NZ Police where a person wishes to do so].
- 5.2.** The Session shall deal with all allegations, suspicions or confessions of child abuse in a timely and God-honouring manner in accordance with Section 3 of the RCNZ Guidelines.⁵
- 5.3.** The Session, ordinarily a Pastor or an Elder, shall keep detailed records, that are in accordance with Section 3 of the RCNZ Guidelines, of all allegations, suspicions or confessions of child abuse.
- 5.4.** The Session shall provide pastoral support for the accuser and their families. Any pastoral support should ordinarily be given with a legal guardian or support person's presence.
- 5.5.** The Session shall provide pastoral support for the accused and their families. Where the accused is a child, any pastoral support should ordinarily be given with a legal guardian's or support person's presence.
- 5.6.** The Session shall, where considering providing pastoral care to both an accuser and accused, have specific regard to guarding against risk or perception of bias or conflict of interest, and shall take steps to mitigate such risk, including seeking counsel or input from another Session.
- 5.7.** The Session shall seek, to the maximum extent possible, to engage with parents or guardians of potential victims in responding to allegations of abuse.
- 5.8.** The Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for volunteers and their families.⁶

⁵ Although the RCNZ Guidelines deal specifically with child sexual abuse and were written in 2014, the principles outlined provide the Session with the appropriate procedures to deal with any incident of child abuse.

⁶ It is important to note that if a volunteer has a suspicion, or an allegation or confession is made to them, they (and their families) may also need pastoral support.

- 5.9.** The Session shall apply the relevant RCNZ Guidelines (Section 3.10(h),iv, p144, OBH 3.10 p143, OBH and 3.12 p145, OBH) in determining the approach to NZ Police.
- 5.10.** Where there has been an inconclusive court case or investigation, the Session shall monitor the situation for a time and ordinarily provide pastoral care and accountability in accordance with Section 3.14 of the RCNZ Guidelines.⁷
- 5.11.** Where there has been a false allegation, the Session shall deal with the accuser in accordance with Section 3.15 of the RCNZ Guidelines.⁸

In the Event of a Child abuse Conviction

- 6.1.** The Session shall provide pastoral support for the victim and their families in accordance with Section 2.6 p140, OBH of the RCNZ Guidelines and any advice from the Presbytery.
- 6.2.** The Session shall provide pastoral support for the abuser and their families in accordance with Section 2.7 p141, OBH of the RCNZ Guidelines and any advice from the Presbytery, provided that the Session shall comply with cl 5.6 of the NPRC CPP.

Training and Administration

- 7.1.** The Session shall ensure that adequate resources and training are available for volunteers wanting to work with children, and volunteers already working with children.
- 7.2.** The overall responsibility, implementation and review of the NPRC CPP shall be with the Session.
- 7.3.** Whilst the authority remains with the Session, they have the freedom to appoint a person(s) of their choosing to administer and implement any part of this policy.
- 7.4.** The Session shall review the NPRC CPP at least triennially or as required by the Session.

⁷ It is important to note that just because there is no conviction this does not mean that the ‘accuser’ (and their families) are not a victim.

⁸ It is important to note that in an event of a public and proven false allegation, that the accused could be a victim of defamation.

7.5. The Session shall make the NPRC CPP and the RCNZ Guidelines publicly available, on the NPRC website.