

Child Safety Reporting Procedure

Policy Number	G09
Policy Area	Governance
Board Approved Date	February 2021
Scheduled Review Date	February 2023
Related Documents	Safe Places Policy, Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This procedure sets out who needs to report what, when, and to whom, when there is a current child safety concern at Discovery Church.

For more information on our approach and behavioural expectations in relation to child safety, please refer to our **Child Safety Policy** and **Code of Conduct**.

WHO SHOULD REPORT?

Anyone covered in the scope of the Child Safety Policy, including staff, volunteers, elders and representatives of our Related Agencies, must report child safety concerns according to this Reporting Procedure.

Anyone else associated with Discovery Church should also report child safety concerns.

WHAT SHOULD BE REPORTED?

All child safety concerns must be reported, which include:

- Any disclosure, allegation, belief or suspicion of child abuse or harm.
- Non-compliance with the Code of Conduct or other child-related misconduct.
- Concerns regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child.

Reporting other matters:

- Environmental safety concerns that affect children should be reported to a pastor/team leader and an Incident Report Form completed.
- Matters relating to child abuse that occur outside Australia, such as in our global partnerships, should be reported according to the legal frameworks within that country and a Discovery Church Child Safety Officer must be notified.
- Matters relating to historical abuse should be reported to the Churches of Christ Vic/Tas (CCVT) Safe Places Coordinator through the CCVT office (03 9488 8800).

WHO TO REPORT TO

All child safety concerns must be reported to a Child Safety Officer.

Depending on the nature of the concern, the person with the concern may also need to report to designated authorities, as set out in this procedure and the **Appendix 1: Reporting Flowchart**.

Refer to **Appendix 2: Child Safety Contact Details** for a full list of contacts.

CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS

Discovery Church	Beck Lambert	(03) 9760 8055	beck.lambert@discoverychurch.com.au
Discovery Kids	Kate Boehringer	(03) 9760 8029	kate.boehringer@discoverychurch.com.au
i60 Youth	Tiani Walters	(03) 9760 8017	tiani.walters@discoverychurch.com.au
Neighbourhood & Discovery Community Care	Moriah Weston	(03) 9760 8040	moriah.weston@discoverychurch.com.au

DEFINITIONS

Child: any person under 18 years of age. This includes those also referred to as a young person.

- Children that turn 18 while involved in Discovery Church's youth ministry activities will be treated in the same way that children are within this policy until they exit the youth ministry. While this recognises they are still participants within the youth ministry, it does not exempt them from any legal obligations they hold as adults.

Child Abuse: any non-accidental act that endangers a child's physical or emotional health or development. These may be things people *do* to children, *fail to do* for them or *fail to protect* them from. Abuse occurs when those in positions of trust and power abuse that trust and make use of their power to harm children. It can take many forms, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as well as neglect and exploitation.

Child Physical Abuse: any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person. Examples of physical abuse may include slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or assault with implements. It does not include lawful and reasonable discipline by a parent/guardian.

Child Sexual Abuse: the use of a child by another person for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification or for that of others. It includes:

- Sexual acts, such as sexual intercourse, oral sex, masturbation, sexually touching or fondling, or forcing a child to perform any form of sexual act.
- Exposing a child to things of a sexual nature, such as indecent exposure, viewing sexually explicit materials, or watching sexual acts.
- Discussing things of a sexual nature in any means of communication, such as sexual references and innuendo, or discussing or inquiring about sexual matters.

Mandatory Reporting: the legal requirement for certain professional groups to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities.

- In Victoria, the following people are mandatory reporters: registered medical practitioners, nurses, midwives, registered teachers and early childhood teachers, school principals, school counsellors, police officers, out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers), early childhood workers, youth justice workers, registered psychologists and people in religious ministry.
- 'People in religious ministry' refers to a person appointed, ordained or otherwise recognised as a religious or spiritual leader in a religious institution.

Reasonable Belief: a belief formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. It is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A reasonable belief might be formed when:

- A child states that they have been sexually abused.
- A child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).
- Someone who knows the child states that the child has been sexually abused.
- Signs of sexual abuse lead to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

Reportable Conduct: within the Reportable Conduct Scheme there are five types of reportable conduct:

- Sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of, a child.
- Sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of, a child.
- Physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child.
- Behaviour that is likely to cause significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.
- Significant neglect of a child.

PROCEDURE

Please refer to **Appendix 1: Reporting Flowchart** for a summary of the procedure, and contact a Child Safety Officer at any stage for assistance.

1. CALL EMERGENCY SERVICES 000 IF THERE IS IMMEDIATE DANGER

Remove any immediate threat if it is safe to do so, and call 000.

2. LISTEN TO ANY CONCERNS BEING RAISED

If you are under 18, and a child starts to talk with you about behaviour which sounds concerning because it may indicate child abuse, ask an adult leader or a Child Safety Officer for help.

If you are over 18, interact with the child as follows:

- Reassure the child that telling someone was the right thing to do.
- Emphasise that what occurred was not their fault.
- Stop questioning the child/witnesses if the conduct is likely to constitute criminal conduct.
- Consider whether expert assistance is needed to support a child to communicate their concern or disclosure (for example, disability expert, language or cultural interpreter).
- Limit questioning; ask only open-ended questions (for example, can you tell me what happened?).
- Undertake to do something in response to what the child has said and, where appropriate, explain what will be done and the expected timeframe.
- Don't make promises that cannot be kept, including that the information will remain confidential.
- Document the conversation using the child's exact words as far as possible.
- If in doubt, ask a leader or a Child Safety Officer for help.

If an adult informs you of a child safety concern, direct them to make a report according to this procedure or gather as much information as possible and make a report.

If you otherwise become aware of a child safety concern, move to step 3.

3. WRITE UP THE CONCERN

Make notes straight away, using the **Child Safety Report Form**. If the form isn't immediately available, make a note of the following:

- Names and contact details of the people involved in the concern (e.g. children, parents).
- Information that has led to the child safety concern (e.g. physical injuries, behaviour).
- The source of this information (e.g. observation of behaviour, report from child or another person).
- The actions taken as a result of the concern (e.g. consultation with a Child Safety Officer, report to police).

As the person with the concern, your role is to report; you do not need to know all the answers or investigate the situation before making a report. You only need to report what you have seen, heard or become aware of.

4. REPORT TO A CHILD SAFETY OFFICER

All child safety concerns must be reported to a Child Safety Officer as soon as possible. If the matter is serious and you have not been able to contact a Child Safety Officer, do not delay reporting to authorities; simply move to step 5.

Report directly to your department Child Safety Officer if applicable, otherwise report to the church wide Child Safety Officer. If your concern involves a Child Safety Officer, report to one of the other officers or directly to the chair of the eldership.

All child safety concerns should be treated confidentiality. You should only discuss the situation with a Child Safety Officer and others designated by them, except confidentially if you need to seek support yourself. Please reach out to a Child Safety Officer or the CCVT Safe Places Coordinator if you would like guidance on obtaining or providing appropriate support.

5. REPORT TO AUTHORITIES IF REQUIRED

Sometimes reports need to be made to designated authorities to ensure the safety of children and to meet legal obligations. In some circumstances, you may need to make this report, and in others, certain Discovery Church staff will need to make this report. However, anyone can make a report to authorities at any time. If unsure, it is safer to report than fail to do so.

Please refer to the following table and seek guidance from a Child Safety Officer as needed.

What needs to be reported?	Who needs to report?	Who does it need to be reported to?	How is it reported?	When does it need to be reported?
<p>Reasonable belief of child sexual abuse¹ If you are an adult, you are personally obliged to report to police if you have reasonable belief that another adult has committed or attempted to commit a sexual offence against a child who is under 16, unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reporting would endanger someone other than the perpetrator; or all of the information has already been reported to police by someone else. 	All adults	Police – Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) or local police station	Contact the nearest SOCIT . Alternatively, contact your local police station .	As soon as practicable.
<p>Reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse² If you are a mandatory reporter, you must make a report to child protection if a child is under 17 and you have formed a belief on reasonable grounds that the child is in need of protection, which is when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the child has suffered or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse; and the child’s parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child from that harm. <p>Mandatory reporters include people in religious ministry, which would include any adult Discovery Church representative.</p>	Mandatory reporters	DHHS – Child Protection Intake	Contact the relevant DHHS child protection intake office .	As soon as practicable after forming the belief and after each occasion on which you become aware of any further grounds for the belief.

¹ For more information on the failure to disclose offence, see: <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence>.

² For more information on mandatory reporting, see: <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting>.

Mandatory reporters are only required to make a report to child protection if their concern arises while they are acting in their capacity as a mandatory reporter.				
<p>Concern regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child³ Any concerns regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child that are not already covered by the above reporting requirements should also be reported to child protection.</p> <p>If you are concerned that a child is at risk of significant harm or in need of protection, you or a Child Safety Officer can report to the relevant DHHS child protection intake office in the location where the child lives.</p> <p>If it is believed a child is not in need of protection but there are significant concerns regarding the wellbeing of a child, you or a Child Safety Officer can report to Child FIRST/The Orange Door.</p>	Discovery Church Child Safety Officers	DHHS – Child Protection Intake or Child FIRST/The Orange Door	Contact the relevant DHHS child protection intake office . Or contact the nearest Child FIRST/The Orange Door .	As soon as practicable.
<p>Reportable conduct⁴ Under Victoria’s Reportable Conduct Scheme, Discovery Church is required to respond to allegations of child abuse and child-related misconduct made against our workers and volunteers. A reportable allegation must be reported to police if involving criminal conduct and reported to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).</p>	Discovery Church Chair of Eldership	Police (if criminal conduct) and CCYP	Contact police as above. Contact the CCYP .	Within 3 business days after becoming aware of the allegation.

6. FOLLOW UP TO ENSURE THE CHILD IS PROTECTED

If you are an adult in a responsible position in the church you must follow up to make sure that appropriate action has been taken to protect the child or children involved in your child safety concern, or risk committing an offence.

³ For more information on making a report to child protection, see: <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection>.

⁴ For more information on the Reportable Conduct Scheme, see: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au>.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

HOW WILL DISCOVERY CHURCH RESPOND TO A CHILD SAFETY REPORT?

The response process for each report will depend on the nature of the child safety concern. For example, a report involving a disclosure of child abuse will need to be handled differently to a concern regarding an area of the Code of Conduct that has not been upheld by someone.

In general, Discovery Church will take the following steps after being notified of a child safety concern:

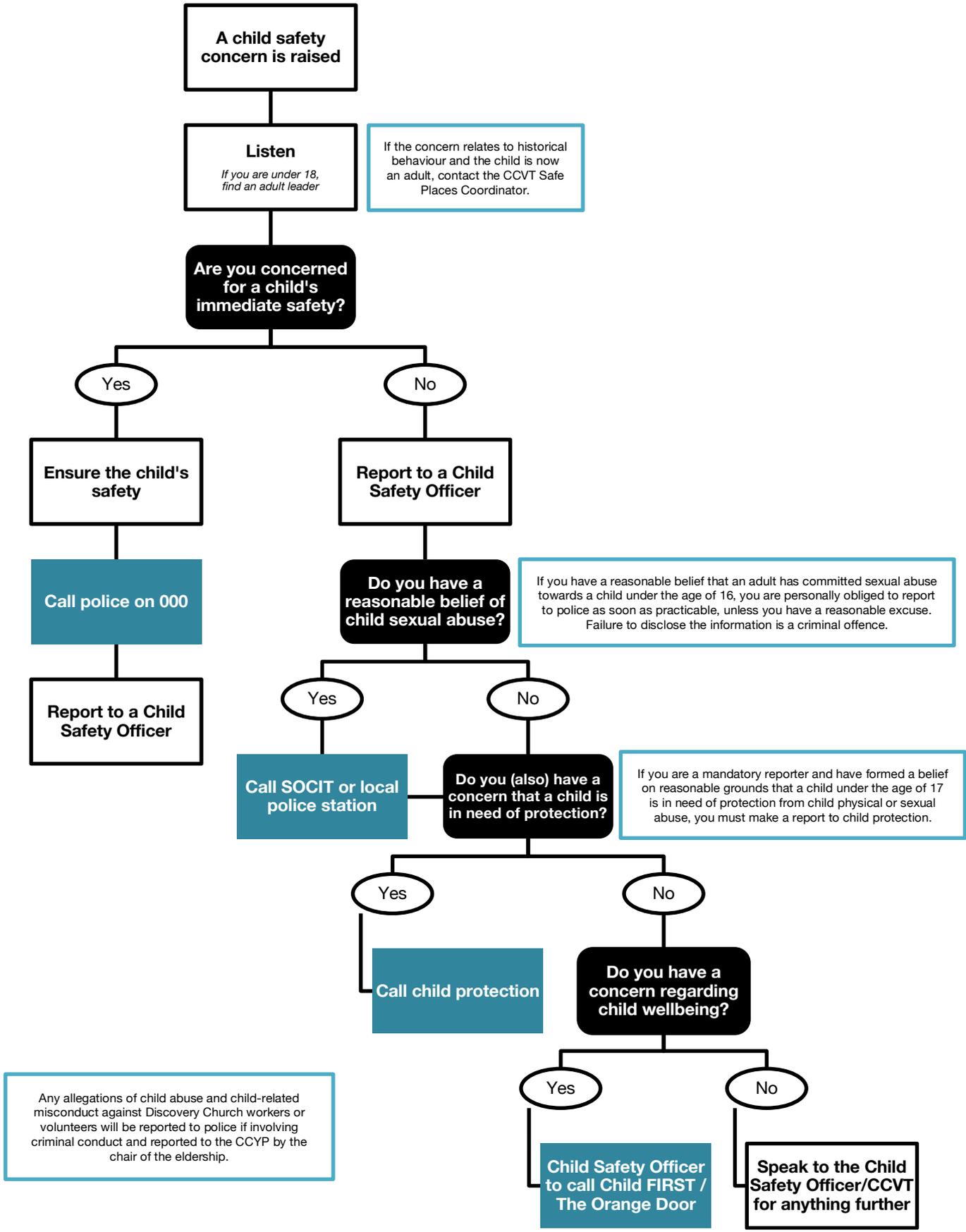
- **Commence an investigation.** Once a report is received, an immediate meeting with the Child Safety Officer/s, executive leadership and chair of the eldership where necessary will take place and a Child Safety Officer will be appointed to lead the investigation. The concern will be treated as top priority until it is resolved. If the concern involves criminal conduct or is a serious concern, clearance must be given from police and/or the CCVT Safe Places Coordinator before the investigation commences.
- **Report to relevant authorities and bodies if required.** The lead Child Safety Officer will ensure all reports are made to the appropriate parties as outlined in the above procedure, unless the person who received the report has already reported to authorities in line with their responsibilities. The lead Child Safety Officer will provide any additional information and documentation to authorities as required.
- **Take corrective actions.** If the concern involves misconduct of a Discovery Church representative, appropriate actions will be taken, including temporarily stepping the person down from their role while the concern is investigated, and if severe or involving criminal conduct and proven credible, dismissal from roles and/or the church. Other concerns related to child safety in programs will be addressed appropriately on a case-by-case basis.
- **Support those involved.** All people involved, including the reporter, victim and the person the concern is against, will be treated with respect throughout the entire process. The lead Child Safety Officer will debrief with those involved and can provide, arrange or recommend additional pastoral care and external counselling where necessary.
- **Maintain confidentiality.** All information related to child safety concerns will be treated as confidential and only shared with the Child Safety Officer/s, executive leadership and eldership, and the relevant authorities and CCVT Safe Places Coordinator where required. Wherever possible, only general details of the concern will be shared and identifying individuals involved will be kept to a minimum. All information related to child safety concern will be securely stored with restricted access.
- **Review.** At the end of the investigation, the lead Child Safety Officer will review the concern and the response process and identify any areas for improvement to programs, policies and procedures to minimise the risk of similar situations occurring in future. A copy of the final report will be sent to the chair of the eldership and senior ministers.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM NOT SATISFIED WITH THE RESPONSE?

If you are not satisfied with Discovery Church's response, you can contact the CCVT Safe Places Coordinator.

APPENDIX 1:

CHILD SAFETY REPORTING FLOWCHART



APPENDIX 2:

CHILD SAFETY CONTACT DETAILS

CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS

Discovery Church	Beck Lambert	(03) 9760 8055	beck.lambert@discoverychurch.com.au
Discovery Kids	Kate Boehringer	(03) 9760 8029	kate.boehringer@discoverychurch.com.au
i60 Youth	Tiani Walters	(03) 9760 8017	tiani.walters@discoverychurch.com.au
Neighbourhood & Discovery Community Care	Moriah Weston	(03) 9760 8040	moriah.weston@discoverychurch.com.au

KEY CONTACTS

Discovery Church Eldership	Chair of the Eldership	(03) 9736 2323 (Church Office)	chairofelders@discoverychurch.com.au
Churches of Christ Vic/Tas (CCVT)	CCVT Safe Places Coordinator	(03) 9488 8800	safeplaces@churchesofchrist.org.au

EXTERNAL CONTACTS

Police	Triple Zero	000	
	Knox SOCIT	(03) 9881 7939	Other SOCIT teams: https://www.police.vic.gov.au/sexual-offences-and-child-abuse-investigation-teams
	Mt Evelyn Police Station	(03) 9736 2473	Other police stations: https://www.police.vic.gov.au/location
Child Protection (DHHS)	After Hours Emergency Service	13 12 78	
	East Division Intake	1300 360 391	Other divisions: https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts
	Yarra Ranges Child FIRST/The Orange Door	1300 369 146	Other regions: https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams
Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)	CCYP	1300 782 978	Making a report: https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/notify-and-update/

APPENDIX 3:

CHILD SAFETY REPORT FORM

In accordance with Discovery Church’s Child Safety Policy and Reporting Procedure, all child safety concerns must be reported, which include:

- Any disclosure, allegation, belief or suspicion of child abuse or harm.
- Non-compliance with the Code of Conduct or other child-related misconduct.
- Concerns regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child.

Please note that you do not need to know all the answers or investigate the situation before making a report. You only need to report what you have seen, heard or become aware of.

You can contact a Child Safety Officer if you have any questions or would like help completing this form. Submit the form to them once complete.

CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS

Discovery Church	Beck Lambert	(03) 9760 8055	beck.lambert@discoverychurch.com.au
Discovery Kids	Kate Boehringer	(03) 9760 8029	kate.boehringer@discoverychurch.com.au
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Neighbourhood & Discovery Community Care	Moriah Weston	(03) 9760 8040	moriah.weston@discoverychurch.com.au

SECTION A: YOUR CONCERN

To be completed by you.

YOUR DETAILS

Name:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Address:	
Relationship to Discovery Church (e.g. employee, volunteer):	

CHILD DETAILS

Child’s Name:	
Age:	
Gender:	
Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?	
Is the child from a culturally or linguistically diverse background?	
Does the child have a disability?	
Child’s Parent/Guardian Name(s):	
Child’s Parent/Guardian Contact Details:	

Where is the child currently? Do you believe the child is currently at risk of further harm?	
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INCIDENT DETAILS

What is the nature of your concern?	<input type="checkbox"/> Disclosure by the child <input type="checkbox"/> Observed/suspected by yourself <input type="checkbox"/> Allegation made by someone else: Name: Phone: <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Who has allegedly placed the child or children at risk?	<input type="checkbox"/> Discovery Church employee, leader, volunteer or other representative <input type="checkbox"/> Discovery Church congregation member <input type="checkbox"/> A family member of the child <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Name and other relevant details of the alleged person (contact details, relationship to the child):	
Date(s), time(s) and location(s) of the incident(s):	
Who was responsible for the child at the time of the incident(s)?	
Provide details of the concern. Please include as much detail as possible including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened? • What was the context? • Who was there? • What was said in their own words (by the child, by others, by yourself)? Use additional pages if needed.	

Who, if anyone, has been notified about this situation already? If so, when?	
Do you have any further comments?	

Signature:	
Date:	

Please submit this report to your department's Child Safety Officer or the church wide Child Safety Officer immediately and they will follow the steps outlined in the Child Safety Reporting Procedure.

Situations of child abuse or harm can be quite distressing. Please reach out to a Child Safety Officer if you would like pastoral support.

SECTION B: DEPARTMENT CHILD SAFETY OFFICER REVIEW

To be completed by the department Child Safety Officer, if different from the person who completed Part A.

Name:	
Role:	
After reviewing the incident report, are there any further comments you wish to make?	
What, if any, immediate actions have been taken in regard to this situation?	

Signature:	
Date:	

SECTION C: CHILD SAFETY OFFICER REPORT

To be completed by the lead Child Safety Officer.

Date matter was referred:	
Investigation Include how the investigation was conducted, who was involved, and key dates.	
Findings Include the key findings from the investigation process.	
Actions Include the actions taken and any follow-up actions.	
Lessons Learned Include any strengths or weaknesses in the Child Safety Policy and recommendations for preventing such matters or improving processes in future.	

Report prepared by (Child Safety Officer):	
Signature:	
Date:	

Reviewed by (Chair of Eldership/Senior Minister):	
Signature:	
Date:	