

Anchor Church Sydney

Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy

PREFACE

We worship a God who is love (1 John 4:8), and as recipients of His love, we are called to love one another (John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:7-12).

In fact, we are to love others *in the same way* that God has loved us. Love in Christian community is not a sentiment, but a tangible experience of God's love working its way into our lives. Love is also our witness to the watching world, and the measure of our maturity in faith.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35, NIV)

That's why violence and abuse are an intrusion on our core Christian ethic to love one another. God detests the violent (Psalm 11:5-6, Prov 3:31, Prov 10:11).

Sadly, Domestic Violence and Abuse and intimate partner violence is far too common in the church. A report by the Anglican Church of Australia in [2021] found that the prevalence of intimate partner violence among Anglicans was the same or higher than the wider Australian community¹. While this research is limited to Anglican church goers, we should not automatically assume it is any different in other denominations. These statistics should deeply grieve us and drive us to action.

Therefore, it is essential that Anchor Church Sydney staff, board of operations, elders, and its members develop a growing understanding of Domestic Violence and Abuse and intimate partner violence, and are better equipped to respond when this occurs within the congregation. Churches ought to be safe places, places of refuge, and communities where victims are protected and cared for.

As a city on a hill (Matt 5:14), it is our responsibility to change the narrative, push back the darkness of Domestic Violence and Abuse and lead the way in the broader community. As we as a church embody the love of God, in the way of Jesus, the church can be a beacon of hope and a genuine community of grace.

¹ <https://anglican.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/NAFVP-Top-Line-Results-Report-NCLS-Research.pdf>

1. Introduction

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline the position of Anchor Church Sydney with respect to the issue of Domestic Violence and Abuse and to guide the Lead Pastors, the staff, the Elders and the Board of Operations to act in a way that is best practice when dealing with Domestic Violence and Abuse within Anchor Church Sydney.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all of the churches within the collection of churches that belong to Anchor Church Sydney and any language or conduct that could be considered Domestic Violence and/or Abuse within those churches.

It is acknowledged that Domestic Violence and Abuse manifests in a multitude of forms. The purpose of this policy is **not** to serve as an exhaustive guide which is designed to cover every situation of Domestic Violence and Abuse that may occur within the Anchor Church Sydney or the wider community.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safe Ministry Policy.

Terminology in this Policy

- The term “**Domestic Violence and Abuse**” includes but is not limited to:

Physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse or injury, as well as conduct designed to exert power by restricting access to financial, familial, and cultural resources and limiting social autonomy, sometimes referred to as coercive control. Domestic abuse may also manifest as spiritual abuse by the misuse of Christian doctrine or scriptures.

It may encompass abuse and violence in a domestic setting, including intimate partner violence – but may also include children or other minors living in the same domestic setting or household.

- The term “**Victim**” includes but is not limited to:

a person regardless of age who has been subjected to any form violence or abuse in a domestic setting, regardless of the relationship with the perpetrator of the abuse or violence.

[**Note:** In no way is the choice of the term “victim” over that of “survivor” in this policy intended to disempower the person being subjected to the Domestic Violence or Abuse. Rather the term “victim” in this policy has been chosen given the most likely stage that Anchor Church Sydney will encounter the person/s.

For the sake of clarity, the term “victim” does not indicate powerlessness or in any way reflect they have given any form of consent for the Domestic Violence or Abuse.

When dealing with those coming forward who have been subject to Domestic Violence or Abuse, staff/Elders/Board of Operations should be open to the use of the term “victim” or “survivor” depending on the circumstances and the preferences of the person/s involved.

- The term “**Perpetrator**” includes but is not limited to:

those who are subjecting others to Domestic Violence or Abuse, which may or may not amount to criminal standard.

2. Domestic Violence – Perpetrators in the Congregation/Members

This policy covers all the churches within Anchor Church Sydney regardless of their location.

It is also intended to include those who attend in the congregation or are members of any of the churches who belong to Anchor Church Sydney.

3. Domestic Violence – Staff/Eldership/Board of Operations Perpetrators

Anchor Church Sydney also recognises that Domestic Violence and Abuse may occur within the church itself and even be perpetrated by Staff, Elders and Board of Operations members.

Anchor Church Sydney acknowledges in this situation it will be even more challenging for a Victim to speak out if the Perpetrator is part of staff/eldership/Board of Operations.

Regardless, any form of Domestic Violence or Abuse by a Staff member/Elder/Board of Operations member will not be condoned by Anchor Church Sydney.

4. Acknowledgments

Anchor Church Sydney acknowledges the following:

- a) Domestic Violence and Abuse is wrong in all and any form, regardless of whether it amounts to a criminal standard or not.
- b) Domestic Violence and Abuse comes in a variety of awful forms, none of which are condoned by Anchor Church Sydney.
- c) Domestic Violence and Abuse may have cycles of violence and abuse which form part of a complex matrix of Domestic Violence and Abuse.

5. Myths about Domestic Violence & Abuse

There are many myths which circulate in the community at large and also potentially within the church about Domestic Violence and Abuse.

A few have been listed here in the hope to dispel these within Anchor Church Sydney.

- **MYTH:** Domestic Violence and Abuse is uncommon within the community and doesn't occur in Christian churches.
- **MYTH:** Domestic Violence and Abuse only occurs in low socio-economic communities and families.
- **MYTH:** If victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse were really suffering they could just easily leave.

6. Our Commitment to Standing Against Domestic Violence and Abuse

Domestic and Family violence is violation God's clear and compelling command to love one another. It is a grievous sin. It diminishes the inherent value of individuals who are made in the image of God. The ripple effects of domestic and intimate partner violence are significant and lasting.

It is our commitment to create a safe place by upholding our code of conduct for pastoral workers including regular training, upholding the clear and consistent teaching of scripture against any use of violence in the home, responding seriously and realistically to occurrences of domestic violence, respectfully listening to victims, and ensuring a safety-first approach to care for victims.

7. Upholding of Scripture – Condemning Domestic Violence and Abuse

The scriptures clearly teach the following:

- All people (men, women & children) are created equal in the image of God. This means all people irrespective of gender or age have inherent value, dignity, and worth (Gen 1:27, Ps 8, Ps.139:14)
- God rejects all forms of abuse and scripture firmly and consistently condemns the misappropriation of power, authority, and control (Matt 20:25-28, 1 Pet 5:1-3, Jer 23:1, Ps 11:5, Ex 22:22)
- Covering up violence is wicked (Prov 10:11)
- No reading of the household codes (Eph 5, Col 2, 1 Pet 3) regarding submission in a marriage can be faithfully interpreted to condone the use of violence in the home. Even the most conservative and restrictive reading of such verses allows no room for abusive, domineering, or violent behaviour. To interpret these passages in this manner is not only a gross error but a direct denial of the call to love in found in the very verses in question.
- It is wise and prudent for victims of IPV to leave a relationship in their interest of their safety and the safety of any children. There is no verse that requires a victim of abuse to remain in an abuse relationship.
- Forgiveness is central to the Christian faith, but it does not excuse violence, nor negate the importance of boundaries in a relationship, including separation. Separation in such events is not considered abandoning a marriage.

In our teaching and public statements, Anchor Church Sydney will:

- Clearly teach that Domestic Violence and Abuse is wrong, and that the Bible should never be interpreted to justify or excuse any form of violence or abuse.
- Clearly teach that the Bible does not condone Domestic Violence and Abuse and should not be interpreted to demand a spouse tolerate or submit to Domestic Violence or Abuse.
- Raise awareness of domestic violence agencies, support services, crisis accommodation, resources and expertise.

8. Anchor Church Sydney Position - Safety First

- a) **Safety First** – Ensure that those who have experienced Domestic Violence and Abuse can find safety and informed help as a first priority, and can continue to stay safe.
- b) **Take it Seriously** – Ensure that any disclosures of Domestic Violence or Abuse are taken seriously and not dismissed.
- c) **Get help from outside authorities** – Work with the appropriate statutory authorities during an investigation into Domestic Violence and Abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.
- d) **Keep it confidential** – Respect the need for confidentiality within the bounds of good Safe Ministry practice, noting that reporting requirements exist where there is an immediate danger, where a child is at risk of serious harm or where the matter involves a clergy person or church worker as an alleged perpetrator.
- e) **Challenge with Care** – Carefully challenge inappropriate behaviour, but only in a way that does not place any individual, especially a Victim, at increased risk.

9. Support for Perpetrators

Anchor Church Sydney will need to consider on a case by case basis what support for a Perpetrator can be offered and this may take different forms depending on the stage and circumstances of Domestic Violence and Abuse.

Any form of support for a Perpetrator should clearly reflect the position that Anchor Church Sydney has regarding Domestic Violence and Abuse as expressed in this policy and take into consideration the views of the Victim/s.

Anchor Church Sydney realises that there may be a multitude of factors which lead to circumstances of Domestic Violence and Abuse including issues such as substance abuse and mental health concerns. Nonetheless, Anchor Church Sydney acknowledges that Domestic Violence and Abuse is never justified.

[**Note:** Anchor Church Sydney will also need to consider carefully that any support for the Perpetrator and contact with the victim is not in breach of any Domestic Violence Order which has been taken out for the protection of the victim with authorities].

10. Staff Training

Anchor Church Sydney considers Domestic Violence and Abuse to be a very serious issue.

Accordingly, all Elders and Anchor Church staff are required to undertake training in relation to Domestic Violence and Abuse within 6 months of appointment or employment within Anchor Church Sydney.

Lead Pastors for all churches of Anchor Church Sydney have the responsibility for reviewing employments and appointments and ensuring that this training occurs. A record of this training will also be held by Anchor Church Sydney.

The training for Anchor staff and elders involves the following:

- Course through Ridley College called “Responding to Domestic Violence”. This is an online course which will take about up to 10 hours to complete. On completion the participant must send the Lead Pastor evidence of the completion which will be saved to the records of Anchor Church Sydney.

11. Location & Publication of this Policy

This policy will be made publicly available on our website www.anchorchurch.com.au It will also be available to staff, elders and board of operations members via the appropriate online storage mechanisms (Drive, Dropbox etc).

12. Review of this Policy

This policy is to be reviewed every 12 months to ensure that it remains accurate and up to date.

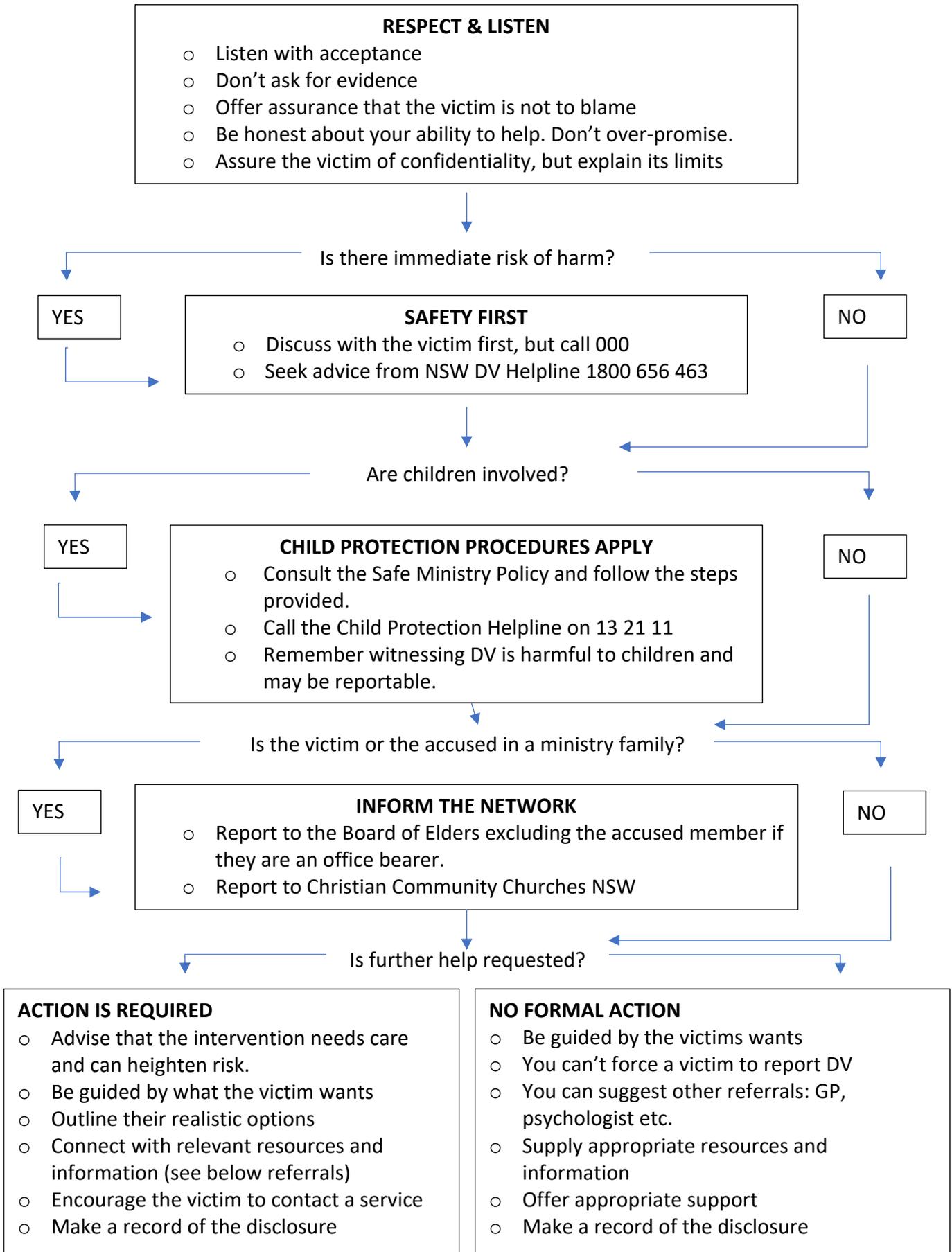
Each version of the Policy is to be kept within the records of Anchor Church Sydney.

13. Self Care for Staff/Elders/Board of Operations

Anchor Church is committed to supporting its staff and elders and will, as needed, pay for professional supervision and/or counselling because of their pastoral care and involvement in cases of domestic and family violence.

14. Domestic Violence – Procedure Flow Chart

If a person discloses domestic abuse:



Annexure A – Domestic Violence and Abuse Resources

- **1800 RESPECT** (national 24/7) on 1800 737 732
<https://www.1800respect.org.au/>
[Professional telephone and online counselling service]
- **DV Line (in NSW 24/7)** on 1800 65 64 63 (This is a government website)
<http://www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/get-help>
[For information, help, and referrals to support services near you]
The service provides:
 - telephone crisis counselling and intervention
 - assessment and safety planning information
 - advocacy
 - referral to domestic violence specific and generalist support services, including crisis accommodation for women and children
- **NSW Link2Home** Crisis Accommodation and Referrals - 1800 152 152
- **Relationships Australia** 1300 364 277
[Support groups and counselling on relationships, and for abusive and abused partners].
- **St Vincent's Community Health DV Counselling** (02) 8382 1988
- **Wesley Mission Credit Line** 1800 808 488 - 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri
[Financial advice and referral]
- **NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre** 1800 656 463
- **Women's Legal Service - Statewide** 1800 801 501
<https://www.wlsnsw.org.au/>
[legal centre providing women across NSW with a range of free legal services.]
Women's Legal Advice Line - Tues 1:30pm - 4:30pm and Thurs 9:30am - 12:30pm
Phone: (02) 8745 6988 or Free call: 1800 801 501
- **LEGAL AID**
 - Family Advocacy and Support Service - 02 9219 6300.
[Can help if you are affected by family violence and have a family law issue].
- **Law ACCESS NSW 1300 888 529**
[Provides free legal advice, assistance, referral and representation for women on family law, domestic violence and sexual assault. Also provides help with applying for legal aid]

POLICY REVIEWED BY:	DATE REVIEWED:	NEXT REVIEW:
BOARD OF ELDERS (BOE)	THURSDAY OCT 27, 2022	OCTOBER 2023
BOARD OF OPERATIONS (BOO)	THURSDAY NOV 17, 2022	NOVEMBER 2023