**Child**

**Protection**

**Procedures**

**Manual**

**Version 2.0**

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Table of Contents

[1. About this document 3](#_Toc84532940)

[1.1 Church 3](#_Toc84532941)

[1.2 Document title 3](#_Toc84532942)

[1.3 Policy document management 3](#_Toc84532943)

[1.4 Version 3](#_Toc84532944)

[2. About this procedures manual 4](#_Toc84532945)

[2.1 Purpose Statement 4](#_Toc84532946)

[2.2 Administration 4](#_Toc84532947)

[2.3 Scope and application 4](#_Toc84532948)

[2.4 Context and background 4](#_Toc84532949)

[2.5 Related policies and procedures 4](#_Toc84532950)

[2.6 Relevant legislation 5](#_Toc84532951)

[3. Prevention of Child Abuse 6](#_Toc84532952)

[3.1 General policy principles 6](#_Toc84532953)

[3.2 Selection of personnel 6](#_Toc84532954)

[3.3 Training 6](#_Toc84532955)

[3.4 Exposure to risk 6](#_Toc84532956)

[4. Recognition of child abuse 7](#_Toc84532957)

[4.1 General policy principles 7](#_Toc84532958)

[4.2 Identifying potential abuse 7](#_Toc84532959)

[5. Responding to child abuse 8](#_Toc84532960)

[5.1 General policy principles 8](#_Toc84532961)8

[5.2 Initial reporting 8](#_Toc84532962)

[5.3 Actions of the Reporting Officer 8](#_Toc84532963)

[5.4 Privacy 9](#_Toc84532964)

[5.5 Managing abuse or reported abuse 9](#_Toc84532965)

[5.6 Pastoral support 9](#_Toc84532966)

[5.7 Media 10](#_Toc84532967)

[5.8 Monitoring 10](#_Toc84532968)

[6. Definition of terms 11](#_Toc84532969)

[APPENDIX 1: GUIDANCE IN RECOGNISING CHILD ABUSE 13](#_Toc84532970)

[A1.1 General observations 13](#_Toc84532971)

[A1.2 Indicators of abuse 13](#_Toc84532972)

[A1.3 Sexual abuse indicators 14](#_Toc84532973)

[A1.4 Emotional abuse indicators 14](#_Toc84532974)

[A1.5 Physical abuse indicators 15](#_Toc84532975)

[A1.6 Family violence indicators 16](#_Toc84532976)

[A1.7 Neglect indicators 16](#_Toc84532977)

[APPENDIX 2: GUIDANCE IN RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE 18](#_Toc84532978)

[A2.1 General observations 18](#_Toc84532979)

[A2.2 Initial response 18](#_Toc84532980)

[A2.3 Initial reporting 18](#_Toc84532981)

[A2.4 Recording 18](#_Toc84532982)

[A2.5 Support 19](#_Toc84532983)

# About This Document

## Church

Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

## Document Title

 Child Protection Procedures Manual

## Policy Document Management

* + 1. This document was prepared by a committee appointed by the 2020 General Assembly of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand as a model to be adopted by member Churches.
		2. The Content Manager for this document is the Secretary of the Administration & Finance Committee of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
		3. This document is be reviewed from time to time and updated to ensure it incorporates changes that may have been made to the GPCNZ Book of Church Order, relevant legislation, related policies, procedures, manuals and considering operational experience.

## Version

* + 1. Revision 1.0 20 September 2021
		As a draft for circulation to churches for interim use and for comment pending adoption by GPCNZ.
		2. This revision of the document was approved by resolution of the Administration & Finance Committee at a meeting held on: …………………………….

# About This Procedures Manual

## Purpose Statement

* + 1. The purpose of this manual is to provide guidance on the practical steps to be taken to implement the Child Protection Policy.
		2. This manual provides the Church leadership with consistent guidelines for:
1. The selection of personnel for roles involving work with children and young persons,
2. The prevention of child and young persons abuse and neglect,
3. Recognising signs that may indicate the occurrence of child or young persons abuse, and
4. Responding to concerns about the wellbeing of a child or young person who may be at risk.

## Administration

* + 1. This procedures manual is adopted and owned by the Session.
		2. The Session will delegate operational, administration and training responsibilities to the Child Protection Officer appointed by Session, being a person suitably qualified and experienced to manage child protection policy and procedures.
		3. The Session may appoint a suitably qualified Child Protection Committee to support the Child Protection Officer.
		4. Where there are several smaller churches in the same locality a Child Protection Officer may be appointed by agreement to act for all these churches.

## Scope and Application

* + 1. These procedures apply to all staff and to all regular attenders, regardless of whether they are Members of the Church, and whether they are employed, stipendiary, or on contract.
		2. These procedures apply to all volunteers, whether permanent or temporary.
		3. These procedures cover all children and young persons who are attending the Church or a church event or programme that is organised under the authority of the Church.
		4. These procedures extend to include all children and young people whose parent or caregiver is not a Member of the Church.

## Context and Background

* + 1. This Child Protection Procedures Manual was developed by a committee appointed by resolution of the 2020 General Assembly of the GPCNZ as a model to be adopted by member Churches.
		2. It is intended that this Procedures Manual, or a similar adaptation, is adopted by the Session of each member Church of GPCNZ.

## Related Policies and Procedures

* + 1. This Child Protection Procedures Manual is to be read and understood in conjunction with the following related policy and guidance documents.
		2. Related Policies:
1. Child Protection Policy
	* 1. Related Procedures:
2. Recruitment and Screening Procedures Manual

## Relevant Legislation

1. Care of Children Act 2004
2. Children’s Act 2014
3. Children’s (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children’s Workers) Regulations 2015
4. Crimes Act 1961
5. Education and Training Act 2020
6. Employment Relations Act 2000
7. Family Violence Act 2018
8. Human Rights Act 1993
9. Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
10. Privacy Act 2020
11. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCOROC)

# Prevention of Child Abuse

## General Policy Principles

* + 1. To ensure that only suitable persons are engaged in roles involving work with children and young people.
		2. To provide resources, training, guidance, and support for all persons who work with children and young people under the auspices of the Church.
		3. To ensure staff and volunteers who work with children and young people are aware of their duty of care and have been instructed in and understood the Child Protection Policy and the Child Protection Procedures Manual.

## Selection of Personnel

* + 1. Session shall ordinarily vet all volunteers prior to them working with children and/or young persons both by interview and through the New Zealand Police Vetting Service and thereafter at least every five years.
		2. All proposed appointments (staff & volunteers) will be interviewed by no less than two members approved by Session.
		3. For details of the procedures relating to the recruitment, screening, and vetting of staff and volunteers refer to the Recruitment and Screening Procedures Manual.

## Training

* + 1. Training resources, including copies of the Child Protection Policy and this Child Protection Procedures Manual, must be readily available to staff and volunteers so that they can conduct their roles in accordance with Church policies and procedures.
		2. Staff and Volunteers must be made aware of their active involvement in protecting children and young people from harm and humiliation, and their duty of care when working with children and young people.
		3. Any person wanting to work with children and young people must confirm that they have read and understand the Child Protection Policy and this Child Protection Procedures Manual prior to them working with children and young people.
		4. Where appropriate the Church will consult with suitably qualified and experienced specialists who are in harmony with the church ethos and teaching for assistance with training and guidance.

## Exposure to Risk

* + 1. No person shall be put in a position beyond that for which they are trained and sufficiently experienced to manage.
		2. Staff and volunteers must not be placed in situations that render them vulnerable.
		3. Staff and volunteers shall ordinarily not be placed in situations where they are alone with a child or young person in a closed setting.
		4. Any young person working with children or young people must be always under the supervision of an adult.
		5. Staff and volunteers must not develop or cultivate a sexual or grooming relationship with a child or young person.

# Recognition of Child Abuse

## General Policy Principles

* + 1. To provide specific guidance for the identification of potential child or young person abuse and neglect.
		2. For the purposes of identifying abuse, child abuse refers to the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill- treatment, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person. (S2 Oranga Tamariki Act 1989).

## Identifying Potential Abuse

* + 1. Sexual Abuse
			1. Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative – rape, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving a child or young person to look at pornography such as sexual images, sexual activities, and sexual behaviours.
		2. Emotional Abuse
			1. The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or young person to cause severe and persistent adverse effect on the child’s emotional development.
			2. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting, bullying, or terrorising a child or young person.
			3. It may also include age inappropriate or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children or young people.
			4. It also includes seeing or hearing about the ill treatment of others.
			5. It may also include discrimination on the grounds of cultural practices, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation (subject to exemptions under the Human Rights Act 1993).
			6. For the sake of clarity ‘emotional abuse’ does not include the presentation of the Gospel as contained in the Bible with age-appropriate sensitivity and as taught by the Church in the past.
		3. Physical Abuse
			1. A non-accidental act on a child or young person that results in physical harm.
			2. This includes, but is not limited to, bullying, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or young person.
			3. Physical abuse also involves fabrication or inducing of illness.
			4. For the sake of clarity, ‘physical abuse’ does not include reasonable force by way of disciplinary actions permitted and/or acknowledged in the Bible and as taught by the Church in the past.
		4. Family Violence
			1. This can take many forms and includes not only acts of physical violence, but also intimidating behaviour such as threatening to harm people, pets, or property.
			2. Children and young people are always affected either emotionally or physically where there is family violence, even if they are not personally injured or physically present.
			3. 2
			4. A legal definition of family violence is provided in S9 of the Family Violence Act 2018.
		5. Neglect
			1. The persistent failure to meet a child or young person’s basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.

# Responding to Child Abuse

## General Policy Principles

* + 1. To provide guidance for the appropriate actions to be taken in response to indications of potential child or young person abuse and neglect.
		2. To support the roles of the Police and Oranga Tamariki in the investigation of suspected abuse or neglect.

## Initial Reporting

* + 1. As reporting of suspected abuse is a sensitive process that may have far-reaching consequences, it should be confined to the least number of people. It should not compromise the position of the Pastor, who is or might become involved in pastoral counselling, or any Elder.
		2. In the event of an allegation, suspicion, or confession of child or young person abuse, members and volunteers shall promptly at the first opportunity upon becoming aware, report all allegations, suspicions, and confessions of child or young person abuse to a Reporting Officer, ordinarily to the Child Protection Officer.
		3. If the Child Protection Officer is not available, or may be compromised by the circumstances, the matter should instead be reported to the Session Clerk. If the Session Clerk is not available, or may be compromised by the circumstances, the matter should be reported to the Pastor.
		4. Guidance in recognising the signs that may indicate the occurrence of child or young person abuse is detailed in APPENDIX 1.
		5. Guidance in the procedures to be followed when child or young person abuse is suspected is detailed in APPENDIX 2.

## Actions of the Reporting Officer

* + 1. The Reporting Officer on receiving a report of an alleged, suspected, or confessed abuse will ordinarily report it to the other Reporting Officers or one of them depending on the circumstances.
		2. The Reporting Officers will together make all decisions in consultation with other of them the Session Clerk, Pastor, Moderator (where appropriate) and if relevant, the authorities, about reporting to child protection agencies (Police or Oranga Tamariki) having regard to relevant factors including but not limited to the, safety, emotional stress, and family needs and support of the child or young person.
		3. Reporting Officers are expected to determine when it is appropriate to deal with a serious case of suspected or alleged child or young person abuse internally and when to refer it to an appropriate authority or authorities. Decisions will be based on wise judgement and discretion on when to follow biblical teaching and guidelines and when reporting to authorities is appropriate. Reporting of suspected or alleged child or young person abuse is not mandatory under New Zealand law. However, churches will need to consider the possibility of later criticism if they deal with a case internally without also consulting appropriate authorities or referring it to them.
		4. If there is a serious threat to the sexual safety of the child or young person, then the Reporting Officer should contact Oranga Tamariki or the Police directly. The Police or Oranga Tamariki will require the child or young person’s full name, date of birth, address, and any available details about the alleged incident and the alleged perpetrator. In order to avoid hasty or precipitate action, the Reporting Officer should attempt where possible to secure a peer opinion of the seriousness and urgency from another Reporting Officer before acting.
		5. The Church will maintain a good, cooperative, and appropriate working relationship with the child protection agencies.

## Privacy

* + 1. Information on any abuse or alleged abuse must be handled sensitively and confidentially and shared initially only with the Child Protection Officer or the Session Clerk or the Pastor.
		2. The Reporting Officers in consultation with Session (excluding any member of Session with a material conflict of interest) will determine when to seek advice from Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police.
		3. Reporting Officers may only share information on a restricted “need to know” or “need to be advised” basis.
		4. When collecting personal information about any person, privacy principles must be complied with.

## Managing Abuse or Reported Abuse

* + 1. All allegations, suspicions, or confessions of child or young person abuse will be followed up without unreasonable delay.
		2. A Reporting Officer, ordinarily the Child Protection Officer or Session Clerk, shall maintain and keep confidential detailed records of all allegations, suspicions, or confessions of child or young person abuse for as long as required but thereafter no longer than allowed by law.

## Pastoral support

* + 1. The wellbeing of the offended child or young person shall be treated as crucial and of immediate concern in every case of suspected abuse or neglect whereby actions taken must ensure ongoing privacy, confidentiality, safety, and wellbeing.
		2. The wellbeing of any other child or young person who is in close connection with the alleged perpetrator shall similarly be managed and protected.
		3. Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for the accuser and the family of the accuser.
		4. Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for the accused and the family of the accused.
		5. Session shall ordinarily provide pastoral support for members and volunteers and their families.

## Media

* + 1. Session shall appoint a spokesperson for the media who shall ordinarily be the Session Clerk.
		2. The media spokesperson shall be responsible to Session for the wording and controlled release of any information.

## Monitoring

* + 1. Where there has been an inconclusive court case or formal investigation, Session shall monitor the situation for a time and ordinarily provide pastoral care and accountability in accordance with these guidelines.
		2. Where there has been a false allegation, Session shall deal with the accuser in a supportive and pastoral manner with disciplinary action if necessary, with all due diligence (BCO 31- 8 & 9).

# Definition of Terms

***The definitions contained in this policy and the related procedure guidelines are subject to and apply insofar as they are not inconsistent with biblical teaching.***

**Adult** means a person who has attained the age of 18 years.

**BCO** means The Book of Church Order of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

**Child** or **Children** means those under the age of 14 years.

**Child abuse** means the harming, whether physically, emotionally, or sexually, the ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person. For the sake of clarity Child Abuse excludes reasonable instruction and discipline by parents or their proxies. And excludes the teaching of the Gospel as contained in the Bible with age-appropriate sensitivity, as carried out and taught by the Church in the past.

**Child protection** means those activities carried out to ensure that children and young people are safe in cases where there is risk of or suspected abuse or neglect.

**Child Protection Officer** means a designated person responsible, under delegated authority from Session, for administering the Child Protection Policy and associated Child Protection Procedures, including the provision of advice and support where there is concern about a child or a request for advice about the Child Protection Policy and Child Protection Procedures.

**Church** means the Church of GPCNZ that has adopted this policy.

**Disclosure** means information given to a staff member or volunteer by the child, parent, caregiver or third party in relation to abuse or neglect.

**GPCNZ** means the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

**Grooming** means the deliberate action of an adult to befriend a child or young person and, having established an emotional connection with him or her in a manner inappropriate for the relationship. This includes intentionally arranging to meet with the young person with the aim of taking an action that would be an offence under the Crimes Act 1961 as detailed in Section 131B of that Act.

**Member** means current communing members of the Church. It also means all baptised members who though adults in age may not yet be communing members.

**Oranga Tamariki** means the Ministry for Children, the statutory agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing a statutory response when children or young people are found to need protection.

**Police** means the New Zealand Police, the statutory agency responsible for the safety of all New Zealanders, and for responding to situations where there is immediate danger.

**Policy/ Child Protection Policy mean** the Child Protection Policy of GPCNZ that references to this Child Protection Procedures Manual.

**Reporting Officer** means the responsible person who first receives a report of actual or suspected abuse. The Reporting Officer will ordinarily be the Child Protection Officer, but if the Child Protection Officer is not available or may be compromised by the circumstances the matter should instead be reported to the Session Clerk. If the Session Clerk is not available, or may be compromised, the matter should be reported to the Pastor. In the latter instances the Session Clerk or the Pastor would be regarded as the Reporting Officer for that case.

**Session** means the Session of the Church, or the body appointed by Presbytery to function as a Session.

**Staff** means all paid employees of the Church, including those in stipendiary positions.

**Volunteer** means a member, regular attender, staff, non-member, or young person participating in any activities of the Church involving children or young people, subject to reasonable exception.

**Young person/ Young people** mean those of or over the age of 14 years but under 18 years.

**Note**

Where there may be any conflict between the GPCNZ Book of Church Order and the Child Protection Policy and its associated manuals, then the Book of Order shall have primacy.

# APPENDIX 1: Guidance in Recognising Child Abuse

## A1.1 General Observations

1. Children do not generally have the power to stop abuse. They rely on others to help them.
2. Child abuse can involve ongoing, repeated, or persistent abuse, or it may arise from a single incident.
3. Child abuse can occur in many different settings and forms and may come to attention in several ways. These can include, but are not limited to:
* Direct or indirect disclosure by the child or someone known to the child.
* Suspicions of abuse by those involved with the child.
* Allegations, direct observations, of signs displayed in the child’s physical or emotional behaviour.
* Direct witnessing of abuse.

## A1.2 Indicators of Abuse

1. The indicators for child abuse and neglect fall into three general categories:
* **Physical indicators:** Injuries to a child that are severe, occur in a pattern or occur frequently. These injuries range from bruises, to broken bones, to burns or unusual lacerations and are often unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given.
* **Behavioural indicators:** The child’s actions, attitudes, and emotions can indicate the possibility of abuse or neglect. Behavioural indicators alone are much less reliable than physical indicators, as a child’s behaviour may be the result of a variety of other problems or conditions. When observing changes in behaviour, look for the frequency and pattern of the new behaviour, as well as a child’s age and stage of development. For example, it is normal for younger children to be wary of adults, as they may have been taught not to talk to strangers. Look for a combination of physical and behavioural indicators.
* **Caregiver indicators:** Caregivers who abuse, neglect, or exploit children are either unable or unwilling to provide care and protection in an appropriate way. Those who are unable to provide care and protection may be physically unable due to their own medical or health condition. They may be overly stressed, tired, working or caring for children under the influence of drugs or alcohol which limits their abilities. Caregivers who are unwilling to provide children with the appropriate level of care and protection are more aware that what they are doing is wrong but continue to act in that way. These caregivers may not view the child as someone who has feelings and emotions and often have the need to control others or have displaced aggression towards weaker persons.
1. The indicators alone do not prove child abuse or neglect. Likewise, the absence of indicators does not exclude the possibility that abuse is occurring. If you have any concerns about the wellbeing of a child, seek advice from your Child Protection Officer.

## A1.3 Sexual Abuse Indicators

1. Physical Indicators:
* Unusual or excessive itching or pain in the genital or anal area.
* Torn, stained or bloody underclothing.
* Bruises, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in genital, vaginal or anal area.
* Blood in urine or stools.
* Sexually transmitted infections.
* Pregnancy.
* Discomfort in sitting or fidgeting as unable to sit comfortably.
1. Behavioural Indicators:
* Age-inappropriate sexual play or language.
* Bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge.
* Refuses to go home, or to a specific person's home, for no apparent reason.
* Fear of a certain person.
* Depression, anxiety, withdrawal, or aggression.
* Self-destructive behaviour. This can include self-harm, attempted suicide, alcohol, and drug abuse.
* Overly compliant.
* Extreme attention seeking behaviours or extreme inhibition.
* Dresses inappropriately to hide bruising or injuries.
* Eating disorders.
* Compulsive behaviours.
1. Caregiver Indicators:
* May be unusually over-protective of the child.
* Accuses the child of being sexually provocative.
* Misuses alcohol or drugs.
* Invades the child’s privacy (e.g. during dressing, in the bathroom).
* May favour the victim over other children.

## A1.4 Emotional Abuse Indicators

1. Physical Indicators:
* Bed wetting or bed soiling with no medical cause.
* Frequent psychosomatic complaints (e.g. headaches, nausea, abdominal pains).
* Non-organic failure to thrive.
* Pale or emaciated appearance.
* Prolonged vomiting or diarrhoea.
* Malnutrition.
* Dressed differently to other children in the family.
1. Behavioural Indicators:
* Severe developmental lags without obvious physical cause.
* Depression, anxiety, withdrawal, or aggression.
* Self-destructive behaviour. This can include self-harm, attempted suicide, alcohol, and drug abuse.
* Overly compliant.
* Extreme attention seeking behaviours or extreme inhibitions.
* Running away from home, avoiding attending at school, truancy.
* Nightmares, poor sleeping patterns.
* Anti-social behaviours.
* Lack of self-esteem.
* Obsessive behaviours.
* Eating disorders.
1. Caregiver Indicators:
* Labels the child as inferior or publicly humiliates the child (e.g. name calling).
* Treats the child differently from siblings or peers in ways that suggest dislike for the child.
* Actively refuses to help the child.
* Constantly threatens the child with physical harm or death.
* Locks the child in a closet or room for extended periods of time.
* Teaches or reinforces criminal behaviour.
* Withholds physical and verbal affection.
* Keeps the child at home in role of servant or surrogate parent.
* Has unrealistic expectations of the child.
* Involves the child in adult issues such as separation or disputes over the child’s care.
* Exposes the child to situations of arguing and violence in the home.

## A1.5 Physical Abuse Indicators

1. Physical Indicators:
* Bruises, welts, cuts, and abrasions.
* Burns - small circular burns, immersion burns, rope burns etc.
* Fractures and dislocations - skull, facial bones, spinal fractures etc.
* Multiple fractures at different stages of healing.
* Fractures in young children.
1. Behavioural Indicators:
* Inconsistent or vague explanations regarding injuries.
* Wary of adults or a particular person.
* Vacant stare or frozen watchfulness.
* Cringing or flinching if touched unexpectedly.
* May be extremely compliant and eager to please.
* Dresses inappropriately to hide bruising or injuries.
* Runs away from home or is afraid to go home.
* May regress (e.g. bedwetting).
* May indicate general sadness.
* Could have vision or hearing delay.
* Is violent to other children, or to animals.
1. Caregiver Indicators
* Inconsistent or vague explanations regarding injuries.
* May appear unconcerned about the child’s wellbeing.
* May state the child is prone to injuries or lies about how they occur.
* Delays in seeking medical attention.
* May take the child to multiple medical appointments and seek medical treatment without an obvious need.

## A1.6 Family Violence Indicators

1. Indicators in the child or young person:
* Physical injuries consistent with the indicators of physical abuse.
* Absenteeism from school.
* Bullying or aggressive behaviour.
* Complaints of headaches or stomach aches with no apparent medical reason.
* Talking about or describing violent behaviours.
1. Indicators in the Victim:
* Physical Injuries including - bruising to chest and abdomen, injuries during pregnancy.
* Depression and/or anxiety.
* Inconsistent explanations for injuries.
* Fearful.
* Submissive.
1. Indicators in the Offender:
* Isolates and controls partner and children.
* Threatens, criticises, intimidates, uses aggressive and physical abuse towards partner and children.
* Minimises and denies own behaviour or blames victim for the perpetrator’s own behaviour.

## A1.7 Neglect Indicators

1. Physical Indicators:
* Dressed inappropriately for the season or the weather.
* Often extremely dirty and unwashed.
* Severe nappy rash or other persistent skin disorders.
* Inadequately supervised or left unattended frequently or for lengthy periods.
* May be left in the care of an inappropriate adult.
* Does not receive adequate medical or dental care.
* Malnourished - this can be both underweight and overweight.
* Lacks adequate shelter.
* Non-organic failure to thrive.
1. Behavioural Indicators:
* Severe developmental lags without an obvious physical cause.
* Lack of attachment to parents/caregivers.
* Indiscriminate attachment to other adults.
* Poor school attendance and performance.
* Demanding of affection and attention.
* Engages in risk taking behaviour such as drug and alcohol abuse.
* May steal food.
* Poor social skills.
* No understanding of basic hygiene.
1. Caregiver Indicators:
* Puts own needs ahead of those of the child.
* Fails to provide for the child’s basic needs.
* Demonstrates little or no interest in the child’s life; does not attend school activities, social events.
* Leaves the child alone or inappropriately supervised.
* Drug and alcohol use.
* Depression.

# APPENDIX 2: Guidance in Responding to Suspected Child Abuse

## A2.1 General Observations

1. Any person who has reasonable suspicion that child abuse has occurred is to report the alleged abuse to the Child Protection Officer following the procedure below. Reasonable suspicion means a situation where reasonable people have sufficient general knowledge about appropriate and inappropriate interactions to be suspicious about a particular activity or incident.

## A2.2 Initial Response

1. If a child reveals abuse to an adult:
* Stay calm and listen carefully.
* Ask open-ended questions – do not ask leading questions.
* Do not rush the conversation – give the child time to say what they want in their own words.
* Be patient, and do not be worried by the child’s emotions.
* Reassure them that they were right to tell, and that they are not to be blamed.
* Explain that you may have to pass on what the child has told you as soon as you are aware that the child is making a disclosure.
* Give an age-appropriate explanation to the child of what the child can expect to happen next.
* Do not write things down during the conversation. See A2.4 below.
* Do not re-interview the child, promise to keep secrets, or ask the child to show you any bruises or marks. Any further investigation will be conducted by a trained professional.
* If there is immediate concern for the safety of the child then contact Oranga Tamariki (0508 326 459) or the Police (111) immediately. Further contact information is available on the website: <https://orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/contact-us/>
1. If a person suspects that abuse is occurring, having noted relevant signs as detailed in APPENDIX A1, the matter must be immediately reported to the Child Protection Officer.

## A2.3 Initial Reporting

1. Report the concern immediately to the Child Protection Officer.
2. If the Child Protection Officer is not available, or may be compromised by the circumstances, the matter should instead be reported to the Session Clerk. If the Session Clerk is not available, or may be compromised by the circumstances, the matter should be reported to the Pastor.

## A2.4 Recording

1. After the initial conversation, the adult should document the details of the conversation. The write-up should include:
* Information about the child, the alleged incident, and the alleged perpetrator.
* Any details from the conversation including the nature and frequency of the abuse.
* Bruises or marks that are visible on the child.
* Any emotions displayed during the conversation.
* The date and time of the report.

## A2.5 Support

1. The Church provides pastoral support for anyone involved in a child abuse incident. It is recognised that responding to a child abuse issue can be very stressful. Therefore:
* Seek support for yourself.
* Do not let doubts, fears or concerns become a burden.
* Do not be quick to suspect the child of lying. It is possible that some adults may be lying to stop abuse from being brought out into the open.
* Do not discuss the situation with the alleged perpetrator or anyone else, other than the Child Protection Officer, as this could significantly compromise any further investigation of the matter.