

WESTCITY CHURCH

POLICY DOCUMENTATION

BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY

The Goal

The purpose of the Bullying & Harassment Policy, as part of the broader Westcity Healthy Church Framework, is to ensure that the Westcity community volunteers are empowered in a way that is congruent with Westcity's mission and values, whilst adhering to relevant legislation and Churches of Christ WA guidelines.

The Vision

Westcity Church, within the Healthy Church Framework seeks to be an authentic, healthy church community that supports the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming individuals to become 'More like Jesus'. The Westcity community aspires to be a safe space where individuals in all stages of faith are able to rest, heal, grow, to recognize and practice their God given gifts and talents to the benefit of the wider community.

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WESTCITY Church is committed to providing all people within the Westcity community with a learning and working environment which is safe, supportive and caring and which is free of harassment, bullying and discrimination of any kind. Accordingly, harassment, bullying and discrimination will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

The Church expects everyone who is part of the Church community to honour the Church's commitment in this Policy and to work with the Church in achieving a safe learning and working environment. This Policy applies to behaviour, even if it occurs off church premises and outside of church hours where, in the Westcity Board and Lead Pastor's reasonable opinion, there is a connection between one or more of those involved and the Church.

1. Introduction

This policy accords with the Vision, Mission and Values of Westcity Church. The particular elements of the Vision, Mission and Values of the church from which this policy flows are:

Vision: Love God, Love People, Follow Jesus

Mission: His Vision, Our Mission.

God has a vision for this world; He always has. That it be good, that creation be free from the ravages of sin and violence that have resulted from our rebellion. That God is working through a people united in Jesus to show the world what it will fully become one day.

Key Questions:

- *Does this action benefit everyone?*
- *Am I setting a good example?*

Actions that work together with love, honour and respect for one another:

- *Does this action unify?*
- *Is this safe for myself and others?*
- *Is it considerate of the happiness and comfort of others?*
- *Is it honourable, respectful and dignified?*
- *Does this action reflect well on my nation, church, family and myself?*

2. Definitions

Bullying means repeated intimidation, over time, of a physical, verbal or psychological nature including cyber bullying of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons.

Examples include:

- hiding, damaging, destroying or stealing work or belongings;
- name calling, putting a person down, teasing, pulling faces, using abusive language;
- hitting, pushing, pinching or threatening physically;
- deliberately excluding a person from the group.

NB: Conflict or fights between individuals on an equal footing or single incidents are not normally bullying.

Discrimination refers to any behaviour or practice which reflects an assumption of superiority of one group over another and is behaviour which disadvantages people on the basis of their real or perceived membership of a particular group.

Examples include doing any of the following on account of a person's gender, religion, intellectual or physical ability, culture, race or background:

- asking discriminatory questions;
- making offensive comments or gestures, telling offensive jokes or showing offensive material;
- calling a person names;
- deliberately excluding a person.

Harassment involves physical, verbal or psychological behaviour which makes another person feel embarrassed, offended, upset, devalued, degraded, afraid, frustrated or angry. It is unwelcome, unreciprocated, uninvited and usually repeated, and may be based on misunderstanding or be a deliberate act based on a subjective perspective.

Examples include:

- includes bullying and sexual harassment;
- insulting, demeaning, humiliating, offensive, vilifying or intimidatory behaviour or behaviour which incites hatred of others.

Sexual harassment occurs if a person makes an unwelcome sexual advance or an unwelcome request for sexual favours or engages in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature and a reasonable person in the circumstances would have anticipated the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Examples include:

- unwelcome touching or brushing against a person;
- whistling, gesturing or making comments that are sexually explicit and offensive;
- showing material of a sexual nature;
- making comments about a person's sexuality;
- unwelcome conversations, obscene language or jokes of a sexual nature;
- sexual exhibitionism;
- mature persons expressing sexual feelings for an underage young person;
- underage young person expressing sexual feelings for a mature person; and
- deliberate exposure to sexual behaviour of others.

NB: Mature person refers to person 18 and above; under-age person refers to person under 16 years.

3. Creating a Safe community and Working Environment

The Church must develop strategies to create a safe learning and working environment and to reduce as much as possible the incidence of harassment, bullying and discrimination within the Church.

To do this:

1. Staff, volunteers and where possible, church members, must become familiar with these strategies.
2. All allegations of harassment, bullying and discrimination must be taken seriously.
3. The strategies developed by the Church must be monitored continuously and reviewed regularly.
4. The Church must provide professional development to meet the needs of the staff in implementing this Policy.
5. The Lead Pastor/Executive Pastor must promote this Policy within the Church, with particular regard to the professional development needs of staff; and monitor the strategies to counter harassment, bullying and discrimination.
6. Staff must model and promote appropriate behaviour, be aware of the legislative requirements relating to harassment, bullying and discrimination; and ensure that claims of harassment, bullying and discrimination are speedily and constructively addressed according to this Policy and the strategies developed under it.
7. Church members must respect the rights of others to be free from harassment, bullying and discrimination; behave as responsible digital citizens; behave as responsible bystanders; and be aware of and use the appropriate procedures for reporting incidents of harassment, bullying or discrimination.

4. Reporting Obligations

1. Any member of staff to whom an allegation of harassment, bullying or discrimination is made or who observes or is subjected to any form of harassment, bullying or discrimination in the course of their employment must report this to the Executive Leader.
2. Any community member who observes any form of harassment, bullying or discrimination involving people in the Church community or who is subjected to any form of harassment, bullying or discrimination wherever it occurs is strongly encouraged to report this to the Executive Leader or another member of staff.
3. If the allegation of harassment, bullying or discrimination is against the Executive Leader, the report should be to the Chairman of the Board who must then comply with the obligations under this policy that would otherwise fall upon the Executive Leader.
4. The Executive Leader must set up structures which make it easy for people to report harassment, bullying or discrimination. The Executive Leader must also educate the Church community about these structures and actively encourage the Church community to make use of them.
5. The Executive Leader must ensure that no-one reporting harassment, bullying or discrimination is disadvantaged as a result.

5. Investigation

This section of the Policy applies unless an investigation is being carried out by the Police, Community Services, the Ombudsman or some other state or federal authority.

The Executive Leader must investigate all reports of harassment, bullying or discrimination in a way which affords procedural fairness to the person who is the subject of the allegation ("the subject"). This means that, before completing an investigation of an allegation of harassment, bullying or discrimination, the Executive Leader must inform the subject of the substance of the allegation against them and provide them with a reasonable opportunity to put their case forward (if required by the subject, with the assistance of a support person of the subject's choice). Normally, the Executive Leader is to decide the timing and the particular form this will take, ensuring the investigation is not compromised.

It also means that the Executive Leader must:

1. Act fairly and without bias;
2. Conduct an investigation without undue delay;
3. Ensure the case is not investigated or determined by someone with a conflict of interest;
4. Ensure the outcome is supported by evidence;
5. Take steps to maintain confidentiality for the sake of all parties involved in the investigation.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Executive Leader may:

1. If the breach is minor, resulting from a misunderstanding of how certain words or behaviour were understood, require from the subject:
 - a. an apology;
 - b. and/or a commitment not to repeat the offence
2. If it is more serious, require from the subject:
 - a. an undertaking to attend counselling and/or training;
 - b. and/or a written apology;
 - c. and/or a commitment not to offend again.
3. In the most serious case:
 - a. where the subject is a member of staff, suspend or terminate their employment;
 - b. must advise the victim and the subject in writing of the result of the investigation and the action taken.
 - c. If the victim of the harassment, bullying or discrimination is unhappy with the conduct or result of investigation, they may take their complaint to any relevant authority depending on the circumstances.

6. Pastoral Care

The Church must:

1. Where an underage young person is the victim of the alleged harassment, bullying or discrimination, the Executive Leader must as soon as possible advise the young person's parents or caregivers of the nature of the allegations and of the proposed investigation.

2. Make available counsellors to provide counselling and other support as required to those who have been subjected to any form of harassment, bullying or discrimination and, where relevant, their families;
3. Refer people to external agencies able to provide care and support for victims of the particular type of harassment, bullying or discrimination involved;
4. Provide counselling and other support as required to students and staff who have been subjected to allegations of harassment, bullying or discrimination and, where relevant, their families.

7. Publication and Distribution

This Policy must be promoted to the church community and maintained in the following ways:

1. A summary of the policy will be published in the Church's team member handbook.
2. There will be a full review of the policy one per year at a staff development day.
3. This Policy must also be given to all new staff who must, as part of their contract of employment, agree to its terms.
4. This Policy must be given to all members of the Board.

7. Review of Policy

The Executive Leader is to ensure that this policy is regularly monitored and revised in the light of legislative or best practice changes.

In any event, the Board is to review this policy every three years.