

Wantirna Seventh-day Adventist Church

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

Document Control

Revision Number	Implementation Date	Review Date	Description of Changes	Prepared By	Approved By
Version 1	13/8/19	13/8/22		Rosemary Bullen	Wantirna Church Board

Rationale

The Wantirna Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes its duty to provide a safe and positive environment where individual differences and diversity within the Church is respected and accepted. We believe that all individuals have the right to receive respect from others and the right to feel safe and secure.

Bullying is not tolerated at Wantirna Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is our policy that:

- Bullying be managed through a 'whole of church community' approach involving church attendees, leaders, elders, Pastors and parents/carers.
- Bullying response strategies to be tailored to the circumstances of each incident.
- Pastors, Elders, Leaders present as positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture.
- Bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on a three yearly basis.

Aims

The aims of the Bullying Prevention Policy are to:

- Promote a culture of anti-bullying and co-operation.
- Provide a safe and caring environment, and foster respect for others.
- Model non-bullying behaviour in interaction with others, and empower church attendees to resolve incidents in a non-aggressive, non-violent manner.
- Create an environment which is conducive to worship.
- Promote and model Christian principles of respect and love for others.
- Encourage everyone within the church community to be alert to signs and evidence of bullying, and have a responsibility to report it to a Pastor, Elder or Departmental Leader either verbally or in writing by completing the Bullying Incident Form (Appendix A).
- Ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up and that support is given to both victim and perpetrator.
- Seek parental and peer-group support and cooperation at all times.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is the repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person that involves an imbalance of power. It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation, vilification, harassment and damage to property. In any bullying incident there are likely to be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and possible bystanders.

Bullying is when one or more of the following occurs repeatedly:

- **Physical bullying** involves physical actions such as hitting, kicking, punching, pushing, shoving, spitting or obstructing for the purpose of hurting or intimidating someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings and making a person do something they do not want to is also a form of physical bullying.
- **Psychological/Emotional bullying** is an attempt to control by using words or actions which cause psychological/emotional harm. It is often associated with situations of power imbalance. Commonly, the perpetrator does not know that he/she is being abusive. Examples include name calling, accusations, blaming, insults, mimicking, teasing, intimidation, threatening or making fun of someone because of their appearance, actions, physical characteristics or cultural/religious background.
- **Indirect bullying** is when deliberate acts or actions of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.
- **Cyber bullying** is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person using digital technology. Cyber bullying can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones to harass, be defamatory or deliberately exclude someone.

What Bullying is Not:

There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing, are not bullying. These include:

- **Mutual Conflict Situations** which arise where there is disagreement, but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations may progress into a bullying situation.
- **One Off Acts** (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.

Signs of Bullying:

Major behaviour changes in a person may be indicative of the effects of bullying. Such behavioural changes may include:

- Crying at night and having nightmares
- Refusing to talk when asked, "What's wrong?"
- Having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
- An unwillingness or refusal to go to church
- Feeling ill in the mornings
- Becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence
- Beginning to bully siblings, and
- Acting unreasonably.

Parents/carers are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify the Church through a trusted church member immediately (such as a Pastor, Elder, Sabbath School Teacher), if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying. A Bullying Incident Form is available to be completed. (Appendix A)

Bullying Prevention Strategies

Wantirna Seventh-day Adventist Church recognises that the implementation of whole church community prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising incidents of bullying within our church community. The following initiatives form part of our overall bullying prevention strategy and our strategy to create a 'no bullying' culture within the Church:

General

- Establish a culture of inclusion and respect that welcomes everyone.
- Promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between Pastors, volunteers, parents/carers and all church attendees.
- Promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst Pastors, volunteers, church attendees and parents/carers.
- Reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by bystanders, Pastors, volunteers, church attendees and parents/carers are encouraged, and made easy by completing the Bullying Incident Form.
- Records of written reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify persistent bullies and/or victims and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate.
- Responding to bullying in a timely manner.
- Anti-bullying posters may be displayed strategically within the church to promote appropriate behaviour and encourage church attendees to respect individual differences and diversity.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of staff and volunteers are to:

- Be familiar with the Wantirna Seventh-day Adventist Church Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy.
- Model appropriate behaviour at all times.
- Adopt positive departmental management strategies.
- Deal with all reported and observed incidences of bullying as set out in this policy.
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Ensure that any incident of bullying that is observed and reported in writing is recorded appropriately.
- Be vigilant in monitoring persons who have been identified as either persistent bullies or victims.
- Acknowledge the right of parents/carers to speak with a Pastor, Elder or Departmental Leader of their choice if they believe their child is being bullied.
- Practice Matthew 18 principle of resolution and reconciliation as necessary.

The responsibilities of church attendees are to:

- Accept responsibility for their actions.
- Inform the Pastor, Elder or Departmental Leader if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied.
- Help someone who is being bullied.
- Refrain from bullying others.
- Give an honest account of incidents when requested.

The responsibilities of parents/carers are to:

- Watch for signs that their child may be bullied.
- Inform the Pastor, Elder or Departmental Leader if their child is being bullied or they suspect that this is happening.
- Encourage their children to inform them or someone they trust if they are being bullied.
- Report to the Pastor, Elder or leader any bullying they observe at church.
- Model appropriate behaviour when interacting with staff, volunteers and other parents.

Reporting Bullying

Church Attendees and their parents/carers are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying incidents; for fear that it will only make matters worse. A key part of the Wantirna Seventh-day Adventist Church's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well as providing assurance to church attendees who experience bullying (and parents/carers) that:

- Bullying is not tolerated within the Church.
- Their concerns will be taken seriously.
- The Church has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Bullying incidents can be advised to the Church verbally to a Pastor, Elder or Departmental Leader, or by completing the Bullying Incident Form (Appendix A). At least two people will be made aware of the incident.

Responding to Bullying

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and as a consequence each incident needs to be dealt with on its facts.

In all circumstances Wantirna Seventh-day Adventist Church:

- Takes bullying incidents seriously.
- Provides assurance to those involved that all interactions will be kept confidential and only the issues raised will be discussed by persons on a 'need to know' basis.
- Takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the victim, the perpetrator and any bystanders.
- Takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved.
- Maintains records of written reported bullying incidents.
- Will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents.
- Response escalation strategy:
 - The person notified should notify another person (Departmental Leader or Elder) and wherever possible they should attempt to resolve the issue raised.
 - If the bullying incident cannot be resolved, or has occurred more than once, it must be referred to the Head Elder or Pastor. Two people will be appointed to manage the resolution process.
 - Where there is a risk of significant harm to a person, the Pastor and Head Elder must be notified and professional third party advice will be sought.
 - Allegations of criminal conduct must be notified to the Pastor and Head Elder and the matter referred to Victoria Police.

Approaches that may be taken when responding to bullying include:

- The "Method of Shared Concern" Approach (Pikas);
- The "No Blame" Approach (Maines & Robinson).

Sources

The Peninsula School Bullying Prevention & Intervention Policy as cited at:
<https://www.peninsulagrammar.vic.edu.au/all-policies/all-student-policies>

The Edinburgh College Bullying Prevention College as cited at:
<https://www.edinburghcollege.vic.edu.au/our-community/publications-policies/policies/>

Appendix A - BULLYING INCIDENT FORM

1. Your Information

Name

Phone

Email

2. Person Who Has Allegedly Been Bullied

Name

3. Witness Information

Name

Phone

Email

4. Person(s) Against Whom Bullying Has Been Alleged

Name

Name

5. Date of Incident

When did this behaviour start happening? (date)

When was the last time this behaviour happened? (date)

Is it still going on?

6. Other Details *- please circle where applicable*

Did you observe the incident? Yes No

If NO, who reported the incident to you?

What form of bullying took place? Verbal Physical Indirect Cyber
Other (please detail):

How many times has this behaviour occurred?

Where did the incident take place?

Have you tried to resolve the incident? Yes No

6. Other Details - please circle where applicable

If YES, what did you do and what was the outcome?

7. Incident Details. Describe the nature of the incident including details of persons involved and any witnesses.
Include the behaviour you think might be bullying.

8. Declaration: I declare that the information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge:

Name

8. Declaration: *I declare that the information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge:*

Date

Please hand this form to a Departmental Leader, Elder or Pastor.