



CSPN and International Schools: An Interview with Tim McGill

The following Q&A was conducted remotely in January 2018. Tim Shuman, ACSI Regional Director for International Schools interviewed Tim McGill, Superintendent of Morrison Academy. Morrison Academy, an ACSI member school in Taiwan, has been providing education and boarding for the children of missionaries since 1952.

TS: Tim, thank you for spending some time with us. [Child Safety and Protection Network](#) (CSPN) has been around for a while, can you give us a brief background on how CSPN got started and where things are at today?

TM: Child Safety and Protection Network (CSPN) was founded in 2006 by several prominent missionary sending agencies in order to strategically address the issues of child protection within the missions community. In 2015 international Christian schools were formally added to the [Mission Statement](#) in order to enhance and align school and missions child protection systems.

TS: Who does CSPN serve today?

TM: Currently 32 international schools have joined the Network. 56 mission agencies have joined CSPN.

TS: What's CSPN's Vision?

TM: "Safer Together! Strategically and creatively enhancing organizational safeguarding capacities based on shared values and a commitment to global collaboration."

TS: Why did Morrison Academy join CSPN?

TM: Morrison Academy had all the child protection systems required by ACSI. Then in a Board meeting the Chair surprised me by suggesting Morrison join CSPN to better align mission-school child protection protocols and definitions. I reluctantly attended a CSPN conference, assuming CSPN would require the "two-adult-rule"* which would hamstring the boarding and mentoring programs. Soon after the conference, I was confronted with an outbreak of child-to-child inappropriate touching among staff kids. Morrison's existing child abuse definitions and procedures didn't provide any direction, so I turned to the recently acquired CSPN training manual which contained everything we needed to respond effectively and professionally. That convinced me to implement CSPN's comprehensive child safety program. To my pleasant surprise this didn't compromise any of our programs and even raised the trust level with staff, students and their parents.

*Some child-safety organizations require the "two-adult-rule" that stipulates two adults must be present with kids at ALL times with no exceptions. Schools (including boarding programs) with well-established child protection procedures like overlapping safeguards of visibility, accountability and power-balance are able to meet this concept in a way that makes sense in their context.

TS: What is your role with CSPN today?

TM: Three years ago I volunteered to serve on the CSPN Board in the hope of protecting many more children at international Christian schools. Currently there are three other school representatives on the CSPN Board: Nikki Aldum (Mercy Ships Academy), Jesse Newman (NICS), and Tim Thompson (ACSI).

TS: Why are you so personally committed to CSPN? And why are you so passionate about international Christian schools getting CSPN training?

TM: Back in the 1960's, as an MK in Taiwan, I was molested by older boys at a mission conference. I know firsthand the harm that results from inadequate child protection. I also recognize that child abuse is one of the few threats that can end the ministry of a Christian school.

TS: I understand that some things have changed in the CSPN process over the last 3 years. To be honest, some of us didn't feel the process was very "school friendly". Could you please give us an overview of the major changes and how our schools will be encouraged by them?

TM: At the 2015 Annual Meeting the CSPN members realized we were morphing into a compliance watchdog, rather than the original vision of a resource sharing network. As a result, CSPN's proscriptive "Standards" were radically revised into the [Elements of a Child Safety Program](#). Today, instead of the law-enforcement-investigative-type language focused on catching the "perpetrator", CSPN has shifted back to its original holistic child safety focus. This has restored CSPN's collaborative culture and focus on child protection.

TS: How does CSPN stand out among the other protection networks out there?

TM: Other child protection organizations that serve international schools are not based on Biblical values. For example, I attended a [Council of International Schools](#) child protection event and found CSPN resources were more robust and applicable for ACSI member schools. The [Association of International Schools in Africa](#) has produced more child safety resources than the other regional international school associations, but I found more relevant resources within the CSPN. There are lots of well-established US-based Christian service providers, but they are designed for US-based ministry, so I found them of limited value for Morrison Academy.

TS: By the way, ACSI USA recommends [Darkness to Light](#) and its "Stewards of Children" training program to its US member schools.

TS: What does it mean to be a member of CSPN?

TM: [CSPN membership](#) opens the door to professional training programs and networking with other schools that are grappling with the same child protection challenges and accreditation standards. The membership fee is US\$500 per year and the application process is easy for schools that are members of ACSI.

TS: Does coming into alignment with CSPN tie the hands of a school to act in a way that it thinks is appropriate? In other words, shouldn't a school just handle things on its own, does a school really need CSPN?

TM: Six years ago, CSPN was moving towards rigid mandated compliance standards, but that has all been replaced by a voluntary framework of seven "Elements" of a comprehensive child safety program. There's even a concise rubric that schools can use to self-assess progress on each of these elements. I'd be happy to share these resources with any ACSI member school but joining CSPN will open the door to many more professional connections and training services that are designed for international Christian schools.

TS: We have seen announcements about different trainings. Can you briefly describe those to us?

TM: CSPN's flagship training program, Response Team Training (RTT), equips organizations to effectively respond to reports of child harm. I've also learned a lot at the CSPN annual conferences held in Virginia in April and everyone is invited to attend. CSPN is also developing a Comprehensive Child Safety Program "in a box" training program that will be very beneficial for international schools. For any school unable to participate, I've found CSPN member schools eager to share their child safety materials, even with schools that are not members of the Network.

TS: In your opinion, what are the top 3 things every Christian school should have in place to serve its community well in terms of child safety and protection?

TM: Morrison Academy's students and staff have benefited most from the CSPN-recommended:

1. Policy definitions (particularly related to student-to-student inappropriate sexual behavior),

2. Incident reporting process, and
3. Training for team to respond to those reports.

TS: What are the top three mistakes Christian schools tend to make in child safety and protection?

TM: Before joining the Network I didn't realize there were huge holes in Morrison's child protection procedures. For example, there were

1. No child safety training or background checks for custodians or volunteers,
2. No definitions and procedures for responding to child-to-child inappropriate sexual behaviors, and
3. No Code of Conduct for child protection that defined safeguards and professional misconduct.

TS: What would you say to a leader who is handling some sort of child safety crisis right now? Is there any immediate things that CSPN can do to help? Is there anyone that can be called for a consultation?

TM: CSPN doesn't employ crisis management consultants, but within the Network there are several veteran school child safety officers that have offered to advise school administrators or conduct a peer review of your school's child protection procedures. Send an email to mcgillt@mca.org.tw and I'll try to recommend someone in your region.

TS: How can I learn more about CSPN? When and where are the next trainings going to be held?

TM: Visit: www.childsafetyprotectionnetwork.org

Upcoming trainings:

- [Mar 5-8 Response Team Training](#) Korea
- [Mar 20-23 Response Team Training](#) Germany
- [Apr 16-21 USA Conference & RTT](#) Virginia USA
- [Jun 4-8 & Response Team Training](#) Kenya
- RTT in Kuala Lumpur coming soon. Malaysia

TS: Anything else you want to tell us?

TM: We're "SAFER TOGETHER"

TS: Thank you Tim McGill for caring so much for our schools and the students in our care.

To our readers and member international schools we urge you to examine your schools' child safety protocols thoroughly. A good start would be to examine your protocols against CSPN's Child Safety Elements. Membership in CSPN is highly recommended to you.

Tim Shuman

Regional Director, International Schools

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