



Safe Ministry

with Vulnerable People

Junior Leaders

Online Training Handbook

Sydney Anglican Diocese Safe Ministry Training Pack



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A note about this handbook:

This resource accompanies the online safe ministry training for Junior Leaders. It contains a summary of the notes from the online course and is useful to print and keep as a hard copy of the course notes.



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BIBLE TRANSLATION

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SAFE CHURCH TRAINING AGREEMENT



Since 2008 the Anglican Diocese of Sydney has been a member of the *Safe Church Training Agreement* (SCTA) under the National Council of

Churches in Australia. This provides a national standard for Safe Church Training across a number of denominations.



INTRODUCTION

In the first place, I want to thank you for volunteering to exercise a leadership role among our children and youth or other vulnerable people. It is a privilege to serve Christ in this way, as we help them either to become disciples of Christ or to mature as disciples of Christ within the context of our churches, schools and camps. Thank you for your commitment to this ministry.

However, with privilege comes responsibility. This is the reason for our course on Safe Ministry. We have a high calling to protect the vulnerable among us, especially the very young, and it comes from none other than the Lord Jesus himself.

All children who come into contact with the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Sydney should feel safe and secure in our care. Their parents should also feel confident in leaving their children with us, knowing that we shall protect them from harm's way, while sharing the love of Christ in word and deed through our ministry.

The protection of the vulnerable, especially children, is a consistent theme in Scripture and one which we in the Diocese of Sydney take very seriously. Widows, orphans and aliens (or refugees) comprise a familiar triad of responsibility for Ancient Israel and the New Testament reinforces this responsibility for Christian care to those who might otherwise be marginalised. In the past there have been some incidences of poor supervision and sadly, occasions of sexual misconduct with little ones. Such behaviour is abhorrent in God's sight, as it is in ours. It is a travesty of our calling to righteousness and a betrayal of parental trust when sexual abuse of little ones occurs at the hands of those given the responsibility of leading these little ones to Christ.

It is my prayer that your involvement in this course on Safe Ministry will not only raise your consciousness of the importance of protecting children and other vulnerable persons, but also provide you with practical advice so that both our policy and our behaviour might be 'best practice'. It is the Lord Jesus Christ whom we serve and our desire is to honour him in every community, but especially in our churches and organisations, that they might be places of safety and security wherein all people, particularly children and youth, might hear the good news of Christ and be built up in their faith.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Grace and peace

Glenn N Davies

Archbishop of Sydney



SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION

Faithfulness in Service (2017)

Accessible from: <https://safeministry.training/resources/>

The Anglican Church's *National Code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and church workers* as adopted by the Sydney Diocese is referred to within this document. It is only intended to be an introduction to the Code for those working as leaders in a ministry position. All leaders should be given access to this document upon commencement in a leadership position.

Additional resources

Accessible from: <https://safeministry.training/resources/>; and <https://safeministry.org.au/resource-documents/>

This includes reproducible forms and documents referred to throughout this training pack that are useful in a variety of ministry settings.

Safe Ministry Blueprint documents

Accessible from: <https://safeministry.org.au/blueprints/>

The Safe Ministry Blueprint documents represent a holistic approach to safe ministry. These documents are aimed at informing people across all levels of leadership and church engagement to help ensure greater awareness, transparency and accountability within our churches and to help foster a culture of safe ministry at all levels of the church.

The most comprehensive document is the Safe Ministry Blueprint For Churches. The rest are sub-sets of that Blueprint, aimed at those in various leadership or ministry roles, as well as parents and church members.

Safe Ministry Blueprint for Churches | This comprehensive document contains the content of all the Blueprint documents and is written for Senior Ministers, Parish Councillors and Wardens.

Safe Ministry Blueprint documents (for various ministry roles or church members)

- Safe Ministry Blueprint - Senior Minister
- Safe Ministry Blueprint - Safe Ministry Representative
- Safe Ministry Blueprint - Head of Youth Ministry
- Safe Ministry Blueprint - Youth Ministry Leader
- Safe Ministry Blueprint - Head of Children's Ministry
- Safe Ministry Blueprint - Children's Ministry Leader
- Safe Ministry Blueprint - Parents and Church Members (this document is designed to inform, help raise awareness and promote a culture of safe ministry in your church and the broader community)



1. FOUNDATIONS IN SAFE MINISTRY

DEFINING WHO IS A VULNERABLE PERSON

For the purposes of Safe Ministry training, here is how we define vulnerable people:

Children

A child is generally defined as anyone less than 18yrs of age. A child can be vulnerable due to their age, size, lack of experience and awareness, limited knowledge and their dependence on others.

Some children can also be more vulnerable than others. For example, a child with a disability or a child undergoing a transitional developmental period (from teen to young adult) may be particularly vulnerable.

Vulnerable adults

Adults can be vulnerable too.

This can be due to a disability, their age (e.g. the elderly), experiencing difficult personal circumstances, different cultural circumstances or their own experience of childhood abuse.

CARING FOR PEOPLE IN OUR MINISTRIES

We must care for those we lead in our ministries. This will include:

- understanding their needs
- developing positive friendships with them
- helping them to learn
- protecting them from threat or harm

When they are exercising a pastoral ministry involving children in a church body, clergy and church workers (e.g. Sunday school teachers, youth group leaders) have responsibility for the safety and welfare of children in their care.

Faithfulness in Service, 5.4 (2017)



SAFE MINISTRY FRAMEWORK

Providing a safe ministry is underpinned by three basic principles

Appropriate Leadership

Identifying leaders with appropriate characteristics.

Appropriate use of power by a leader.

Leaders to maintain safe boundaries

Leaders chosen via thorough selection process.

Best Practices

Protecting people.

Understanding and responding to abuse.

Reporting abuse.



Safe Environment

Ensuring risks (physical & emotional) are systematically identified and appropriately managed.

Appointing appropriate leaders who will provide a safe emotional and spiritual environment.

These three principles are linked and they all need to work together. Just like a three legged stool won't provide support if one leg is missing, our ability to provide safe ministries is weakened when we don't maintain all three principles .



DUTY TO CARE

The community and congregation have expectations that those in leadership (including junior leaders) will understand their responsibility to care for and protect people from harm. Everyone has the right to be protected, listened to and their particular needs addressed in church activities.

God's Word and God's love also call on us to show deep care for people.

Mark 12:28-31

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

God loves us; therefore, we also must love others. One way that we can demonstrate our care for others is by making sure that our churches are safe places, particularly for those who may be vulnerable. This is the responsibility of everyone, but in particular leaders, who have the privilege of serving others.

WISE LEADERSHIP

As leaders we need to be wise and careful in our interactions with the people in our ministries and with other leaders. This includes face-to-face interactions and online or electronic communication. What we say and how we conduct ourselves is being watched and imitated by the people that we lead, no matter what our age.

When we are leaders, we are role models.

The personal behaviour and relationships of clergy and church worker have a significant impact on the Church and the community because they are a model to others. In a context where their responsibility to is care for others, people will especially observe the way in which clergy and church workers exercise power.

Faithfulness In Service 6.1 (2017)



2. APPROPRIATE LEADERSHIP IN SAFE MINISTRY

APPROPRIATE LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

Appropriate leadership is a foundational principle of safe ministry.

It is important to have appropriate people in leadership roles because leaders can have a great impact on the physical, emotional and spiritual aspect of a ministry. Therefore, we must keep our focus on what God expects of us as His leaders.

1 Peter 5:2-3 says:

² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

What to look for in a leader

Being a leader is not about popularity or 'looking the part'. At times it can be very confronting, requiring constant change and growth on our part. It's important to stop and consider how we do things and why to make sure we have appropriate characteristics and motives for leadership. We need to ensure that our lives are built on a firm biblical foundation as well as seeking wise guidance from trusted mentors and friends.

Appropriate characteristics of a leader includes someone who:

- has a growing committed relationship with Christ
Hebrews 12:1-2
- is passionate about their area of ministry
- respects and love the people they lead
Psalms 146:5-9
- models godliness
1 Timothy 4:11-12
- is reliable and team players
Romans 12:3-8
- is wise and careful
Proverbs 3:21-23
- is motivated from love and servanthood



POWER AND BOUNDARIES IN LEADERSHIP

Power

Power is something that all humans possess no matter what their age.

In some relationships, there is an equal balance of power, for example in a friendship. However, in some relationships there is an unequal balance of power. For example, leaders (including junior leaders) have a greater balance of power than the children under their care. This is because of their position of leadership, and their responsibility to look after and teach those in their ministry.

Power is neither good nor evil although it can be used for both purposes. Therefore, **all leaders must use their power carefully** to serve others, modelling Christ-like behaviour.

Whilst a junior leader is under the authority of an experienced leader, it is important to recognise that all leaders in ministry, including junior leaders, have power and authority with the people that they lead because of their role.

Bullying

Bullying means behaviour directed to a person or persons which:

- *is repeated;*
- *is unreasonable (... including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening);*
and
- *creates a risk to their health and safety.*

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying which involves the use of information and communication technologies.

Faithfulness in Service, key terms (2017)

To manage cyberbullying a person can choose to

- Block or Unfriend the sender,
- Ignore or Delete the message/post and
- Report the incident.

(taken from: <https://www.ncab.org.au/bullying-advice/bullying-for-kids/how-to-deal-with-bullies/>)

For more information on what cyberbullying is and how to stop it, visit [Kids Helpline](https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/my-friend-being-cyberbullied) (<https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/my-friend-being-cyberbullied>) and the [eSafety website](https://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/esafety-issues/cyberbullying) (<https://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/esafety-issues/cyberbullying>)

Leaders must be aware of the signs of bullying. Some things that you may be able to observe when a person is being bullied include:

- frequent mood swings,
- damaged belongings,
- being excluded from peer friendship groups,
- being the target of teasing or ridicule.



If you are concerned about the behaviour of a leader or ministry participant, you should raise your concerns with your head ministry leader.

Are there behaviours that are not bullying?

Sometimes, people don't like another person's words or actions, but that doesn't mean it is bullying. This can include things like:

- disagreeing with someone... in an honest and respectful way;
- a senior leader setting reasonable performance goals, standards or deadlines;
- giving [feedback] in an honest and constructive way;
- taking legitimate disciplinary action.

(Taken from Faithfulness in Service, key terms; 2017)

For more detailed information regarding bullying refer to Faithfulness in Service (<https://safeministry.org.au/for-parishes/faithfulness-in-service/6-personal-behaviour/>)

Self protection and awareness

Leaders have power because of their position and it is their responsibility to maintain a safe environment.

However, that doesn't mean that children and young people are powerless. We can assist them to feel safe by involving them and giving them some power and control. This can include:

- inviting them to share what makes them feel safe or unsafe in the ministry,
- being clear in our ministry programs about how to report misconduct of leaders,
- recognising when they need help and encouraging them to seek it e.g. during a personal crisis, or if they don't have family and friends for support,
- encouraging people to trust their feelings and say 'no' when they don't feel comfortable or safe,
- teaching and encouraging appropriate physical contact in various ministry contexts,
- helping them to understand what are suitable and appropriate personal boundaries to keep.

If kids' participation is not valued and facilitated in an organisation, children and young people are unlikely to speak up about experiences of feeling unsafe.

NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/become-a-child-safe-organisation/listening-to-children-and-young-people>)

By listening to what people in our ministries tell us, and acting on any concerns they have, we demonstrate that we value and care for each person.



Boundaries

Good boundaries are like fences with gates – they allow us to let good things in and keep bad things out. Their purpose is to help define the limits of a particular space or a person’s role and responsibilities.

When a person is appointed to a leadership position, they are being approved as someone who can be trusted to represent God in their words and their actions. Boundaries are important tools to help leaders maintain that trust and protect themselves and others in ministry relationships.

Establishing healthy boundaries helps our ministries to be safer places. This includes physical boundaries e.g. the places or buildings we use or our physical contact with others, and social boundaries e.g. our use of words and the way we communicate (including electronically).

Boundaries also help to make a place feel predictable and familiar, and research has shown that this is important for children when they think of what makes a place ‘safe’. They want to know what is happening, why it is happening and how best to navigate any safety issues that may arise.

Attitudes to boundaries

Being a leader is a responsibility to be taken seriously. As the one with the greater power, leaders have a responsibility to ensure appropriate boundaries are set and maintained within the ministry context. Junior leaders can help to maintain the boundaries for their programs by exercising their authority with care and by being a good role model, not being ‘one of the kids’.

A leader must always **act in the best interests of the less powerful or vulnerable person**, and work within the boundaries that exist in their ministry.

A leader’s attitude to a boundary can be described in the following ways.

- Boundary respecter: respects and maintains appropriate boundaries
- Boundary violator: ignorant of or disregards appropriate boundaries

Leaders should always respect the boundaries within their ministry context. Any leader who continually ignores or violates boundaries may need to be removed from leadership.

A suitable leader for ministry must be a boundary respecter.

Establishing boundaries

Boundaries will be defined by a number of things including church policies and procedures, a leadership code of conduct and relevant legislation.

It is important that we have written policies and procedures so that leaders know what is expected of them and where the limits are in a ministry. However, these won’t describe every situation and there may be times where a leader needs to use their judgement as to what is an appropriate behaviour or response.

For example, it may be appropriate to comfort a young child who is distressed by carrying them for a short period to settle them. Generally, we would limit physical contact to high fives or a brief open hug, but our aim in this situation is to show love and care to the distressed child.

If you are unsure of what the boundaries are in your ministry setting, speak to your head ministry leader to be clear



about what is acceptable behaviour. If you think a situation requires you to use your judgement,

- consider first if it is in the best interests of the person being served and;
- make sure you are being transparent and accountable by informing your head ministry leader of your actions first.

The Sydney Diocese's Code of Conduct *Faithfulness in Service* and the *Safe Ministry Blueprint* documents are important resources for identifying appropriate boundaries for a ministry context and ways in which to maintain them. All leaders should be familiar with the standards and associated guidelines in these documents.

LEADER SELECTION

Churches must carefully recruit, screen and appoint potential leaders to make sure that they are suitable for their ministry role.

A leader selection process needs to be thorough to limit the chance of the wrong person being chosen for a leadership position- this includes leaders who wish to harm or abuse vulnerable people, including children.

Suitability of leaders

Screening is an essential part of determining a person's ministry suitability. Churches should make sure they complete the necessary screening procedures before appointing a leader, but it is also good for leaders to consider their own suitability to a particular role and complete a personal screening of their own behaviours.

Consider the following:

- What are some of your behaviours that make you a good leader?
- What are some of your behaviours that can cause difficulty for you at times? How will you manage that in a ministry context?
- Are there any ministries that you know would not be a good fit for you?

Leader recruitment and appointment

The following recruitment and appointment process should be followed in your church.

Job descriptions (including a code of conduct)

Churches should have clear job descriptions written for each ministry role, both paid and unpaid positions. Leaders should know to whom they are responsible, what they are responsible for and the expected length of time they will serve in their role.

Application for ministry

This allows potential leaders to provide applicable information for a particular role e.g. any experience or qualifications they may have, as well as details of referees.

It is also important to ask an applicant to disclose if they have been the subject of any disciplinary proceedings or criminal offences against a child. The senior minister should then follow up on this with the potential leader.



Relevant screening procedures

- Background or referee checks

This should be part of the application process for a volunteer to provide further information about a potential leader.

- Working with Children Check

Leaders under 18yrs should complete a Volunteer Declaration co-signed by a parent or guardian. This form is accessible at <https://safeministry.training/resources/>

A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a legal requirement in NSW for anyone working with children and youth. A Junior Leader can apply for a WWCC at 17yr 9mths and must have a verified WWCC when they turn 18 to be able to continue in a leadership role.

For more information about a WWCC, speak to your head ministry leader or go to the Office of the Children's Guardian website www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au

Expectations of leaders

Code of Conduct

The Sydney Anglican Diocese's code of conduct is Faithfulness in Service, 2017. This provides standards and guidelines of what is appropriate conduct by leaders and information on how all leaders should appropriately minister to others.

It is highly recommended that leaders read it on a regular basis.

Clergy and church workers will protect the safety of others and themselves by observing its [Faithfulness in Service] standards and following its guidelines.

Faithfulness in Service, 3.1 (2017)

As part of their commitment to leadership and before taking on their leadership position, leaders should agree to read the code of conduct and confirm in writing that they have done so and will abide by the code.

The *Safe Ministry Blueprint* documents for leaders also include a helpful summary of the code of conduct for children's and youth ministry.

The *Safe Ministry Blueprint* documents offer guidelines to leaders in various ministry roles for what is appropriate behaviour, responsibilities and requirements within their ministry.

Ministry participants should also be made aware of what is appropriate behaviour by leaders. The *Safe Ministry Blueprint for Parents and Church Members* is recommended for this purpose.

These documents can be accessed from <https://safeministry.org.au/blueprints/> and should be made available to all relevant people.



Responding to complaints of inappropriate behaviour by leaders

If a leader or ministry participant becomes aware of a church worker acting in a way that does not follow the guidelines in the Code of Conduct they should speak to their head ministry leader, senior minister or the Safe Ministry Representative. This should be done as soon as it is practical to make sure it is addressed in a timely manner for the safety of others in the ministry.

Everyone has a right to feel safe in our ministries and to speak out if they have a concern.

Support for leaders

Training and ministry supervision is vital for young leaders. It should aim to offer care and support for them in the role they are undertaking.

Training is an important part of helping team members to develop their gifts in their leadership roles and use them to the best of their ability for the glory of God. Some training is also a requirement for a role e.g. Safe Ministry training.

Ministry supervision demonstrates a commitment to care for leaders by providing clear expectations for leadership roles, ongoing support for leaders and a commitment to develop leaders.

In the same way, a leader who takes part in supervision demonstrates a willingness to be held accountable in their role and a desire to mature as a leader.

Engaging young leaders

It is widely recognised that the human brain is not fully developed until a person is in their mid to late 20s.

This means that although a young person may be enthusiastic about a role in leadership, they may not be able to fully understand the consequences of their actions and the decisions they make.

It has also been shown that a significant proportion of sexual abuse of children (at least 40%) is perpetrated by another child or adolescent, often within their family.

Source of figures: Intrafamilial adolescent sex offenders: psychological profile and treatment, 2009

<https://safeministry.training/dev/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Intrafamilial-adolescent-sex-offenders.pdf>

Training and supervision are important for all leaders but are especially important when engaging leaders who are young or inexperienced in their role. Training for younger leaders is most effective when done by adults who are known and trusted by them, thus mentoring is an appropriate and important aspect of leadership development for this group.



SAFE MINISTRY PLEDGE FOR JUNIOR LEADERS

The Anglican Diocese of Sydney requires that all leaders who work with children and youth adhere to the Safe Ministry Pledge. The Anglican Diocese of Sydney wants its ministries to be identified by grace and forgiveness, not rules and regulations; but the Bible is concerned that leaders have a particularly high standard in their personal life. Unfortunately, not all Christian workers have protected children and youth in the past.

The Safe Ministry Pledge is based on *Faithfulness in Service* (2017) (the Anglican Church's national code of conduct) and the Code of Conduct for Children's and Youth Ministry found in the Safe Ministry Blueprint documents.

It is expected, that as a junior leader you have read and will comply with the Safe Ministry Blueprint document that is best suited to your role: Safe Ministry Blueprint for Children's Ministry Leaders or Safe Ministry Blueprint for Youth Ministry Leaders.

By agreeing to abide by the behaviour and practices outlined in the Safe Ministry Pledge, you help to make our churches safer places for everyone.

By checking each box you acknowledge that you understand and agree to abide by the Safe Ministry Pledge as it applies to the children and youth involved in your church and its programs.

In acknowledgement of the above, I pledge to;

- Never abuse people especially children or youth, nor cultivate relationships in order to initiate or hide abuse.
- Report to the appropriate authorities any behaviour that could be considered abusive. This includes speaking to my head ministry leader about behaviour by another leader.
- Never be alone with a child or young person in my ministry role where adult leaders are not present.
- Never have children or young people to my home, or visit children or young people in their home, when no adult is present, and never meet privately with a child or young person outside of church activities, except with the permission of their parent or guardian.
- Never touch children or youth, in a manner which is inappropriate given their age, gender, cultural background, or personal circumstances. Where I am unsure about what is appropriate I will speak to my head ministry leader first.
- Never physically discipline a child or young person in the course of my ministry.
- Never make alcohol, cigarettes or illicit drugs available to children or youth.
- Never develop special relationships with particular children or youth that could be seen as involving favouritism or any form of special treatment.
- Never engage in any contact with children or youth, that is secretive (whether physical or through electronic media or in any other way).
- Never become romantically involved with any participant in the youth or children's ministry where I am a Junior Leader.



SAFE MINISTRY PLEDGE FOR JUNIOR LEADERS (CONT)

- Never take unauthorised photos, movies or recordings of anyone, especially a child or young person on church property or at church activities without church authorisation and the consent of their parents or guardians.
- Never view, possess, produce or distribute restricted material containing sexual acts or nudity; and never view, possess, produce or distribute any form of child pornography or child exploitation material.

I confirm that:

- I shall complete Safe Ministry training every 3 years or within 3 months after my appointment (and every 3 years after that). When I turn 18 or take on a senior leadership role (whichever occurs first), I shall complete Safe Ministry Essentials immediately.
- Where required, I shall hold a Working with Children Check clearance obtained from the Office of the Children's Guardian. I understand that this can be obtained at 17yrs and 9months.
- I commit to read and regularly review the Safe Ministry Blueprint document best suited to my role: Safe Ministry Blueprint for Children's Ministry Leaders or Safe Ministry Blueprint for Youth Ministry Leaders (<https://safeministry.org.au/blueprints>)
- If I fail to abide by the Safe Ministry Pledge, I shall inform my senior minister or the Safe Ministry Team (the PSU) at the earliest possible opportunity.
- I understand that any breach of the Safe Ministry Pledge may lead to my being suspended or terminated from holding any role in relation to working with children, youth or other vulnerable persons in church ministries.



3. BEST PRACTICE IN SAFE MINISTRY

PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Everyone has the right to be protected, listened to and to have their particular needs addressed in church activities. As leaders we have a responsibility to care for and protect those that we lead. so we must do this thoughtfully and diligently.

*Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.
Psalm 82:3*

A vulnerable person may be described as one who is susceptible to harm due to a lack of resources. This can include both children and adults.

UNDERSTANDING ABUSE

A definition of abuse

Abuse of any person is devastating, not only for the person it is happening to, but also for those who love and care for them.

To be able to help someone and respond appropriately to abuse we must first know what it is. For the purposes of this training, a general definition of abuse is:

Behaviour that enables a person to have inappropriate power and control over another person.

Abuse of any person is always wrong.

As we have already identified, having power and using it is not wrong. However, we can see from this definition that inappropriate use of power is wrong. Therefore, it is important that we use our power as leaders appropriately, and if we are aware of others misusing their power, we speak to someone about it.

Types of abuse

Abuse includes such things as:

- Physical abuse – hurting a child's body
- Neglect – not providing the things needed for a child to feel safe and secure
- Emotional abuse – not emotionally caring for a child or using words to hurt them
- Bullying (including cyberbullying) – a person with greater power repeatedly using their words or actions to hurt another person
- Family and domestic violence – a family member controlling other family members through fear e.g. acts of violence, physical or verbal threats, intimidation, manipulation
- Financial abuse – the misuse of someone else's money without their knowledge or permission
- Sexual abuse – a bigger or older person involving a child in sexual activity

Abuse may be something that a person does to a child (an act of commission), such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse or something that a person fails to do for a child (an act of omission), such as neglect.



You can also refer to these websites for more information on understanding abuse.

- <https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens>
- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>
- <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/YourRole/ForTeens/Pages/default.aspx>

RECOGNISING ABUSE

To be able to respond to abuse we first need to be able to identify it and there are two main ways that you may do this– by observing indicators or receiving a disclosure.

Indicators

Indicators of abuse are things that you observe.

They can include anything that seems unusual such as:

- what you see
e.g. unexplained bruises or injuries, constant hunger, untreated sores;
- what you notice about a person
e.g. low self-esteem, aggressiveness, withdrawn behaviour;
- what you hear
e.g. a person tells you of their abuse or neglect, inappropriate sexual knowledge or language for their age;
- noticeable changes in a person's normal mood or behaviour
e.g. usually cheerful and happy, but becoming very quiet and sad over a few weeks or months.

Disclosure

A disclosure occurs when a person tells us that they (or someone that they know) have been abused or harmed, or are fearful of being abused or harmed.

A disclosure may be purposeful or accidental.

When we identify abuse or risk of harm our primary response is to report our concerns.

You should tell your head ministry leader straight away about any indicators that you see or hear concerning a person under your care in ministry or, if anyone in your ministry discloses abuse to you.

Responding to a disclosure

If a person discloses something that causes you concern, follow the steps outlined below.

1. Listen

- Stay calm even though you may be feeling a range of emotions.
- Give them your full attention.
- Let them tell you their story in their own words.
- Don't ask questions or try to investigate what is being said- you don't need to prove it.



2. Reassure

- Tell them that they have done the right thing in speaking out.
- Let them know that they have a right to feel safe at all times.

3. Think before you speak

- *Don't* promise that the abuse will stop.
- *Don't* promise that you will keep it a secret. It is important to tell them that if someone is not safe then you will need to let other people know so that they can help.

4. Report

- As soon as possible, ***pass the information on to your head ministry leader.***
- Don't discuss what you have been told with any other people, including other leaders, your family and friends.
- Make sure that you debrief about the situation (see *Responding to Abuse*).

(Adapted from *Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse*, C Hunter, NCPC 2011)



RESPONDING TO ABUSE

As leaders we have a responsibility to ensure that we look after the people under our care to the best of our ability. At times this will involve reporting concerns of child abuse. This is our primary response to abuse, however we will also need to care for those involved and ensure we care for ourselves as leaders.

Possible barriers to reporting abuse

It is important to recognise that passing on our concerns or reporting abuse can be hard. We may not feel comfortable doing it because

- It can be scary and we may be afraid or unsure of how to respond.
- We feel alone.
- We are not sure that what we have seen or heard is a problem.
- We think someone else will probably say something.

These potential barriers may stop us from speaking up and reporting our concerns, so we need to identify them now to overcome these issues and protect people under our care.

While you may feel uncertain about speaking to your head ministry leader about what you have seen or heard, it is important that you do speak up.

Our main concern as leaders is to make sure the people in our ministries are safe. In some cases, we may be the only person who is looking out for them.

Small things can add up so it is important that we pass on all our concerns no matter how big or small we may think they are.

Who to speak to

Concerns for a child or young person's safety

It is extremely important that anything that you see or any information told to you about any form of abuse or harm is not passed around. This is very sensitive information therefore, it should be treated with care and **only told to people who can help**.

You can speak to:

- Your head ministry leader*, or
- Family and Community Services (FaCS), or
- The police.

*NOTE: if your concern is about your head ministry leader's behaviour, see *Concerns about a leader's behaviour*.

It is important that you do not:

- discuss details of a case of suspected abuse with other leaders, friends, family or anyone else.
- investigate or take action on your own where you have a concern about a person's safety or welfare (you are responsible for reporting it not proving it).



Where you have a concern about a person's safety or welfare, write down the following information and raise the matter with your head ministry leader:

- Name of the child
- Date and location of what you have seen or heard
- Details of what you have seen or heard that concerns you (make sure you only state the facts and not your opinion)
- Your signature and the date

If your head ministry leader does not appear to be taking your information seriously, you should raise your concerns with the senior minister.

Concerns about a leader's behaviour

If you have concerns about another leader's behaviour you should inform your head ministry leader or the senior minister.

If an allegation is made against the senior minister or your head ministry leader, you can speak to your Safe Ministry Representative at church or contact the Safe Ministry Team (Professional Standards Unit) for help and assistance.

Ongoing care and support for people

Receiving a disclosure or making a report regarding abuse can be a highly emotional experience for everyone involved.

There should be care and support provided for survivors of abuse as well as others involved, including leaders.

Emotions

After receiving a disclosure or making a report, you are likely to feel many emotions, therefore it is wise for you to debrief and take care of your own wellbeing. This should initially be with the senior minister (or someone they recommend you speak to).

As a junior leader, your head ministry leader or senior minister should inform your parents that you have received a disclosure and have been offered the opportunity to debrief so that they are aware of your situation and what has taken place. It is not appropriate to discuss any details of a disclosure with other leaders, friends, family etc. This is to maintain the privacy and protection of the person who has disclosed.

Debriefing

The purpose of debriefing is to acknowledge and appropriately manage any physical and emotional responses you may have to a situation. It is a discussion that happens in a private and confidential setting with an appropriately skilled person. You may talk about how the experience has affected you but don't give details of what has been disclosed or the person's situation.

Discuss with your senior minister who may be an appropriate person for you to debrief with. *You must not disclose private information to other leaders, family, friends or church members.*



Immediate care and follow-up

It's important to know who you can speak to about what to do next if you have received a disclosure or suspect a person is being abused.

Remember: you are not alone. Help is available but you must only speak to a person who has a need to know about it for reporting purposes.

There is support and guidance available to help you in knowing what to do after receiving a disclosure or when you need to report abuse. This can include speaking to your head ministry leader or senior minister (or your Safe Ministry Representative if needed) or contacting the Professional Standards Unit for advice.



4. SAFE ENVIRONMENTS IN SAFE MINISTRY

When we hear the term 'safe environment', it's easy to think only about buildings or just the physical space however, we also need to think about the emotional environment as well.

We need to consider any safety concerns in the physical environment, e.g.

- Are the buildings/rooms in good repair?
- Is the space well lit and clear of obstructions?

We also need to think about the emotional environment in our ministries, e.g.

- How are we serving others?
- How do our words and actions convey love and care?
- How do ministry participants feel respected and listened to?

This will be done by managing risks and creating and maintaining policies that everyone is aware of.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Maintaining a safe and caring environment should be the shared responsibility of each member of the congregation. However, leaders have a particular responsibility to care for the people that they lead therefore leaders should always be aware of what risks are involved in any activity or program they intend to use.

The most effective way to be aware of risks is to consider the following things when preparing for an activity:

- What could go wrong in this activity?
- How can we best manage that risk e.g. how can we minimize or eliminate the risk?

Managing risks should also take into consideration what any policies or practices state for a particular ministry.

GENERAL POLICIES & PRACTICES

As leaders, we have a duty to care for those in our ministries, showing them God's love in practical ways. We also have a legal obligation to provide a safe place for people.

To fulfil these obligations we must follow the policies or procedures set for our ministry by the church leadership, and ensure that we do not harm or injure others or ourselves by

- Our actions i.e. the things that we do. For example, choosing to play an unsafe game for a particular age group; or
- Our inaction i.e. the things that we don't do. For example, not removing obstacles from an area where a high action game will be played.

Creating and reviewing policies

It is important that everyone in a ministry is aware of policies relating to that ministry. This is to ensure that leaders and participants know what is acceptable behaviour within the program and understand how and to whom they should raise any concerns they have.



When developing or reviewing policies, consultation with both the ministry leaders and participants can help all parties to have a greater understanding and ownership in them. It can also empower ministry participants, knowing that their thoughts and feelings are taken into account within the ministry.

Policies also need to take into consideration any social and cultural diversity issues e.g. identifying cross-cultural issues regarding appropriate physical contact with young children in our ministries.

Appropriate practices

Relevant policies and forms can be found online on at <https://safeministry.training/resources/>

Appropriate supervision

It is always recommended to have at least two adult leaders present at every ministry event or program. The number of additional leaders required on top of this for any activity will vary according to the age and ability of the participants and the type of activity. Where the risks in the activity increase, the supervision should also increase.

A leader should avoid being alone, one-on-one with a vulnerable person.

A junior leader, i.e. a helper under 18 years of age, should not be included as a leader for supervision purposes.

Suggested supervision ratios for low risk onsite events are: preschoolers 1:5, primary age 1:7, youth and vulnerable adults 1:10

Appropriate physical contact

Having appropriate physical contact is an important aspect of a child's social and physical development. Therefore, we need to take care that we interact with children in our ministries in appropriate ways.

A child or young person should be the one to initiate physical contact, not a leader. Any physical contact made by a leader should occur with the child's permission, and all contact and conversations should be in the open where it can be seen and/or heard by others.

We must also consider what is appropriate physical contact for various individuals i.e. consider what is appropriate for different ages, cultural backgrounds or abilities of people.

For more information on children and physical contact, see *Guidelines for Appropriate Practices in Ministry* (p28).

Food handling

No matter what food we provide, we need to consider how to handle food safely in our ministry activities. It is best practice to have a nominated supervisor who is responsible for making sure that food is handled and served in a safe manner. It is important that all leaders follow appropriate personal hygiene practices when handling, storing and serving food.



Transport

Leaders should not be left alone in a car with a vulnerable person. Where this is unavoidable another leader should be informed of the trip and its reason. Parents are to be responsible for organising transport to/from children's and youth activities. Written permission from parents must be obtained before children/young people travel with someone other than their parent on an outing. All drivers should be responsible, experienced (green P's or higher) and not impaired by alcohol or drugs. Vehicles should be appropriately maintained and fitted with restraints.

Electronic communication

Your church should have a policy on the use of electronic communication between leaders and ministry participants- what is permissible and what is not.

Where electronic communication with children or young people is used, the following areas need to be considered:

- In general, all phone or electronic communication must be with a child's parent/guardian by an experienced leader (not junior leaders)
- Electronic communication should be used with members of church-based activities only and permission must be obtained from a parent/guardian first.
- Communication should be limited to logistical purposes e.g. to inform or remind of events
- All electronic communication should be brief and kept to a minimum.
- Use of social network pages should be through the church/youth group page and not a leader's personal account.

Use of church facilities by various people

As part of our love and care for all people we need to look at how we can provide access to our facilities and offer a safe and welcoming environment to all who wish to attend our ministry activities including young children, the aged and people with a disability. We must ensure that we provide a space where people can move around the physical environment freely and safely. For example, check floors, doorways and walkways are clear; is there sufficient lighting; are hazards clearly marked.

Emergency evacuation and fire

Planning and preparation for an emergency such as a fire is very important in case such an event occurs.

- Emergency evacuations should be practiced twice a year.
- Emergency exit plans and signage should be clear and easy to read.
- There should be working smoke alarms and fire extinguishers (and people trained to use them).

Incident/Accident/Injury

Proper care of our ministry leaders and participants requires us to have a first aid plan and appropriate equipment.

- Ensure adequate first aid kits are available
- Ensure trained first aid personnel are at events.
- Ensure those with medical conditions provide an action plan and emergency medication, e.g. for anaphylaxis.



Use and maintenance of equipment

Church sites and their equipment can be used for a large variety of activities and by many people. Therefore, leaders should take proper care of all equipment and should be properly trained in the handling, storage and maintenance of the equipment for the safety of themselves and others.



CORE GUIDELINES FOR MINISTRY WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE

1. The senior minister will generally be responsible for the recruitment and training of leaders appointed for ministry positions, although he may delegate the responsibility. This person is also responsible for appropriately screening leaders before they are appointed.
2. Leaders should be trained in all the responsibilities of caring for vulnerable people, treating them properly and reporting reasonably suspected abuse or misconduct by leaders.
3. The designated area and its contents should be safe and suitable for the particular ministry activity.
4. A registration form should be completed for children in a ministry activity. The head ministry leader should have access to this for any important information.
5. A well-stocked first aid kit should be kept handy. At least one leader should be able to administer first aid (having done, for example, a St John Ambulance First Aid Course).
6. When administering first aid, at least two leaders should be present and any treatment documented. Parents/ carers should be informed of any injury as soon as possible.
7. Be careful with hygiene. Anyone handling food should wash their hands first or wear disposable gloves. Activities or games should not encourage unhygienic practices e.g. using the same spoon in a team game that requires putting the spoon in mouths.
8. When assisting children with toileting or other personal care issues a leader should consider what is appropriate for the person's age and ability whilst avoiding being alone in concealed areas with one person e.g. a female leader should accompany a small group of preschoolers and infants to the toilet; primary-aged children should be able to visit the toilet on their own.
9. Be on the alert for people wandering around—a person unknown to the leaders should not be allowed access to the program or participants.
10. As much as possible, leaders should work in pairs. If that is difficult because of a lack of leaders, groups should meet where they can be clearly seen by others.
11. Leaders should not physically discipline a child. Consequences that do not include corporal punishment can be imposed on children for overstepping stated boundaries.
12. Male leaders should be particularly aware of their behaviour towards children and young people, keeping unavoidable physical contact to a minimum.



GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE PRACTICES IN MINISTRY

Very young children (ages 0-5yrs):

- caregivers should work in teams due to the high vulnerability and dependency of the age group
- try to re-direct their attention when upset or frustrated
- sit them beside you to read a book/do an activity
- assist and encourage independence, as this shows love and concern
- young children have the right to refuse contact from an adult
- when children initiate touch, keep it brief and re-direct them
- all contact and conversations should be in the open
- toileting and first aid is best done by parents or experienced female leaders
- appropriate physical contact includes:
 - ◇ rocking and talking in reassuring tones to comfort a child
 - ◇ sitting on a caregiver's lap to check discomfort or ill health
 - ◇ patting the top of the child's back to reassure or praise
 - ◇ carrying for a short period to reassure if hurt or facilitate separation from a parent

Older children, youth and vulnerable adults:

- it is desirable to work in teams or pairs, otherwise groups should meet where they are visible to others
- don't use physical restraint (unless for obvious safety reasons)
- all contact and conversations should be in the open
- when assisting a vulnerable adult with their personal care (e.g. an elderly person or adult with a disability) be sure to keep all situations open and visible and avoid one-on-one activities in concealed areas with the opposite sex (where privacy is needed to assist with personal care, it is preferable that 2 people assist and where possible same sex toileting arrangements are recommended)
- appropriate physical contact includes:
 - ◇ high fives
 - ◇ handshake
 - ◇ open hugs
 - ◇ contact with the shoulders, upper arm or back

Remember:

- a leader's **first response** should be **non-contact**;
- it should be a **child, young person or vulnerable adult who initiates physical contact**;
- any **physical contact** made by a leader should occur **with the other person's permission**.



HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

Family and Community Services (FaCS)

Child Protection Helpline _____ 132 111
Web _____ www.community.nsw.gov.au

Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG)

Web (WWCC) _____ www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au

Police

Emergency _____ 000
Local police _____

Anglican Abuse Report Line

Phone _____ 1800 77 49 45
Email _____ abusereport@sydney.anglican.asn.au

Safe Ministry Team (Professional Standards Unit)

Safe Ministry website _____ <https://safeministry.org.au>
Safe Ministry training website _____ <https://safeministry.training>

Kids' Helpline _____ 1800 55 1800

24hr Domestic Violence Hotline

National Helpline _____ 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)
Web _____ www.1800respect.org.au

Helpful internet sites

Bullying website _____ www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
Internet and mobile safety advice _____ www.esafety.gov.au
Safety precautions for using the internet _____ www.childnet.com
Use of internet and associated technologies _____ www.thinkuknow.org.au
Children, youth & pornography _____ www.thefrankchat.com
Youthworks' online community _____ www.fervr.net



SAFE MINISTRY SUMMARY CHECKLIST

Our church has:

- adopted a Safe Ministry policy
- appointed a Safe Ministry Representative
Write their name here: _____
- Appropriate Leadership i.e.
 - ⇒ a process for recruiting and appointing leaders in ministry
 - ⇒ clear expectations for leaders including a code of conduct, relevant policies and ministry guidelines
 - ⇒ training and supervision of leaders
 - ⇒ easily accessible complaints procedure
- Best Practices i.e.
 - ⇒ understanding who is a vulnerable person
 - ⇒ responding appropriately to abuse
- Safe Environment i.e.
 - ⇒ risk management mindset e.g. leaders consider 'What could go wrong?' and develop control measures for risks
 - ⇒ a system of accountability to ensure policies are being implemented & reviewed