



CROSSROADS SAFE MINISTRY REQUIREMENTS

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Introduction

This document should be read together with the Crossroads Safe Ministry Policy [0101 Safe Ministry Policy](#).

This document provides requirements for all staff and volunteers involved with Crossroads ministry involving children, young people or vulnerable adults.

The way in which we care for others is a reflection of God's love and care for us. It is clearly mandated in scripture for God's people to love others and protect the vulnerable (e.g. Deut 10:17-19; Mark 12:31; James 1:27). Christ never hurt the young or vulnerable, on the contrary, he used his gifts and power to bless and love.

We believe that children, young people and vulnerable adults are entitled to be safe and protected in line with government policies and expectations. Staff and volunteers engaged in any church ministry activities have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of the children, young people and vulnerable adults they have contact with as part of those activities.

All contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults must be beyond reproach, appropriate and meet the requirements set out by the church.

Careful consideration will be given to things such as leaders and volunteers, activities chosen, the venue, safe ratios of supervision, appropriate child toileting practices, transportation, work health and safety, parental or guardian permission and confidentiality of record keeping.

A grace period of 6 months from the date of Council approval of this document will apply to training and other requirements. However, all leaders are still required to comply with our Code of Conduct and other procedures and hold a current Working with Vulnerable People registration card.

General Requirements

As part of Crossroads' overall approach to communicate openly and transparently with families, carers and the community, the following documents are available on our website for anyone to view and download:

- Our Safe Ministry Policy
- Safe Ministry Requirements (this document)
- Our Privacy Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct and
- Volunteers Code of Conduct.

We will review these documents annually, to ensure they remain suitable and meet contemporary standards. We also welcome input by families, carers and the broader community. This can be provided to safeministry@crossroads.asn.au.

Safe People

Screening and appointing of leaders and volunteers

This section addresses the screening and appointment of volunteers, staff, Council members and Pastoral staff. This section should be read in conjunction with Policy [01-01-01-01 Leadership selection and training levels](#), where each ministry area is assigned a Level of Screening/Selection and training.

Leader Level	Roles	Screening, Selection and Training
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pastors and Office staff ● Council members ● Children and Youth Leaders including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Crossfire ○ BoysZone ○ Girls Club ○ Kingdom Kids ○ Crèche groups ○ Junior Children and Youth leaders (Supervised and <18yo)* 	<p>Required screening and selection process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A completed relevant application form. ● Be endorsed by a Pastor/Ministry Coordinator (Note for Pastors, Office Staff and Council members this will be the Senior Pastor and the Executive Pastor). ● Undertake at least one interview with the Ministry Coordinator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ assess applicant's understanding of the Gospel ○ explain the duties of the role ○ explain the process that will be followed, and ○ explore other matters deemed relevant. ● Complete referee checks on two provided referees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ * Note Junior leaders require parents approval and reference from their Crossfire leader ● Present evidence of a Working with Vulnerable People card to the designated lead Pastor, or evidence that they have commenced that process. ● Annually read and agree in writing to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relevant Code of Conduct ○ Relevant Ministry Guidelines ○ Crossroads Safe Ministry Policy ○ Crossroads Privacy Policy ○ Statement of Belief, and ○ Safe Ministry Requirements (this document) ● Gain Council agreement to applicant. <p>Leaders in this category are also to undertake the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Designated Safe Ministries Leadership training course, agreed by Council (including any refresher courses) that provides a deeper understanding of safe ministry needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note that the Pastor can agree in writing to allow a person to undertake leadership activities prior to completing a Designated Safe Ministries Leadership training course, for a period of no more than three months. This is only on the basis that the Pastor signs a waiver document that is

		<p>provided to Council, through the Executive or Senior Pastor, at the soonest practical moment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ * Note that Junior leaders complete the Junior Safe Ministry course ● Annual Crossroads Essentials Safe Ministry course that instructs on policies, procedures and ACT legislation.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Growth Group leaders ● Children and Youth temporary leaders, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ term helpers ○ supersubs ○ kids clubs ○ Junior temporary helpers (<18yo)* ● Crossroads English ● Griefshare ● DivorceCare ● Congregational Leadership Teams 	<p>Required screening and selection process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A completed relevant application form. ● Be endorsed by a Pastor/Ministry Coordinator (Note for Pastors, Office Staff and Council members this will be the Senior Pastor and the Executive Pastor). ● Undertake at least one interview with the Ministry Coordinator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ assess applicant's understanding of the Gospel ○ explain the duties of the role ○ explain the process that will be followed, and ○ explore other matters deemed relevant. ● Complete referee checks on two provided referees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ * Note Junior leaders require parents approval and reference from their Crossfire leader ● Present evidence of a Working with Vulnerable People card to the designated lead Pastor, or evidence that they have commenced that process. <p>Leaders in this category are to undertake the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annually to read and agree in writing to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relevant Code of Conduct ○ Relevant Ministry Guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Crossroads Privacy Policy (if relevant) ○ Statement of Belief ● Annual Crossroads Essentials Safe Ministry course that instructs on policies, procedures and ACT legislation.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Serve Team Leaders (e.g. music, welcome, site managers) ● Media Team ● Children & Youth temporary helpers (e.g. camp cooks) 	<p>Required screening and selection process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A completed application form. ● Be endorsed by a Pastor/Ministry Coordinator ● At least one interview by the Pastor/Ministry Coordinator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ explain the role and its requirements, and assess applicant's understanding of the Gospel ○ explain leadership requirements prior to commencement.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present evidence of a Working with Vulnerable People card to the designated lead Pastor, or evidence that they have commenced that process. <p>Leaders in this category are to undertake the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annually to read and agree in writing to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relevant Code of Conduct ○ Relevant Ministry Guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Crossroads Privacy Policy (if relevant) ○ Statement of Belief ● Annual Crossroads Essentials Safe Ministry course that instructs on policies, procedures and ACT legislation.
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Safe Practices

Record Keeping

It is essential that good records are taken and maintained to ensure that Crossroads can demonstrate it is undertaking its duties in line with the Gospel, our commitment to safety, society expectations and the law. As a general principle, records should be maintained electronically whenever suitable systems exist in line with our privacy and security obligations.

This is particularly important where an incident of misconduct is reported.

As a general principle, all records of children's attendance, leaders that were on duty at an event and matters relating to any health requirements should be maintained for 7 years. Such records can be maintained by a third party on the basis that they demonstrate their compliance with our privacy and security obligations.

Where a matter of misconduct has been raised, regardless of the outcome, such records should not be destroyed at any time without Council agreement and only then after maintaining for a minimum of 7 years. Such records can be maintained by a third party on the basis that they demonstrate their compliance with Crossroads' privacy and security obligations.

General Requirements

Golden Rules

Never alone

It is a fundamental principle that at all times a leader should never be alone with an individual child or vulnerable adult. Should for any reason this rule be breached, it must be reported immediately to the responsible Pastor who is required to document the breach and provide this report to the Executive Pastor for review. Note that this breach should also be reported by any leader if they become aware. If the Senior Pastor was responsible for the breach, he is to provide a written report to Council for their review, and/or another leader is to provide a report directly to Council should they become aware.

Stranger Danger

Leaders should be on the alert for people wandering around – a person unknown to leaders or not part of the children's and youth ministry should not be allowed access to children and young people. If a stranger persists in a manner that raises concerns to the leaders, the police should be called.

Grooming behaviours

Leaders should be on the alert for adults who may be showing grooming behaviours. Grooming is the development of relationships, with children and/or the adults around them, to prepare a child for future harm, and prevent other adults from recognising such behaviour.

There is no one set of behaviours that make up grooming, and it can be hard to recognise as grooming behaviour may look like normal caring behaviour. Examples of grooming behaviour can include:

- encouraging secretive behaviour

- giving special attention, favours or gifts to a child (and/or their carer), and
- seeking opportunities to touch a child, e.g. tickling or wrestling.

More information is available on the [Raising Children Network website](#).

Listening to children and young people

Children and young people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them, have their voices heard and be taken seriously. It is important that children and young people feel able and supported to raise concerns when they feel unsafe, unhappy or marginalised. In most cases children will seek help from an adult they trust when they have a problem. It is important to listen to the child or young person's concerns, show you take them seriously, and take appropriate action in response to their concern/s.

Concerns may vary from minor issues that volunteers/leaders are able to address on the spot, to more serious concerns that should be discussed with the Ministry Leader, or passed on to safeministry@crossroads.asn.au.

Vulnerable Adults

All people deserve to be treated equally and with respect, including vulnerable adults. Where required, additional effort should be undertaken to ensure vulnerable adults (see definition under Appendix B) are able to participate in activities/events, make their views and preferences heard and understood, and access resources. Vulnerable adults are more likely to experience abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, bullying etc.). Staff and volunteers engaging with vulnerable adults should always treat them with respect and dignity. Ministry Leaders should ensure this condition is met and provide support, including access to training and resources, to staff and volunteers as required.

LGBTQI+

All people are created in God's image and we respect and understand the complex nature of human sexuality in our world. While we affirm the Bible's teaching on sexuality, we welcome and encourage members of the LGBTQI+ community to be a part of our community and benefit from our ministries. Our registration system allows a person's gender to be recorded as male, female or other (blank where systems do not currently enable 'other' to be recorded), and we will seek to honour and be understanding of any individual's wishes in regards to their gender identity.

Cultural Awareness

We need to be aware of differences in terms of what is acceptable especially to children of parents who have recently arrived in Australia, e.g. taboos on touching the head; restrictions concerning touch between males and females.

Carers and ministry leaders, would be well advised to consult directly with parents if they have any concerns or questions regarding cross-cultural matters and in particular when a child is stressed, has medical issues or is injured.

Person of interest

All people are welcome to be part of our church, including any referred to as Persons of Interest (POI).

A POI is a person who has been convicted, accused, is reasonably suspected of, or has admitted to, perpetrating abuse or sexual offences.

Under no circumstances will a POI be allowed to be involved in ministry roles covered by this policy. If a person currently in Ministry is accused of offences related to child abuse or sexual misconduct, they are to be stood down immediately by the Senior Pastor from those ministries and designated a POI until the case has been resolved by legal authorities. Any Pastor so accused will be stood down on full pay by the Senior Pastor (or Council in the case of an accusation against the Senior Pastor) until a determination is made by a suitable legal authority, when their position will be assessed by the Senior Pastor or Council.

Any POI who wishes to be part of Crossroads or remain part of Crossroads must complete and be subject to a Safety Plan. This Safety Plan outlines obligations of both the POI and Crossroads in relation to ensuring the ongoing safety of the POI and all children, young people and vulnerable adults who are part of Crossroads ministry.

Behavioural Expectations

It is important in fulfilling our responsibilities to provide clear expectations for behaviours in children and youth programs and to follow the recommended procedures for behaviour management. These procedures will be specific to each ministry area and will be provided as part of ministry specific requirements given to relevant leaders.

All contact with children and young people must be beyond reproach, appropriate and within the requirements set out by the church.

Physical discipline of a child or young person in a designated ministry activity is never appropriate.

There are some situations when leaders should involve the ministry coordinator immediately, and parents/guardians will be informed. This includes any occurrence of bullying, or physical violence.

While pursuing our priority of maintaining a safe environment, our goal in matters of discipline will be to see children and young people restored to normal engagement with our activities. However, in consultation with parents, there may be circumstances when children and young people may not be allowed to participate for a time.

In any situation, when a leader does not feel confident managing a child, young person or group's behaviour, they are to speak to the ministry coordinator for assistance.

Leaders and ministry coordinators will seek to involve parents/guardians whenever necessary, and to find solutions to ongoing behavioural issues.

Physical Touch Guidelines

In general, excluding circumstances such as immediate physical danger or medical emergency, physical contact should be initiated by the child or occur with their permission (where they are old enough to express their feelings). When you make physical contact with a child, be very careful that you respect the child's feelings and privacy.

The following table provides guidance for what may be considered appropriate physical touch by age group.

Age group	Physical touch guidelines
0-2 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If a baby or infant is crying or distressed, a normal response would be to pick them up, talk in reassuring tones and hold them in order to comfort them. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Try to discern the cause of their tears (e.g. hunger, soiled nappy, temporary separation from parents) and take action to overcome their discomfort. This may include holding them for a period. ● Within Christian ministry contexts, hugging, sitting on one's lap, rocking, carrying, rubbing or patting backs and hand holding are acceptable responses for this age group. ● Assistance with face-washing, hand-washing, examining sore spots or providing first aid and blowing noses will require appropriate touch. ● Parents/guardians are to change their own child's nappy. <p><i>Inappropriate contact includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you ● extended hugging or tickling ● touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume, and ● slapping, hitting, shaking or forceful grabbing.
3-5 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If a 3-5 year old is crying or distressed, a normal response would be to give them an open hug with comforting words. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Check for the cause of their distress by asking them and being aware of what is going on in the room. ○ Take appropriate action to address these issues where possible. ● Words or encouragement, providing some time and attention, or a tangible object to hold or play with may be more appropriate responses than prolonged physical touch. ● It may be appropriate to have them sit with you or join in an activity with assistance. ● The preferred strategy for this age group is to redirect their attention and energies to some other worthwhile activity, e.g. reading a book, playing a game or joining in with others. ● Assistance with face-washing, hand-washing, examining sore spots and blowing noses will all require appropriate touch. ● Assistance with toileting should be kept to a minimum, allowing the child to attend to their own needs as much as possible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A leader must never be alone with a child. If a child needs to go to the toilet, a leader must take a group of children together, preferably with two leaders. ○ If a child needs assistance with toileting, ask their parents/guardians to take their child to the toilet.

	<p><i>Appropriate contact includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● bending down to the child’s eye level, speaking kindly and listening attentively ● gaining permission before hugging a child and respecting their right to refuse ● taking a child’s hand and leading them to an activity ● comforting a child by placing an arm around their shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side ● praising or welcoming a child by holding the child’s two hands in yours ● patting the child on the head, hand, back or shoulder in affirmation, and ● holding a preschool child who is crying, provided they want to be held, and holding firmly from behind or across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury. <p><i>Inappropriate contact includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you ● extended hugging or tickling ● touching or hugging if they have asked you not to ● touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume, and ● slapping, hitting, shaking or forceful grabbing.
<p>Primary aged children</p>	<p><i>Appropriate contact includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● an open hug with space between you with the child’s permission or placing an arm around the shoulders giving a gentle squeeze from the side ● high fives, and ● holding firmly across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury. <p><i>Inappropriate contact includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you ● extended hugging or tickling ● touching or hugging if they have asked you not to ● touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume ● carrying or sitting them on your lap, and ● slapping, hitting, shaking or forceful grabbing.
<p>Teenagers</p>	<p>Ensure that any physical contact you have with teenagers is of a non-sexual nature and appropriate to the situation. Avoid any physical contact that is sexually stimulating, or that may be construed as sexual stimulation. Teenagers may or may not be aware of creating such situations. It is your responsibility to be alert for such situations and to cease any inappropriate physical contact immediately.</p> <p>In general, youth leaders should minimise physical contact with teenagers, remembering particularly that you must always get permission before making physical contact (unless in an emergency,</p>

	<p>to restrain or prevent injury). Any touch should be out in the open and in view of other leaders. Physical contact with teenagers should be limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● an open hug (with the child’s permission) creating a ‘triangle of safety’ or placing an arm around the shoulders giving a gentle squeeze from the side ● ‘neutral zones’ – shoulder to the elbow on the outside of the arm, or across the shoulders and the top of the back, and ● holding firmly from behind or across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury. <p><i>Inappropriate contact includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you ● extended hugging or tickling ● touching or hugging if they have asked you not to ● touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume ● carrying or sitting them on your lap, and ● slapping, hitting, shaking or forceful grabbing.
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Transportation

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing or arranging transport for their child and/or young person between home and the ministry venue.

Any person transporting children and/or young people involved in Crossroads activities is to:

- have completed appropriate Safe Ministries training
- drive responsibly and not be impaired by alcohol or any other mind altering, addictive or illegal substance/s
- have an unrestricted license, or written approval from parents and agreement from the responsible Pastor if the driver has a Provisional license
- be authorised in writing by a Pastoral member of staff
- use a motor vehicle/s (that may not be a motorbike) that is registered, insured, safe to operate and fitted with appropriate restraints or safety devices, and
- to the extent practicable, not be alone in a car with a child or young person even with permission from the parent/guardian (except where the child/young person is a family member of the driver). If such a situation is unavoidable, a member of Crossroads Pastoral staff must be informed of the trip and the reason for it. If possible, this notification should take place prior to the event.

Overnight activities and access to toilets

As a general rule, all overnight activities should involve the separation of boys from girls in sleeping arrangements. A similar approach should be adopted for the use of toileting facilities. Where an event involves children or young people identifying as LGBTQI+ it is important that their needs are discussed with individuals and parents/guardians. It may be desirable to document the agreed approach to ensure clarity exists between all parties. Any final arrangement must ensure that all children (and their parents/guardians) are comfortable with the arrangements. Whatever approach is adopted it must respect the maximum amount possible the privacy needs of the LGBTQI+ person.

Social Contact Policy/Communication

Requirements for those ministering to children (primary school age and below)

Leaders should take care that their communication with children is appropriate and above reproach. Be aware that those who wish to abuse children may use electronic communications to try to cultivate secretive or exclusive relationships.

Leaders should not contact children by email, mail, social media, video calls, using chat rooms or by any other form of electronic communication. Leaders should not call or text a child on the child's mobile phone.

All electronic communication must be with the child's parent or guardian. On the rare occasions when a leader might need to speak to a child on the phone for ministry purposes, the leader is to call the child's parent to explain why he or she is calling. Only then, with the parent's permission, should the leader speak with the child. The leader should be conscious of keeping the conversation with the child short.

Requirements for those ministering to youth (high school age) and vulnerable adults

For most young people in our society today, electronic communications are a part of daily life and a key way of engaging socially. New social media platforms and apps are being developed every day, and no one policy can hope to keep up with the ever-changing landscape. Rather than attempting to create a comprehensive policy, there are 10 key principles to guide leaders in their communication with young people and vulnerable adults.

Requirements for those involving youth/vulnerable adults in other ministries

From time to time, other ministries may wish to involve youth and vulnerable adults in their activities (e.g. music teams, growth groups). Any person contacting youth individually must ensure they cc email to parents and to youthcomms@crossroads.asn.au, and also abide by the ten principles below.

Ten Principles for Communicating with Children, Youth and Vulnerable People

1. ABOVE REPROACH

Communications should always be above reproach, both in terms of the content and the way it is communicated. Leaders should ask themselves: if this communication were to be made known to all of church, would they consider it to be appropriate?

Leaders ought to be sensitive to the impact of the words and images used, to avoid offence or miscommunication. They must never use flirtatious, sexually suggestive, explicit or offensive language or images. Leaders ought also to be conscious of how things might look. They should be careful that the circumstances of their communication do not suggest that their relationship with a young person is inappropriate by, for example, communicating regularly or late at night. Even if a leader's motives are pure, misunderstandings can arise.

2. IN PERSON IS BEST

Face-to-face interactions are the best way to build relationships with youth. Leaders should not use electronic communications for matters that are pastorally sensitive, emotionally

charged or that require a back-and-forth conversation. In those cases, it's much better to have a conversation in person. If a young person initiates a pastoral conversation with a leader using electronic communications, the leader should ask if they can talk about it with the young person the next time they see them.

3. BE TRANSPARENT

Be aware that those who wish to abuse young people may try to cultivate secretive or exclusive relationships through electronic communications. That is why it is so important for leaders to be transparent in all communications. Leaders should aim to keep communications public and brief.

Long or intense conversations by electronic means should be avoided. If a young person initiates a conversation like that, leaders should consider how to redirect it to a more transparent forum or include other people in the conversation. That might mean talking face to face or including another leader in the communication with the young person's permission. At the very least, the leader should let their ministry leader know so that nothing is going on in secret. Leaders should also keep any emails, text messages or conversation threads with youth, in case an accusation is ever made or a misunderstanding arises.

4. DON'T INITIATE SOCIAL MEDIA FRIENDSHIPS

There is a power imbalance that exists between leaders and the youth they are ministering to. That power imbalance might make it difficult for a young person to say 'no' when a leader initiates a friendship on social media by, for example, sending a Facebook friend request or following them on Instagram. For that reason, it is best for a leader not to initiate, though a leader might choose to accept if the young person initiates a friendship.

5. SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Wherever possible, leaders should communicate electronically with groups rather than individuals. The best practice when sending emails or text messages is to include multiple youth or another leader in the message. When using social media for ministry purposes, closed groups should be used where possible (for example, Facebook) and youth should be directed to the group rather than to a leader's individual account if possible.

6. BUILD UP THE CHURCH

When posting on social media, leaders should think carefully about the impact of what is being communicated on the entire church community (including children, youth and the vulnerable). It is important to remember that leaders are often seen as representing the church. Leaders ought to consider how they can build up the church community, and avoid being divisive, showing favouritism or making others feel excluded or inferior.

7. RESPECT OTHERS

Leaders should be careful to observe confidentiality and privacy in electronic communications, for example, not publishing the names, contact details or other personal information of people online.

8. BE TRUTHFUL

A leader should never hide their identity or pretend to be someone else. Electronic communications that seek to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else should not be used in ministry in any circumstances.

9. KNOW THE DIGITAL TERRAIN

When using social media, leaders should be aware of and comply with the terms of use, age restrictions, privacy options and controls for each site prior to using it in ministry.

10. REPORTING ONLINE ABUSE

Laws regarding mandatory reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children and youth apply equally to the digital world.

AND FINALLY, USE COMMON SENSE!

There may be exceptional circumstances that arise from time to time, and common sense might dictate that a leader deviates from their usual practice when it comes to electronic communications. In those situations, leaders must be transparent and above reproach and, where possible, should seek advice from their ministry leader.

Recommendations about the sort of contact that is likely to be appropriate at different ages:

Type of contact	Primary school Students	Years 7–9 Students	Years 10–12 Students
Phone calls	Only after speaking to parent then, if the parent gives permission, with the child and only for ministry purposes.	To be avoided. Preferable to speak with the parent first and ask permission to speak with the young person.	Reasonable phone contact for ministry purposes permissible. Long conversations to be avoided.
Text messages	✗	For logistical purposes only	For logistical purposes and encouragement
Email	✗	For logistical purposes and encouragement (for individual communication cc parents and youthcomms@crossroads.asn.au)	For logistical purposes and encouragement (for individual communication cc parents and youthcomms@crossroads.asn.au)
Social networking (Facebook, Instagram, etc)	✗	Use discretion and keep in mind the 10 key principles above.	Use discretion and keep in mind the 10 key principles above.
Video calls/streaming and chat rooms	✗	Only if approved by a pastor	Only if approved by a pastor

Meeting outside programmed events

Guidelines for ministering to Year 6 and under

It is not appropriate for leaders to meet up with children socially, unless it is in the context of socialising with the child's family.

Guidelines for ministering to Years 7-9

It is never appropriate for a youth leader to meet socially with youth in Years 7-9 without written or verbal permission from parents and discussing it with the Head of the Youth Ministry (or ministry supervisor). This type of meeting is best done in groups rather than one-to-one, and should be with youth of the same gender.

Guidelines for ministering to Years 10-12

Leaders may choose to meet casually with mixed groups of youth in Years 10-12 or in one-to-one meetings with members of the same gender. Any meetings should be in a public place and parents and the supervisor of the ministry should be aware of this contact outside of programmed events, including the location, duration and reason for the meeting. If a leader is proposing to do this, they must obtain parental permission and discuss it with the Head of Youth Ministry (or ministry supervisor) first.

Photographs

An appointed leader may take photos of children/youth ministry activities subject to all restrictions outlined below.

- Only use photos in accordance with the purpose for which consent was given in writing (e.g. putting in a brochure/advertising campaign etc.).
- Photos should be saved to a secure location as soon as practical and kept secure.
- The photos should then be deleted from the device as soon as practical, and never stored on personal cloud-based accounts.
- Leaders should not be taking photos of children or young people during ministry activities for any reason other than official ministry purposes which have been clearly discussed with the ministry leader.

When taking photos:

- Photos should be taken on a device designated by the ministry leader.
- Young people should be discouraged from photographing leaders.
- Children and young people must not be photographed without parental/guardian consent or where the child/young person/parent/guardian has asked not to be photographed.
- Focus on small groups rather than individuals.
- All children and/or young people must be appropriately dressed when photographed.
- Embarrassing or possibly degrading photos must be deleted immediately.

When using photos of children or young people in print or online:

- Seek written permission annually from parents/guardians before posting photos of children and/or young people on the church website or social media.
- Avoid identifying the person/s in the photograph in physical publications.
- Do not identify people in the photograph.
- Ensure all young people are appropriately dressed when photographed (e.g. not in swimwear or pyjamas).

- Ministry leaders must regularly monitor the Church's social media to ensure photos and comments are appropriate.

Video phoning (mobile phone/internet)

- Church workers should avoid entering into conversations of this nature with children and/or young people. Where it is unavoidable (e.g. COVID when all meetings were online), at all times at least two leaders must be involved in the video conversation when engaging with children or young people. Pastoral approval is required.

Reporting Responsibilities

Crossroads has a number of reporting responsibilities, as outlined below.

Emergency Situations

If you believe the child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, contact the Police immediately by calling 000.

Sexual Offences against a child

Under the *Crimes Act 1900* all adults in the ACT are required to tell Police if they have a **reasonable belief** a sexual offence has been committed against a child. Failure to report is a criminal offence under the [ACT Crimes Act 1900](#). For all other circumstances call ACT Policing on 131 444 to report.

ACT Government Voluntary and Mandatory Reporting

Under the *Children and Young People Act 2008* there are two types of reporting: voluntary and mandatory reporting.

Voluntary reporting allows **any person** who is concerned about a child or unborn child to make a Child Concern Report to Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) if they believe or suspect a child is:

- being abused, or
- being neglected, or
- exposed to family violence, or
- at risk of abuse or neglect.

Voluntary reporting also includes a report of an unborn child if it is believed or suspected this child may be at risk after birth. This is called prenatal reporting.

Everyone in the community is a voluntary reporter. As a voluntary reporter, you should always provide CYPS with the basis for your belief or suspicion honestly and without recklessness. Knowingly providing false or misleading information is an offence under the Children and Young People Act 2008 and you can be charged. A maximum penalty of 50 penalty units, six months imprisonment or both apply to this offence.

Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement for certain professionals to make a Child Concern Report to CYPS if, through the course of their work (paid or unpaid), they believe on reasonable grounds a child may be:

- being or has been sexually abused, or
- experiencing or has experienced non-accidental physical injury (physical abuse).

Mandated reporters are **also** voluntary reporters and as such can choose to report any other form of abuse or neglect to CYPS, however they are not obliged to do so under mandatory reporting laws.

If you are a Mandated Reporter you should spend some time familiarising yourself with your obligations under the law. If you would like to learn more about your obligations you can read the 'Keeping Children and Young People Safe Guide' available at the following link:

See: [Keeping Children and Young People Safe - Community Services](#)

Ombudsman Reportable Conduct Scheme

Crossroads must notify the ACT Ombudsman about allegations of reportable conduct involving an employee, which may include certain volunteers and contractors. Broadly reportable conduct is child abuse or misconduct with a person under 18 years. A Safe Ministry Supervisor should be contacted if you have any concerns or would like to report concern about staff or volunteer conduct.

See: [Reportable conduct](#)

Reporting Process

Reporting Child Abuse

It is your responsibility **to ensure** that **any** child abuse that you become aware of is reported to the relevant authorities. You may become aware of abuse because you have observed indicators of abuse, another person has informed you of their concerns for a child, or a child has told you they are being abused.

Suspicious

If you suspect risk of harm to a child or young person in your group, e.g. there is evidence of a physical injury or odd behaviour, note the following:

- details of the individual child involved including date of birth and address (if known),
- time and place, and
- grounds for forming the belief that abuse has occurred (this information should be kept in a secure place).

Do not investigate or take action on your own. Raise the matter and discuss it with your ministry leader or pastor.

Disclosure

If you find yourself in a situation where a person tells you they are being, or have been abused, show your care and concern by:

- Listening carefully to what the child/young person is saying, be patient and calm, but do not ask leading questions.
- Reassuring the child/young person that disclosing was the right thing to do.
- Indicating what you will do, i.e. that you will contact the Safe Ministry Supervisor for assistance.

Please do **not**:

- Start an investigation, i.e. Do not seek further details beyond those that the child/young person freely wants to discuss.
- Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone or stop the abuse happening.
- Tell anyone that does not need to know.

As soon as possible after the disclosure you must:

- a. WRITE DOWN the details of what was said including such details as:
 - who you spoke to,
 - time and place,
 - what you said,
 - what the young person said, and
 - any grounds for forming the belief that abuse has occurred.

Keep to the facts about what was said and don't express your opinion.

Be aware that this document must be signed and dated and could be subpoenaed in court proceedings

- b. SPEAK to a Crossroads Safe Ministry Supervisor. They can help you confirm the appropriate steps forward and are mandated to report if they have reason to believe the child is being abused or neglected.
- c. REPORT the information to the appropriate authorities, with the Safe Ministry Supervisor. (As outlined in the table below).

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES (TABLE)

ISSUE OR CONCERN	REPORT TO:
General suspicions	Ministry Coordinator or Pastor
You have significant reason to believe a child is being abused or neglected within a family context	<p>Police Contact police immediately by calling 000 if you believe a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation.</p> <p>Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) If possible, discuss with the Safe Ministry Supervisor first and use the “Guide to reporting child abuse and neglect in the ACT” (www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/keeping-child-ren-and-young-people-safe)</p> <p>Professional Standards Unit Where the alleged perpetrator is a church worker* the Safe Ministry Supervisor will alert the Senior Pastor** who will contact the PSU.</p>
You have knowledge of relevant criminal offences, including sexual offences against a child, or you have significant reason to believe a child is being abused or neglected <i>outside</i> of a family context	<p>Police Contact police immediately by calling 000 if you believe a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation.</p> <p>Safe Ministry Supervisor</p> <p>ACT Policing 131 444</p> <p>Senior Pastor** or designated Crossroads Council member</p> <p>(Professional Standards Unit) (regarding a church worker*)</p>

Reportable conduct by a church worker* toward children	<p>Senior Pastor**/church worker's employer</p> <p>ACT Ombudsman</p> <p>ACT Policing Where relevant criminal offence has been committed 131 444</p>
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Contact the Professional Standards Unit if you are unsure of what to do in any circumstance or where an allegation is regarding the Senior Minister

* A church worker includes a pastor, any ministry volunteer or leader (e.g., Kingdom Kids leader, Crossfire leader, Growth Group leader, musician, etc), council member, and office staff.

** Do not report to the Senior Minister if the allegation is regarding the Senior Minister, but to Professional Standards Unit and the Council member responsible for Safe Ministry.

Please note:

- If you are a **Mandated Reporter** (paid staff at Crossroads), and you have made a mandatory report about child sexual abuse to CYPS, you do not have to report the same information to police under the Failure to Report offence. CYPS will pass relevant information onto the police.
- However, you should be aware that if the information is not subject to a mandatory report, or is obtained outside the course of your employment, you will need to make a report to the **police** under the new legislation.
- Since our organisation has obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, it has to comply with those obligations independently of Failure to Report and Mandatory Reporting. It doesn't matter if you have made a report to police or to CYPS, your organisation must still meet any obligations it has under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Confidentiality

You must treat any suspicion, knowledge or disclosure of abuse with the utmost confidentiality. Apart from reporting it to the relevant authorities and to the Safe Ministry Supervisor or Pastor, you must not ordinarily share the information with anyone else.

Before Making a Report

Sometimes a child's circumstances can have a negative effect on their wellbeing, however this does not necessarily mean the child is being abused or neglected. Before making a report to CYPS, consider if involving the child protection system is the most appropriate response, or if perhaps there is a better solution for you to ensure the child and family is okay.

Before making a report to CYPS, it is good to:

- **Speak with the child:** If you know the child, have a gentle conversation with them. Let them know you are worried there may be something wrong. By simply offering to listen, you can help the child open up about any issues they may be having.
- **Speak with the parents:** Depending on the situation, speaking with the parents about your concerns may be the best first step. You could work with the parents to resolve any issues – whether this is you being actively involved, connecting them with other services or just letting them know you are there if they want help. Engaging with parents in a positive and supportive way can help build trust and expand their support network. However, if after raising your concerns with the parents you believe abuse or neglect may be happening, it is **very important that you do not** conduct your own investigation or interfere with a future CYPS processes. Instead, record the parents' responses to your questions for future reference. Observations, comments and parent responses can be included as part of your Child Concern Report to CYPS.
- **Consider available support services:** There are many support services that specialise in providing help to parents and their children. See 'Supporting families: other ways you can help'.

Important:

If you believe the child is in **immediate** danger or in a life-threatening situation, contact the Police immediately by calling 000.

Factors that increase vulnerability to abuse and neglect

Abuse and neglect are complex and typically involve many connected factors. A child's exposure, or risk of exposure, to these factors increases their vulnerability to abuse and neglect. Such factors include:

- history of previous abuse or neglect of the child
- abuse or neglect of a sibling
- family history of violence
- social or geographic isolation of the child or family, including lack of access to extended family
- physical or mental health issues, or developmental disability, of the parent affecting their ability to care for the child
- alcohol or drug abuse by the parent, affecting their ability to care for the child
- significant difficulties by the parent in managing the child's behaviour
- unrealistic expectations by the parent of age appropriate behaviour in the child.

Checklist

The following checklist will help you decide if you should make a report to CYPS **and/or** the Police.

- I have formed a **reasonable** belief a child is being, has been, or is at significant risk of being abused or neglected.
- I am clear on what basis I have formed this belief.

- **My definition** of abuse or neglect is consistent with the definition provided in this guide (see Appendix B - definitions).
- I am responding to a behaviour (for example sexualised behaviour) that may have many causes, or a **pattern of behaviours** that point to abuse or neglect.
- This particular abuse or neglect has, to my knowledge, **not yet been reported** to CYPS or the Police by another person.
- I have **sufficient information** that will enable CYPS or the Police to identify the child my report relates to.
- I believe the abuse or neglect is occurring **within the family****

**Note CYPS reports only deal with abuse or neglect within the family

When making a report you should also be prepared to share what you know about:

- the child's behaviour inside and outside their home
- the child's siblings
- the child's parents or carers.

Making a Report

If you believe a child is in **immediate** danger or in a life-threatening situation, please contact the **Police** immediately by calling 000.

Mandated reporters (paid staff)

To make a report to CYPS, use the online portal at:

- <https://form.act.gov.au/smartforms/csd/child-concern-report>

You can also make a report using the contact details below:

- Mandated reporters 24-hour line: 1300 556 728
- childprotection@act.gov.au
- <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child-and-youth-protection-services>

All reports

- Non-mandated reporters 24-hour line: 1300 556 729
- childprotection@act.gov.au
- <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child-and-youth-protection-services>

If you are reporting child sexual abuse (as a non-mandated reporter), you can do this by:

- calling **ACT Police** on 131 444.

Regardless of what type of abuse or neglect you are reporting, or if you are reporting to CYPS or the Police, when making your report you will be asked to provide information about:

- the child – including name, age, background

- the family – including general details of the parents and other significant people living in the home
- the reason for your concern – including what happened and where, who was involved, what led to the incident, any visible injuries, the impact on the child, who you believe to be responsible
- relevant circumstances – such as drug or alcohol misuse, mental health, financial issues, past trauma, unemployment, court matters
- your details and connection to the child – your information will remain strictly confidential, CYPS (or the Police) may just need to contact you if more information is needed.

Be as detailed as possible. The information you provide is central to the decision-making process. The more information you can provide helps to make a timely and informed assessment of what further action should be taken, and for the child, and family, to receive the necessary help as soon as possible.

If you are **unsure** of what you are seeing is abuse or neglect, contact CYPS to discuss your concerns. CYPS staff will advise you if your concerns are consistent with the legal definitions of abuse and/or neglect. See 'Contacts'.

If you do not have access to a computer, you can also call CYPS (1300 556 729) to make your report.

Protection of reporters

When you make a Child Concern Report to CYPS, the Children and Young People Act 2008 provides you with certain protections. This includes protection of your identity and protection from prosecution.

Protection of your identity

When you make a report, your identity is protected under law from being disclosed to any other person, except in certain exceptional circumstances. This applies to both voluntary and mandated reporters.

When you make a report, you are required to be honest and to act without recklessness. If after investigating your allegations CYPS determines the child is not at risk, you cannot be held legally or professionally liable if you have acted honestly and reasonably. However, it is an offence to knowingly make a false or misleading report.

After Making a Report

Pastoral care

A victim of abuse may require immediate specialist counselling or other support. When a report is made to the Professional Standards Unit, the Professional Standards Unit Chaplain can provide advice on care for victims and their families. Victims often need ongoing contact and support and the Safe Ministry Supervisor or Pastor should ensure that an appropriate person is appointed to follow up with them.

Possible Trauma from Exposure to Disclosures of Abuse

Each person has a unique response to receiving a disclosure of abuse.

There may be some common reactions such as: shock, anger, sympathy for the victim and frustration.

However, there may also be more severe reactions which may in some cases have a more invasive impact on a person's ability to function effectively within their ministry and life in general.

In these situations, it may be helpful for this person to seek additional counselling support. The Safe Ministry Supervisors and pastoral staff can offer direction and suggestion for this extra support.

You may also wish to contact the following external organisations for support:

- Lifeline on 13 11 14
- 1800 Respect on 1800 737 732
- Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800
- MensLine on 1300 789 978
- Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636

Reporting Vulnerable Adult Abuse

REPORTING SUSPECTED VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES (TABLE)

ISSUE OR CONCERN	REPORT TO:
Sexual abuse of an adult by a church worker*	<p>Police</p> <p>Senior Minister** or designated Crossroads Council member</p> <p>(Professional Standards Unit) (regarding a church worker)</p>
Other abusive behaviour by a church worker* e.g. physical violence, bullying	<p>Senior Pastor**/church worker's employer</p> <p>ACT Ombudsman</p> <p>ACT Policing Where relevant criminal offence has been committed 131 444</p>
Criminal conduct	<p>Police</p> <p>Senior Minister** or designated Crossroads Council member</p> <p>(Professional Standards Unit) (regarding a church worker)</p>
Threat of harm to self or others	<p>Police, Ambulance, Mental health service (as required)</p>

Contact the Professional Standards Unit if you are unsure of what to do in any circumstance or where an allegation is regarding the Senior Minister

* A church worker includes a pastor, any ministry volunteer or leader (eg, Kingdom Kids leader, Crossfire leader, Growth Group leader, musician, etc), council member, and office staff.

** Do not report to the Senior Minister if the allegation is regarding the Senior Minister

Reporting contact information is listed in Appendix A of [0101 Safe Ministry Policy](#).

First Aid, Risk and Food Safety

See Event Management Policies.

Appendix A – Responsibilities

Policy review

- Safe Ministry policies and requirements should be reviewed annually, and following any relevant incident.
- The Executive Pastor will be responsible for ensuring the policies are regularly reviewed.

Safe Ministries Mailbox

- Dan Walton and Kerry Rudder are responsible for monitoring the safe ministries mailbox (safeministry@crossroads.asn.au).
- Dan Walton and Kerry Rudder will action, respond and/or refer all correspondence received as appropriate.

Compliance – WWVP

- The Executive Pastor, along with the SAFE Ministry Staff Worker, will monitor compliance of staff, leaders and volunteers with the ACT Government's Working with Vulnerable People scheme.

Compliance – Training

- The Executive Pastor, along with the SAFE Ministry Staff Worker, will monitor training compliance.

Compliance – all other requirements

- The Executive Pastor, along with the SAFE Ministry Staff Worker, will monitor compliance with all other requirements of the SAFE Ministry Requirements, including adherence to screening requirements for each Leader level (interview, reading and signing of relevant documents, referee checks, etc.)

Appendix B – Definitions

Child Abuse

Abuse of a child or young person generally means:

- ▶ physical abuse
- ▶ sexual abuse or other exploitation of a child, including child grooming
- ▶ emotional (including psychological and verbal abuse; exposure to the physical, sexual or psychological of a person whom the child has a relationship to; and exposure to material which has, or is, causing harm to the wellbeing or development of the child or young person)
- ▶ neglect of the child
- ▶ exposure to violence, including family and domestic violence.

Grooming

Grooming is when someone tries to build trusting relationships with children or families with the aim of child sexual abuse. Grooming involves the person building connection and trust with a child and family over days, weeks, months or years. For example, the person might befriend a family and seem to have an amazing connection with the child. The person might gradually spend more and more time with the child. This lays the ground work for sexual abuse at a later time.

Anyone can be a groomer and grooming can happen face-to-face or online.¹

Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement for certain professionals to make a report to the ACT Government if, through the course of their work, (paid or unpaid) they believe on reasonable grounds a child may be:

- being or has been sexually abused, or
- experiencing or has experienced non-accidental physical injury (physical abuse).

In the ACT certain people are mandated to report situations where they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person has experienced abuse or neglect. The mandated reporter is not required to prove that abuse or neglect has occurred.

If a person suspects or believes on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is experiencing abuse or neglect or they wish to discuss concerns about a child or young person, they should contact the ACT Care and Protection Services as soon as possible.

Reports can be made through the online portal from the [Access Canberra or Community Services Directorate website](#).

More information is available here the [ACT Community Services Directorate website](#).

Ministry Team – TBC

¹ <https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/safety/online-safety/grooming-signs>

Reportable conduct – the Reportable Conduct Scheme in the ACT requires certain organisations (including religious bodies) who work with children to:

- report allegations of child abuse and misconduct to the ACT Ombudsman, including:
 - ill-treatment of a child (such as emotional abuse or use of force)
 - neglect
 - psychological harm
 - misconduct of a sexual nature
 - sexual or physical offences and convictions where a child is a victim or is present
 - inappropriate discipline or not protecting children from harm.
- develop policies and procedures to prevent and respond to child abuse.

More information is available on the [ACT Ombudsman website](#).

Vulnerable Persons

In the ACT a vulnerable person is defined as:

- a child, or
- an adult who is –
 - disadvantaged, and
 - accessing a regulated activity in relation to the disadvantage.
 - For example – disadvantaged
 - an adult with a physical or mental disability
 - an adult who suffers social or financial hardship
 - an adult who cannot communicate, or who has difficulty communicating, in English.

Other examples of what can make a child or adult vulnerable include:

- cultural and linguistic diversity
- identifying as LGBTQI+
- with disability
- elderly
- having an illness, including mental health concerns, and
- cognitive impairment.

Working with Vulnerable People Check

The ACT's Working with Vulnerable People Act requires those who work or volunteer with vulnerable people to have a background check and be registered.

For more information visit the [ACT Access Canberra website](#).