

WAGGA WAGGA EVANGELICAL CHURCH

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WAGGAWAGGA  
EVANGELICAL CHURCH

# WVEC GUIDELINE - Serving in WVEC Children's/Youth Ministry

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# Introduction

Wagga Wagga Evangelical Church loves and values children as Jesus does. As a result the church considers it a privilege to teach and instruct children and contribute to growing them in their knowledge and love of God.

Children's/Youth ministries at WWEC include:

- Kids church (including Preschoolers and K-5 school year groups)
- Youth church (6-8 school year group)
- Youth group (7-12 school years)
- Women's daytime Bible study crèche
- Mission events for children

The following information outlines guidelines designed to ensure the safety and welfare of children and youth in our care, and our ministry workers. The primary strategy for achieving this is outlined below:

***To ensure the safety of our children and ministry workers, ministry workers should never be completely alone with a child or young person, except in an emergency situation that would warrant completion of an incident report.***

***As an absolute minimum there must be at least two children/youth with a children's/youth worker at all times. In all situations it is preferable that at least two ministry workers are present.***

The principle above applies to all children's/youth ministries, all activities, all venues, all the time. This principle underpins the following guidelines.

# Supervision

During our Sunday church services, children are supervised in the 'Listen and Play Room' by their parents up to the age of 2 years. Our formal Kid's Ministry programs begin at 2 years with the Preschoolers program (2 year - school age), K-5 (Years K-5 at school), Youth Church (Years 6-8) and Leaders In Training (upper high school).

We require a ratio of at least 1:8 in Preschoolers or no less than 2 leaders in a room.

Kids Church age (Kindy - Year 5) we aim for a ratio of at least 1:15 or no less than 2 leaders in a room.

Youth church (Year 6-8) normally has 2 leaders, and each leader is aware of the need to ensure they are never alone with a young person, and that at least two youth are present in a room with a leader at any given time. Youth Church aims for a ratio of at least 1:15.

Youth Group (Year 7 to Year 12) also aims for a ratio of 1:15 with no less than 2 leaders in a room. These ratios should also be maintained at combined youth events, with visiting youth groups providing as a minimum requirement:

1. Approximate number of youth attending
2. Number of supervising adults
3. WWCC (working with children Check) details for each adult supervisor

It is acknowledged the degree of supervision will vary according to the:

- venue, time, duration and nature of the activity
- age, maturity, ability and gender mix of the children
- size of the group <sup>1</sup>.

## Registration and permission forms

Parents/guardians of new children attending our kids/youth church programs on Sunday (all children up to age 18) are required to complete a paper registration form for their child which is given to the leader of the group before the lesson so that any medical information and emergency contact details are known. Where families continue to attend WWEC, with permission, their details are entered into the WWEC database 'Elvanto'. Parents/carers have access to their profiles in Elvanto and can modify information at any time. Relevant child/youth church contact details and medical information is included on sign in sheets/rolls (see below) which are updated each term.

Parents/guardians of new children attending our youth group on a Friday night are sent a link by text or email asking them to provide relevant information and permissions relating to their child attending WWEC youth group.

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<sup>1</sup> Faithfulness in Service 2007

## **Preschoolers**

Leaders (or if required, parents) walk children to their room and sign children into the program. Once the children are settled the leader takes a head count and ensures this tallies with the number of children on the sign in sheet. Preschooler children are not able to leave the room after the program until they are signed out by a parent or carer. This provides the opportunity for helpers to provide a handover or feedback to the parents/carers, and to discuss any issues or concerns. This is particularly helpful for visitors and newcomers. Siblings under 18 years cannot sign children out of children's ministry events or activities. Parents may give permission for other adults to sign children out. It is preferred that the children's/youth ministry workers are made aware of this when the child/children are signed in. In rare circumstances where a parent/carers does not arrive to collect their child, the leaders will either call the parent or take the child back to their parent in the main hall.

## **K-5**

Children in the K-5 rooms walk to the classrooms with their teacher. A roll is taken at the beginning of the lesson. If the children leave the room during the lesson for an activity, everyone will walk to the activity as a group, a head count is completed on arriving at the activity (e.g. grassed area), and a head count is repeated on return to the classroom. At the end of church, a leader walks children back to adult church, or parents come to the room to collect their children directly. Leaders will pass on any necessary feedback to parents/carers after church when parents collect children, or at morning tea. Permission forms are completed for any off-site activities.

## **Youth Church**

Our youth leave the adult service after the Kids talk, in the break, and walk together with their leader(s) to their room to complete a Bible study. A roll is taken at the start of Youth Church. Youth return to the main hall after their program is completed.

## **Youth Group**

Our youth group runs weekly on Friday night from 7-9pm during school term. Our youth team consists of a minimum of 2 leaders each week, with at least one male and one female. Youth sign in to the program each week and sign out when they leave. Parents are asked to complete a registration form at the start of each year, or when their child begins attending Youth Group. Any information about youth is directed to parents/carers through SMS and email. Permission forms must be completed for any off-site activities such as our annual youth camp.

Note: if children turn 18 years of age and are still at school and attending WWEC youth church/group events permission/communication is still completed via parents. When youth finish schooling they can no longer attend WWEC youth group or youth events. Leadership of the Youth Group is organised by and at the discretion of the Youth Group Team Leader. Ideally, Youth Leaders are not drawn from youth who have recently graduated from school themselves, except in the case of those involved in registered training programs (for example WWEC's Gospel Apprenticeship Program (GAP)).

# Personal care

Assisting and encouraging independence shows love and concern for the children in our care<sup>2</sup>. We avoid providing personal care, particularly where it is possible for the child to perform the task for themselves<sup>3</sup>.

The following guidelines have been designed to assist in this regard:

- If a nappy change is required in Preschooler Kids Church, a Kids Church Leader will ask the parent/carer to come and change the nappy.
- Parents of pre-school children are encouraged to take them to the toilet before signing in at kids church.
- For Preschool groups, parents are called to assist their children in toileting. If the parent is unavailable, a female helper will take a minimum of two children to the toilet, and generally no more than five children at a time. The helper will not assist the child to do anything they can do themselves, and will avoid entering the toilet cubicle with a child.
- If a younger child needs to be lifted onto the toilet, the helper will do this with the door open and then immediately leave the cubicle. If assistance is required with clothing this is provided prior to entering the cubicle. In the occasional instance where assistance may be required with toileting, disposable gloves are available in the kids church box.
- K-5 children are to go with a friend of the same gender to the closest toilets. Leaders/helpers will monitor the time children are away from the classroom. A helper will be sent to locate them as soon as it is decided they have not returned in a reasonable timeframe.
- If there is an instance where it is necessary for a helper to escort older children to the toilet, the helper will remain in the entry doorway. Helpers are not to enter the toilet cubicle to assist older children with personal care. If assistance is required parents are notified to assist their child.
- In the case of children with special needs any special requirements will be identified in discussion with the parents before the child is left in care. There may be the capacity to provide some additional assistance providing this is within the scope of child protection legislation and WWEC policies.

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<sup>2</sup> Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual

<sup>3</sup> Faithfulness in service 2007

# Unsettled / upset children

Parents are encouraged to support strategies designed to minimise the likelihood of children becoming upset in the process of separating from parents or carers. In the preschoolers group for example, parents are asked to pack morning tea (snack and drink) for their children, which the children have on arrival. If children become upset in Preschoolers, the kid's church team member will utilise a number of strategies to divert attention and engage the children in activities they enjoy. If however a child cries continuously and cannot be consoled for a period in excess of 5 minutes, a kids church team member will notify the parent/s. There may be times where parents and team members negotiate a longer time period, however if the child cannot be consoled and is crying continuously, a team member will notify the parents or carers and ask them to return to the Preschoolers group after a maximum period of 10 minutes.

## Activities and games

It is important to consider the message children may learn from the way events are organised and conducted. Games or activities that emphasise gender, physical, intellectual or ethnic differences should be assessed for their appropriateness. Games involving physical contact especially with older children should also be considered to ensure the level and type of contact is appropriate, and is not likely to offend or embarrass more sensitive participants<sup>4</sup>.

Some other aspects of games and activities that should be considered include:

- how teams are selected - does the process make anyone feel uncomfortable or undervalued?
- how leaders are chosen - does everyone get a chance to lead?
- does the game or activity encourage cooperation, team work, and inclusion of all team members?
- will everyone understand the game and be able to participate?
- is the activity appropriate for all the ages represented in the group?
- how will you manage the situation where a child is unwilling to participate?
- is the environment safe? is the activity safe?
- will children who are visiting feel comfortable with this activity?
- have you got sufficient team members to ensure safety, facilitate inclusion and participation, and to monitor and moderate behaviour appropriately?
- have you carefully previewed any visual materials you will be using to ensure suitability?

If you have any doubts about the suitability of the activity or game it is recommended that you do not proceed with the activity. It would also be useful to seek the opinion of your Team Leader in this instance.

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<sup>4</sup> Faithfulness in Service 2007

# First aid and emergencies

The following strategies are employed to ensure safety:

- A registration form is completed for new children attending any children's/youth ministry activity to identify allergies, special food requirements/restrictions, or other special needs
- WWEC asks that no food to be brought to church that contains nuts. Parents are to supervise children when morning tea or other foods are provided at church to ensure children with other allergies eat appropriately.
- Leaders are not able to accept children who are unwell with contagious illnesses. Where it becomes obvious children in care are unwell the child will be escorted back to their parents or the parents asked to collect their child.
- The primary first aid kit is maintained at church in the first aid box under the welcome table (near church hall entrance). Smaller first aid kits are maintained in the kids church boxes in each room.

In the event of a minor incident, leaders will administer basic first aid (e.g. apply band aid). Detailed information regarding first aid and emergencies procedures is outlined in *WWEC Procedure - Workplace Health & Safety (WHS)*. A copy of the procedure is located in the WWEC Sunday Services Folder located in the hall where WWEC Sunday morning church is held. If it is necessary to administer first aid and the child remains upset after a period in excess of 5 minutes the parents or carers will be advised. If the child settles, the leader will advise the parents of the details of the incident when they collect the child. An incident report form may be required. In the event of any significant injury or incident the parents will be asked to attend immediately if they are onsite, or telephoned if off-site. The decision making in relation to care will then rest with the parent, however the leaders will provide whatever assistance they can. The leaders will complete a *WWEC Incident Report*. Forms are located in the WWEC Sunday Services Folder. The leaders will notify the Ministry Team Leader as soon as possible and give them the completed *WWEC Incident Report*.

WWEC's Emergency Procedures will be accessible at the back of the main hall within WWEC's Safe Church Folder. It will also be within each of the Kid's church folders. WWEC will utilise the evacuation plans already displayed by Wagga Wagga Christian College which display fire fighting equipment, exit points and evacuation assembly areas.

In the event of an evacuation leaders are responsible for implementing the WWEC Evacuation Plan. A copy of the plan is included in the WWEC Sunday Services Folder. In the event of an evacuation from the Kids or Youth Church school rooms, Kids & Youth Church Leaders will follow the procedure below:

- a 'runner' from the main WWEC service will be sent to quietly notify the Kids Church Leader of the need to evacuate
- a Kids Church Leader is to collect sign in sheet and/or attendance roll, a Kids Church Leader is to assemble children in a line, with a leader at the front and back of the line. They are to mark off children to ensure all are present and advise children they will be moving to the grassed area behind the hall (the school evacuation assembly point)
- calmly leave the classroom, head out the main door, and proceed to the grassed area behind the hall (see School Site Evacuation Map within each room)
- all children must remain within their group (parents are instructed not to collect their children until a roll call is completed)
- on arrival at assembly point leaders advise the Ministry Team Leader or Emergency Warden they have arrived

- children can be collected from class lines at this point but must be marked off on the attendance roll by the leader as they are collected by parents/carers.

In the event of an evacuation during Friday night youth group, the Youth Group Team Leader is the Evacuation Warden. Their role is outlined in WWEC's Evacuation plan. Youth Group leaders are to support the Youth Group Team Leader during an evacuation. WWEC's Evacuation plan utilises Wagga Wagga Christian College Site Evacuation Map (found on the wall of the main Wagga Wagga Christian College hall) and evacuation assembly points.

## Communication

Ministry workers should never be completely alone with a child or young person. This same principle applies to all forms of communication with children and young people. When considering other communication media (e.g. email, social networking or chat sites, phone, text messaging), it would not generally be considered necessary or appropriate for ministry workers to enter into closed one-on-one conversation with a child or young person.

Communication between ministry workers and children/youth should:

- Be for administrative or logistical content e.g. reminder about event, change of event time
- Be open communication e.g. a group email to participants, or inclusion of the Team Leader or other relevant ministry workers in 'cc' field when emailing
- Be for the purpose of personal encouragement, only be undertaken with another leader included in the communication for transparency and accountability.
- Be with the approval of, or under the direction of, the Ministry Team Leader and relate to the activities of WWEC
- Where possible, records of communication should be retained in keeping with legislative record keeping requirements.

### Facebook/Instagram

- Generally communication for youth activities will be done via emails to parents. When necessary the general WWEC Facebook page can be utilised for notices to the youth by the director of social media.
- Ministry workers must not seek out and 'friend' youth with their personal Facebook account. If a young person seeks out and 'friends' a ministry worker, they are allowed to accept their 'friend request'. This then means they can now see each others posts. Note - all communication must be kept out in the open for all to see.
- On instagram the youth are allowed to follow ministry workers but ministry workers are not to 'follow' the youth back.
- It is never acceptable to have a private message thread in Facebook/Instagram. If communication occurs, it should be on 'walls' where parents and other ministry workers can observe.
- No photos are to be posted on Facebook/Instagram unless the parents have given consent (parents consent records are kept on *Elvanto*). Security settings of any open Facebook page must be set to restrict non-administrators from posting photos.
- Should it be deemed necessary for the Youth Group to have a social media account of any kind the content must be regularly reviewed by the Youth Team Leader and by the Director of Kids &



Youth. In this event ministry workers must ensure no bullying or inappropriate communication occurs between young people on the social media site. Any inappropriate communication should be removed and, as a last resort, young people can be 'blocked' from the page.

### **Informal meetings with youth outside of weekly youth group**

A youth leader is able to meet up with a youth, of the same gender, informally during the week (eg. for a 1:1 bible reading) if:

- Parents have given explicit consent and there is a minimum of two youth or two leaders present if the meeting is taking place in an isolated venue (eg. An office, meeting hub etc).
- If meetings are held in a home, a parent/caregiver must be present on the premises and the meeting must take place in a living room or highly visible space (ie. NOT in a room with the door closed).
- Where there is only one youth, the location must be a public space where there is clear visibility and others present (eg. a park or food court).
- It is preferable that youth are dropped off and picked up by parents – no lifts to be given. This acts as an additional form of (implied) consent.
- If youth walk to or from the informal gathering, then a phone call or text message is to be made to the parents to let them know where their child is and confirm their consent.
- Leaders must ensure they are never alone with one youth and isolated in a venue.

### **Email**

- Email content should generally be restricted to administrative/logistical content only
- Avoid emailing individuals, use group emails
- When communicating with youth under 18 years of age, use the email address of the youth's parent(s), otherwise if using the email address of the youth, always copy the email to one of the other youth group leaders (who does not live in the same household)

### **Phone**

- Contact should be restricted to short calls for administrative/logistical purposes only.
- No personal calls. Defer other matters until a face to face meeting can be organised (with another adult or youth present). This acts as a protection and boundary to ensure leaders are not isolated or over-burdened.
- Consider whether it may be more appropriate to convey information by phone directly to parents.
- Consider contacting their home phone in preference to their mobile phone. If parents answer the phone advise of the purpose of your call and the expected length of the phone conversation. It may be appropriate to leave a message with the parent or carer.
- If a child or young person initiates a call for non administrative or logistical reasons, or the conversation is likely to be lengthy, it may be necessary to gently exit the conversation until another person can be present and/or the issue can be discussed face to face.

### **Text Messaging**

- Contact should be restricted to texts for administrative/logistical purposes
- Where texting for communication other than logistical purposes (e.g. personal encouragement) include a third party in the message thread.

**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
<b>Phone Calls</b>	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.
<b>Text Messages</b>	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For logistical purposes</li> <li>- For group encouragement eg. WhatsApp</li> <li>- For personal encouragement with a third party included in the message thread.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For logistical purposes</li> <li>- For group encouragement eg. WhatsApp</li> <li>- For personal encouragement with a third party included in the message thread.</li> </ul>
<b>Emails</b>	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For logistical purposes</li> <li>- For group encouragement</li> <li>- For personal encouragement with a third party included in the message thread.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For logistical purposes</li> <li>- For group encouragement</li> <li>- For personal encouragement with a third party included in the message thread.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Networking (eg. Messenger, *SnapChat, Instagram)</b>	X	Follow guidelines above (*SnapChat, or similar messaging platforms that do not record message histories or allow for group interaction, are inappropriate platforms between youth and leaders)	Follow guidelines above (*SnapChat, or similar messaging platforms that do not record message histories or allow for group interaction, are inappropriate platforms between youth and leaders)
<b>Video meetings (eg Zoom)</b>	invite to meeting using parents email. Meetings occur with two leaders.	invite to meeting using parents email. Meetings occur with two leaders.	invite to meeting using parents email. Meetings occur with two leaders.

***If at any time you suspect a child or young person is developing or displaying an interest in communicating with you outside the group regarding non administrative or logistical matters seek the advice of your Ministry Team Leader immediately.***

# Photography

Photographs taken by WWEC leaders should:

- be taken only with parental/guardian consent
- be stored in WWEC's shared google drive and removed from individuals phones
- not be used or displayed in any public forum without consent (of the child's parent and the young person themselves if appropriate)

Anyone involved in taking photographs of children or youth at WWEC events for church purposes (e.g. promotional purposes) should refer to '*WWEC PROCEDURE - Information Management*'.

Note: these guidelines refer to photos taken at WWEC events by members in their capacity as a leader. No leader should have inappropriate or overly revealing photos of youth on their phones regardless of the time at which they were taken.

# Discipline

A primary aim in all children's and youth ministry is to engage the children in age appropriate activities where they can learn and enjoy themselves. The following assists in achieving this:

- well prepared, structured lesson plans – plan lots of activities to accommodate different interests, and children finishing tasks at different rates e.g. plan a few different crafts, or have a helper plan a quiet game to play with those who finish early
- proactively anticipate and manage the needs of the group – e.g. at the beginning of kids church allocate helpers to a particular child or group of children, ask children to move away from other children if a particular relationship often results in disruptive behaviour
- kids church rules – although the expectations of each age group will be different, our programs have general expectations that apply across all age groups. These are called the 5 Ls:

## **Kids Church 5 L's**

- LEGS crossed
- Hands in LAPS
- LIPS closed
- LOOK to the leader
- LISTEN to the leader

Children and young people of any age are most secure when they know the limits or boundaries in which they can operate, and which behaviour will be acceptable to the adults around them<sup>5</sup>. It is out of love that we discipline children (like God does with us). It is loving to children who have difficulty behaving, and it is loving to the rest of the class. Having rules and discipline helps to make the class a safe, fun and productive learning environment where kids can grow in their knowledge and love of God.

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<sup>5</sup> Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual

In relation to your role as children's/youth ministry worker it is **NOT** acceptable to:

- raise your voice (unless it is to warn of immediate danger)
- berate, belittle, ridicule or humiliate a child
- use personal insults or references to personal traits i.e. 'you are a ...'
- physically restrain a child (unless to protect or avoid an accident or prevent the harming of another child - to be used as a last resort)
- smack a child or use any form of physical contact as a disciplinary measure
- isolate a young child (toddlers / preschool) outside the room as a form of discipline.

Discipline strategies must obviously be age appropriate. The following guidelines ensure behavioural management strategies are appropriate and consistent with the aim of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our children and to minimise the risk of any dissatisfaction with care provided at WWEC.

#### **For Preschoolers children:**

The following strategy is recommended:

- Bend down to the child's eye level or sit on the floor and provide a clear, age appropriate explanation as to why the behaviour is undesirable. Speak clearly, calmly and kindly.
- If the behaviour is repeated, initiate directed play where the two children are separated for a time in different play groups or areas. Ensure the child is engaged in an activity they enjoy.
- If the behaviour continues it may be necessary to assign a helper to the child (where possible). This may involve play in a separate area of the room for a time, or the child sitting on a "time out chair" for no more than one minute for each year of the child's age.
- If the behaviour continues, or it is not possible to adequately meet the needs of the child and other children, it may be appropriate for a leader to ask a parent or carer to attend.

#### **For Primary School Children:**

- A laminated copy of the Kids Church Agreements (as listed on page 9) are kept in the box and should be stuck up on the wall before each lesson. Leaders are to review these at the start of each lesson to remind children of what is expected. The Leaders are to then follow the K-5 Kids Church Behaviour Plan as set out in the table:

# WWEC Kid's Church Behaviour Plan

**ALWAYS: Outline the expectations for behaviour at the start of the lesson (i.e. the 5 Ls)**



## **Teacher 1 (Lead Teacher):**

Use positive reinforcement to the whole group (e.g. "I can see so many people doing a wonderful job of listening!")



First disobedience

## **Teacher 2 (Support Teacher):**

Speak to the child discreetly about their behaviour. Ask them to identify their own disruptive behaviours (e.g. "I can see that you're not doing the 5 L's. Which ones are you not doing, Jack?")



Second disobedience

## **Teacher 2:**

Again, speak to the child discreetly about their behaviour and outline the consequence if it happens a third time. (e.g. "Jack, I can see that you're still not keeping your hands to yourself. If it happens again, you will miss out on the game.")



Third disobedience

## **Teacher 2:**

Follow through on the consequence (e.g. "Jack, since you haven't been able to follow the instructions, you'll have to sit next to me instead of playing the game. If this happens again, I'll be calling your mum/dad to come and sit with you.")



Continued disobedience

## **Teacher 2:**

Go and ask the child's parent to join you in the lesson. Explain to them the process that you have followed. (e.g. "Could you please come up to the kids church room and sit with Jack? He has had 3 warnings about keeping his hands to himself and even missed out on the game, but he is still refusing to follow instructions.")



## **Teacher 2:**

Report the incident to the Kid's Church Team Leader so they can follow up with the parent.

## For Youth:

- Provide a clear, age appropriate explanation as to why the behaviour is undesirable with reference to the agreed group rules if appropriate.
- Speak clearly, calmly and kindly. Be mindful that for older children there may be times where it is appropriate to do this out of the hearing of peers (but still in view of others) to avoid unnecessary embarrassment.
- Outline clearly the process that will be followed if the behaviour is repeated.
- The process from this point on will depend on the exact behaviour or situation however if for example the offence was being disruptive or disrespectful during the lesson the following process may apply:
  - a. Instruct the child to move to a different spot in the group
  - b. Ask the child to sit next to the leader
  - c. Ask the child to sit in an area of the room that is not with the main group for a set period of time
  - e. Send a helper to get the Kids Church Team Leader, who may then call the parent to attend if necessary.

# Physical contact

It is important that we are positive in the way we respond to what children and young people say, how they behave, their efforts and contributions. We should always treat children with respect. Our first option for affirming a child or young person however should be non-contact e.g. verbal responses, smiles, appropriate attention. We need to teach children/youth appropriate levels of physical contact for the settings we are in, and that there is a greater need for formality in a group setting than they may be familiar with in a family context<sup>6</sup>.

Physical contact should generally be initiated by the child or occur with their permission (excluding circumstances such as immediate physical danger or medical emergency). When you make physical contact with a child, be very careful that you respect the child's feelings and privacy<sup>7</sup>. Do not touch them unnecessarily.

Appropriate physical contact should be brief and may include:

- high five
- handshake
- patting the child on the head, hand, back or shoulder in affirmation
- open hugs (side by side, not face to face)
- taking a younger child's hand and leading them to an activity
- praising or welcoming a child by holding the child's two hands in yours
- holding a preschool child who is crying, providing they want to be held<sup>8,9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual

<sup>7</sup> Faithfulness in Service 2007

<sup>8</sup> Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual

<sup>9</sup> Faithfulness in Service 2007

Inappropriate contact includes:

- kissing a child, or encouraging a child to kiss you
- extended hugging or tickling
- touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume
- carrying older children or having them sit on your lap
- any physical contact that may even potentially be interpreted or construed as being sexual in nature or overtone
- anything that could give the impression of favouritism or an inappropriate special relationship<sup>10</sup>.

In exceptional circumstances such as immediate physical danger either to themselves or another child or a medical emergency there may be a need for physical restraint of a child or young person. In this instance it is necessary to complete an incident report form identifying the circumstances of the incident, the restraint provided and why it was considered necessary, the people involved in the incident and any witnesses. The relevant Ministry Team Leader, the child's parents or carers, and the Senior Pastor must be informed of the circumstances of the incident as soon as practically possible.

## Off site activities

When planning an offsite activity involving children or youth (i.e. those activities held away from the Christian College), a risk assessment will be completed following the process below:

- the Team Leader/organiser will complete the WWEC Event Planning Form and WWEC Risk Assessment Form
- the completed form will be reviewed by the WWEC WHS Officer for approval (or the Director of Kids & Youth if the WHS Officer is unavailable). The WHS Officer may need to contact WWEC's insurance company.

When it is an activity not held within a normal Friday night Youth Group (e.g. youth group camp)

- the information contained in the WWEC Event Planning Form will be used by the Team Leader/organiser to draft the permission form for the event (with input from the WHS representative if necessary)
- the Team Leader/organiser will send out permission forms to parents/carers
- only children/youth with completed permission forms will be able to participate in the activity/event.

Supervision ratios will be met (see page 2, Section 1. Supervision) with reference to the risk assessment for the particular event. There may be instances where a higher level of supervision is required, e.g. children with special needs. Where outings include children/youth of mixed gender, where ever possible ministry workers and parent/carers of mixed gender will accompany the group offsite. An attendance list and emergency contact details should be taken to all offsite activities

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<sup>10</sup> Faithfulness in Service 2007



where parents and carers are not in attendance. Signed permission forms and attendance records must be maintained as church records.

Where it is necessary for children/youth to be transported in private vehicles by ministry workers to off site activities, the permission form must specifically include this information. In this instance two other requirements must be met:

**a. Child protection considerations**

Ministry workers are not to be alone in a car with a child or young person even with parental consent, except where the child or young person is a family member. Where possible each car will contain two ministry workers and a minimum of two children/youth, however a minimum requirement would be one ministry worker and two children/youth in each car with consideration of gender issues.

If in a particular situation this is not possible (e.g. emergency, or refusal likely to place child or young person in danger) another adult must be informed of the trip and the reason for the trip being necessary. This would necessitate the completion of an incident report form as soon as practicable<sup>11</sup>. Where several cars are involved in transporting youth or children to/from to the same event/location, attempts should be made to travel together in convoy (i.e. leave at the same time, take same route).

**b. Safe driver considerations**

Where transport in private vehicles (other than parents/carers vehicles) is necessary as part of a youth ministry activity/event the vehicles must be registered, be safe and well maintained, and have adequate car insurance. Drivers must have a full (not P plates) valid driver's licence, be experienced, have a good driving record, and agree to drive responsibly and courteously, obeying all road rules including observing speed limits and ensuring seat belts are worn. In the event of a car accident, the responsible driver is responsible to pay any gap/excess required by their insurance company.

Note: Where ministry workers are providing lifts to youth for a regular Friday night Youth Group at the Christian College, in line with the supervision ratios (as set out in section one of this guideline) the ministry workers are not to be alone in a car with a youth. Parents need to specify in the Youth Group registration form who they approve to transport their child to/from youth group - listing all approved drivers by name (ministry workers, other parents etc).

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<sup>11</sup> Transport policy <http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/youthworks>

# Overnight activities

Overnight stays with children or youth require additional planning to ensure safety. The following information provides a guide to assist planning such events at WWEC:

- A WWEC Activity Planning Form must be completed to identify specific risks and mitigation strategies.
- Determine who will supervise the event, and who will be onsite overnight:
  - Mandatory supervision ratios must be met (see page 2, Section .1 Supervision)
  - Consider gender issues. Male and female leaders will be required for mixed gender events
  - Any adult who will be on site overnight must have completed the appropriate WWEC screening (see *WWEC Procedure - Safe Ministry Roles, Responsibilities & Screening*)
  - Main leaders must have up to date child protection training (check with the WWEC Safe Ministry Coordinator). Adults onsite who have not completed training are considered to be 'under supervision'
  - All leaders should be recently familiar with the information in *WWEC Guideline - Serving in children's/youth ministry* (this document)
- Determine in consultation with WWECs pastoral team if WWEC's insurer needs to be notified of the event.
- Ensure all participants provide signed permission slips, including provision of emergency contact details and any relevant medical information such as allergies or dietary requirements. This information should be available on the premises of the overnight event.
- Ensure basic first aid supplies are available on site, or take one of the smaller WWEC kits. Determine from the permission form if anyone will need to bring or take medication during the event and make necessary provisions. Any medication on site must be in original packaging, and have information included on the permission slip.
- Ensure the 'rules' are clearly explained at the commencement of the event.

## Ministry in schools

WWEC is an approved provider of Special Religious Education (SRE) for our local area. In response to the recommendations from the 2015 Review of Special Religious Education and Special Education in Ethics, WWEC complies with the current Special Religious Education Procedures.

The [NSW Department of Education](#) provides important information about teaching special religious education in schools including the responsibilities of all parties, and approval and reporting obligations.

WWEC fulfils the requirements of the NSW Department of Education and relevant information can be found on the [SRE page on WWEC's website](#).

# Women's daytime Bible study creche

WWEC aims to support the women's daytime Bible study groups by helping the group recruit volunteers to supervise a creche. This creche runs during the time of the Women's daytime Bible study, enabling mother's/carers to attend the Bible study without also caring for their children.

Creche helpers supervise the children only during the Bible study time (not during social time before or following the study). Creche helpers are to keep the same ratio of children to helpers as followed in Preschool kids church. Where there are not enough creche helpers a mother/carer may be called out of the Bible study to assist the creche helpers. Creche helpers care for the children at the same location as the Women's Bible study group. Creche helpers are not called to teach the children but supervise the children whilst they play. Where there are unsettled children, discipline or self care needs the creche helpers call the mother's/carers to assist with the relevant child. It is the mother's/carers responsibility to provide food/drink for their child/children during the Bible study group time.

WWEC ensures all creche helpers have the same safe ministry approval (a valid Working with children check) and safe church training.

## Addressing concerns and complaints

On occasions parents, carers, or other people involved in church may raise a concern relating to a matter involving their child, the content of the teaching program, or some other point of concern. In this instance it is important to listen carefully, to receive the information willingly, and not to become defensive or dismiss the person's concerns.

Dependent on the type of concern the appropriate action may include;

- directing the person to report their concern to a WWEC Safe Ministry Contact.
- directing the person to speak with the relevant Kids or Youth Team Leader or the Director of Kids & Youth.
- informing the person you will report the concern to the relevant Kids or Youth Team Leader or the Director of Kids & Youth.

# Child Safe Reporting

WWEC, as a religious organisation, has responsibilities to keep children safe. We need to ensure at WWEC the safety, welfare and care of the children is the primary consideration at all times.

We have obligations under two laws;

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (the Care Act): we are now all mandatory reporters. This means if we suspect, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm (ROSH) we need to report our concerns. The Mandatory Reporting NSW is managed by the Department of Communities & Justice.
- Children's Guardian Act 2019: we must report all 'reportable conduct' we become aware of about a child. The Reportable Conduct Scheme NSW is managed by the Office of Children's Guardian.

## What defines 'Reportable Conduct' or ROSH?

The simplest way to comply with your reporting obligation is to make sure you report any allegation, disclosure, complaint, concern, incident or observation involving alleged misconduct with, towards or in the presence of a child.

Reportable conduct and ROSH are very similar.

Reportable Conduct includes;

- a sexual offence committed against, with, or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct with, towards, or in the presence of a child
- ill-treatment of a child
- neglect of a child
- an assault against a child
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- an offence under section 43B or 316A of the Crimes Act 1900.

Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) can include neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse or emotional/psychological abuse. Further examples of ROSH are detailed on the [DCJ webpage](#).

It is important everyone serving in kids/youth ministry are aware of the definitions of child abuse and neglect, ill-treatment and assault, which are found in Appendix 1.

## How do I identify reportable conduct or ROSH?

There can be general indicators of abuse or neglect in children or young people. One indicator in isolation may not imply abuse or neglect. Each indicator needs to be considered in the context of other indicators and the child's or young person's circumstances. Some indicators can include;

- where the child or young person gives some indication that the injury or event did not occur as stated
- when the child or young person tells you she/he knows someone who has been abused, may be referring to herself/himself
- marked changes in behaviour or mood, escalation in risk-taking behaviours, tantrums, aggressiveness, withdrawal
- child or young person complains of stomach aches and headaches with no physical findings
- self harming behaviour
- physical signs of neglect (poor hygiene, longing for adult affection, anxiety, stealing food)

- physical signs of abuse (bruising, lacerations, burns, multiple injuries)

### What do I do if a child discloses a risk of harm?

There may be times where a child or young person discloses information that raises concerns about their safety, welfare or wellbeing. Children do not often disclose abuse or neglect the first time something happens. They may experience a sense of helplessness and hopelessness and may take weeks or years before making their abuse known.

A child may disclose information purposefully or accidentally. They could:

- 'blurt out' a harmful experience or their fear of something
- confide privately that they have been abused or fear that they will be
- tell another child
- provide hints – as evidenced in drawings, play or stories
- disguise a disclosure by posing 'what if' or 'a friend of mine' scenarios
- present with somatic symptoms, such as constantly feeling 'sick'

In instances where a disclosure raises significant concern for safety, welfare or wellbeing:

- DO stay calm and listen to what you are being told
- DO let the child tell their story freely and in their own way.
- DO convey that you hear what they are saying (avoid strong reactions to what you are hearing)
- DO satisfy yourself that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting abuse or risk of harm. If the child's free discourse is enough to give you an understanding of the type of allegation you're dealing with, it is important to provide support but not ask further questions. If you need to ask questions to clarify the nature of the concern, it is important to use open ended questions – that is, questions that cannot be answered yes or no.
- DO reassure the child you are there to give support. Acknowledge how difficult it may have been to disclose and reassure the child that it was the right thing to do
- DO write a record of what you said and what the child or young person said **immediately after the disclosure**. Write the exact words of the child where possible. Date the comments and statements made by the child. Record any observations about the child's mood or demeanour.
- **DO report the incident/concern to a WWEC Safe Ministry Contact &/or the Kids Church Coordinator as soon as possible.**
- DON'T be dismissive of what they have told you
- DON'T reflect back to a child what they are saying (i.e. restate what they have said in your own words)
- DON'T promise not to tell (as you may be obliged to break confidence)\*
- DON'T ask more questions than are necessary to be clear about what the child is telling you
- DON'T ask leading questions (i.e. questions that suggest an answer)
- DON'T touch the child
- DON'T feel you have to prove what has been disclosed (this is not your role)
- DON'T promise the abuse will stop or that you can resolve the situation
- DON'T discuss the matter with anyone other than the appropriate person
- DON'T notify the parents or caregivers <sup>1213</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Disclosure of risk by a child/young person guidelines <http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/youthworks>

<sup>13</sup> Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual

- DON'T disrespect or disregard what a child expresses to you

\*Confidentiality is an important aspect of relationships with children and young people, however it is important that we make it clear that there are limitations. There are times when you will have a responsibility to report information that has been disclosed to you, even though this may breach confidentiality. This may include:

- when a person is in danger
- when a person threatens to harm themselves or others
- if you become aware that a criminal offence may have been committed.

Where appropriate, a child or young person should be told that you will need to inform the appropriate authorities of the information they disclosed to you. How they are told depends on whether the abuse was intentionally or accidentally disclosed, as well as on the child's age and capacity to understand. It is not a legislative requirement to seek the consent of the child or young person when making a report.

Even if a child or young person opposes you reporting, if they are at risk of significant harm you must proceed and report the matter as they and their siblings or other children and young people with whom the alleged person responsible has contact may be at similar risk. Failure to report suspected risk of significant harm is against the law and can also be seen as colluding with the abuse and with the alleged perpetrator.

### **How do I report a concern?**

Report the allegation, disclosure, complaint, concern, incident or observation involving alleged misconduct with, towards or in the presence of a child to a **WWEC Safe Ministry Contact (SMC) &/or the Kids Church Coordinator as soon as possible**. Your [WWEC SMCs can be found on our website](#) and can be contacted via the WWEC Membership Directory (on Elvanto). They will assist you to complete a Safe Ministry Report and as an organisation will manage the report.

# Appendix 1 - Child protection definitions

**Child or children**

A person 0-18 years of age.

**Child abuse**

Conduct in relation to a child which is bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, neglect, physical abuse, spiritual abuse or any sexual behaviour with or in the presence of a child including sexual communications and gestures, showing sexually explicit or suggestive material and sexual physical contact.

**Child related employment**

Employment (paid or voluntary) that:

- primarily involves contact with children AND
- involves direct contact with children AND
- where that contact is not directly supervised by a person having the capacity to direct the employee in the course of employment AND
- in the specific work environments listed in the NSW Commission's Employer Guidelines.

All four criteria must be satisfied for the position to be child related employment.

**Conviction**

A charge proven in court and recorded as such, including a finding that the charge for an offence is proven, or that a person is guilty of an offence, even though the court does not proceed to a conviction. Those offences included on a person's criminal record which, because of the passage of time and legislative preconditions having been met, are no longer to be considered in any administrative decision making. Sexual offences and child-related personal violence offences can never be "spent" for the purposes of the Working With Children Check.

**Emotional & Psychological Harm**

Behaviour that causes significant psychological or emotional harm is conduct that is intentional or reckless (without reasonable excuse), obviously or very clearly unreasonable and which results in significant emotional harm or trauma to a child.

For a reportable allegation involving psychological harm, the following elements must be present:

- an obviously or very clearly unreasonable or serious act or series of acts that the employee knew or ought to have known was unacceptable, and
- evidence of psychological harm to the child that is more than transient, including displaying patterns of 'out of character behaviour', regression in behaviour, distress, anxiety, physical symptoms or self-harm, and
- an alleged causal link between the employee's conduct and the significant emotional or psychological harm to the child.

**Ill-treatment**

Conduct towards a child that is:

- unreasonable; and
- seriously inappropriate, improper, inhumane or cruel.

Ill-treatment can include a range of conduct such as making excessive or degrading demands of a child; a pattern of hostile or degrading comments or behaviour towards a child; and using inappropriate forms of behaviour management towards a child.

**Neglect**

A significant failure – by a person with parental responsibility for the child, or an authorised carer or an employee if the child is in the employee’s care – to provide adequate and proper food, supervision, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging for the child that causes or is likely to cause harm to the child.

Neglect can be an ongoing situation of repeated failure by a caregiver to meet a child’s physical or psychological needs, or a single significant incident where a caregiver fails to fulfil a duty or obligation, resulting in actual harm to a child or where the failure is likely to cause harm. Examples of neglect include failing to protect a child from abuse and exposing a child to a harmful environment.

**Person of interest (POI)**

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

**Physical Assault**

An assault can occur when a person intentionally or recklessly (ie. knows the assault is possible but ignores the risk):

- applies physical force against a child without lawful justification or excuse - such as hitting, striking, kicking, punching or dragging a child (actual physical force); or
- causes a child to apprehend the immediate and unlawful use of physical force against them– such as threatening to physically harm a child through words and/or gestures and regardless of whether the person actually intends to apply any force (apprehension of physical force).

A physical assault is not serious where:

- it only involves minor force; and
- it did not, and was not ever likely to, result in serious injury.

A physical assault is serious where:

- it results in the child being injured, beyond a type of injury like a minor scratch, bruise or graze; or
- it had the potential to result in a serious injury; or
- the injury suffered may be minor, but the assault is associated with aggravating circumstances (in this regard, aggravating circumstances might include associated inhumane or demeaning behaviour by the employee, for example kicking a child, pulling a child by grabbing the child around the neck).

**Prohibited person**

A person convicted of a serious sex offence, the murder of a child, a child-related personal violence offence or a person who has been found guilty of a registerable offence against children under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000.

**Registrable person**

A person who has been found guilty of a registrable offence against children under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000.

**Relevant record**

Relevant records include Relevant criminal records, Relevant Apprehended Violence Orders and Relevant employment proceedings.



**Sexual Misconduct**

Any conduct with, towards or in the presence of a child that is sexual in nature (but is not a sexual offence) and provides the following (non-exhaustive) examples:

- Descriptions of sexual acts without a legitimate reason to provide the descriptions
- Sexual comments, conversation or communications;
- Comments to a child that express a desire to act in a sexual manner towards the child, or another child

Note - crossing professional boundaries comes within the scope of the scheme to the extent that the alleged conduct meets the definition of sexual misconduct. That is, conduct with, towards or in the presence of a child that is sexual in nature (but is not a sexual offence).

**Sexual Offence**

A sexual offence is an offence of a sexual nature under a law of NSW, another state/territory, or the Commonwealth committed against, with or in the presence of a child, such as:

- sexual touching of a child
- a child grooming offence;
- production, dissemination or possession of child abuse material.

An alleged sexual offence does not have to be the subject of criminal investigation or charges for it to be categorised as a reportable allegation of a sexual offence.