



## Serving in children's and youth ministry

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## 1. Introduction

Lighthouse Church loves and values children as Jesus did. It is a privilege to teach and instruct our children and contribute to their understanding and love of God.

This information has been developed for **children's and youth ministry workers** to:

- provide information about our children's/youth ministry practices and what is expected
- ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and youth participating in church activities
- provide information about what child abuse is, possible indicators of abuse, and what you must do if you suspect a child is at risk of harm or abuse.

Please familiarise yourself with this document, discuss any issues or questions you have with your ministry leader, and keep this document for future reference. The document is also available on our website:

<https://www.lighthouse.net.au/policies-and-procedures/>

## 2. Safe ministry policy

Our Safe Ministry Child Safe policy is designed to provide information for children, families, members, visitors and our community about our commitment to child safety, what they can expect from us, and how they can get more information or report concerns. As required by the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG), the policy is publicly available on our website: <https://www.lighthouse.net.au/policies-and-procedures/>

## 3. Children's and youth ministries

Children's/youth ministries at Lighthouse Church include creche, kids church and youth church, kids club and Lighthouse youth, Summerfest and any other ministry involving children. These ministries meet the government definition of 'child related work'<sup>1</sup> which means ministry workers are subject to NSW government mandatory screening and training requirements for paid workers and volunteers.

## 4. Safe ministry responsibilities

### a. Senior Pastor

The senior pastor has overall (and legal) responsibility for ensuring a child safe environment. This includes:

- developing a 'child safe' culture where children are valued, protected and listened to
- maintaining appropriate standards and systems to protect and promote children's safety and wellbeing when participating in church related events
- having effective systems to prevent and detect inappropriate, reportable and criminal behaviour with, towards or in the presence of children
- having effective systems in place to report and manage child protection issues, and reports of significant risk of harm or abuse.

### b. Safe ministry representatives

Responsible for assisting the senior pastor to implement safe ministry procedures in church including:

- ensure policies and procedures relating to safe ministry are current and updated regularly
- maintain safe ministry register and liaise with leaders regarding screening and training of ministry workers
- provide / gain advice regarding safe ministry queries, issues, and changes to policy and procedures.

<sup>1</sup> Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012  
LC04 - Serving in kids and youth ministry

### c. Children's/youth ministry leaders

#### Responsible for:

- ensuring all children's and youth ministry workers are selected and screened in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document before commencing or continuing 'child related work'
- providing necessary induction and ongoing support to new children's/youth ministry workers
- providing resources eg teaching program resources and support to children's/youth ministry workers
- identifying and raising opportunities for improvement in children's/youth ministry including improvements in our safe ministry policies, procedures and practices
- raising any child protection concerns, or any potential misconduct observed or disclosed directly to them with the Safe Ministry Representative or Senior Pastor
- directing (and potentially accompanying) any children's/youth worker with concerns or allegations that may be reportable conduct to report directly to the Safe Ministry Representative or Senior Pastor.

### d. Children's/youth workers

#### Responsible for:

- preparing and delivering lessons in accordance with the teaching program provided, *LC04 - Serving in Children's and Youth ministry* and our *Child Safe Code of Conduct*
- maintaining current WWC clearance, and undertaking safe ministry training every 3 years
- seeking advice or support when needed, and providing advice and support to other ministry workers where appropriate
- reporting difficulties, concerns, issues or suggestions to the relevant children's/youth ministry leader
- reporting any potential misconduct with, towards, or in the presence of child (physical assault, behaviour that is sexual in nature, neglect, ill treatment, causing psychological harm) to the Safe Ministry Representative or Senior Pastor.

## 5. Selecting, screening and training ministry workers



Lighthouse Church will ensure children's/youth ministry workers are screened in accordance with requirements in the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* and *Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013* **BEFORE** commencing in any child related role whether in a paid or volunteer capacity<sup>2</sup>.

The screening and selection process for our children's/youth ministry workers is outlined in *LC03 – Managing safe ministry in church*. In summary, a person must:

- be a church member - attending for at least 3 months before completing formal membership process
- display the desirable characteristics for a ministry worker<sup>3</sup>
- have a current working with children number which has been verified by Lighthouse Church
- be familiar with this document *LC04 – serving in children's and youth ministry*
- commit to Lighthouse's *Child Safe Code of Conduct*
- maintain current safe ministry training
- consent to reference checks
- participate in ongoing training and support.

<sup>2</sup> A breach of this legislative requirements may involve a fine or imprisonment for two years, or both.

<sup>3</sup> Desirable characteristics for a ministry worker include someone who has a growing, committed relationship with Christ, believes children and young people are important to God, respects and loves children and young people, models godliness, is teachable, reliable, a team player, wise and careful and open in their actions and behaviour.

We utilise online training provided through Safe Ministry Training: [www.safeministrytraining.com.au](http://www.safeministrytraining.com.au) Children/youth ministry workers complete the Awareness and Leader modules of the training. This process also involves online verification of a worker's working with children number, online verification, online training and the completion of referee checks. The cost is around \$10 per module which is paid online when you complete the training (if cost presents a barrier or concern please speak with your ministry leader).

A training refresher course must be undertaken every three years at a minimum. In addition to the Awareness and Leader modules:

- children's/youth ministry leaders, safe ministry representatives and staff complete the Supervisor module
- Staff and Administration Committee members complete the Board module.

## 6. Guidelines for serving in children's/youth ministry

The following information outlines procedures 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/youth and ministry workers, ministry workers should never be alone with a child or young person, except in an emergency situation that would warrant completion of an incident report. At a minimum there should be at least two children/youth with a children's/youth worker at all times.**

**This principle applies to all ministries, all activities, all venues, all the time.**

### 6.1 Supervision

The Department of Education and Communities recommendations regarding adult to children ratios for accredited early childhood education centres<sup>4</sup> are used as a basis for supervision ratios at church as follows:

- Crèche (0-3 years) – Up to 24 months 1:4, 24-36 months 1:5
- Preschool (3 years - school aged) – 1:10, usually roster on 2-3 adults depending on numbers
- Infants (K-Year 2) – no fixed requirement, work on ratio of 1:10, a minimum of two adults rostered on
- Primary – no fixed requirement, two adults are rostered on.

Youth church has only one adult leader, however each leader is aware of the need to ensure they are never alone with youth, and that at least two youth are present at any given time.

The ratios above relate to minimum supervision provided by adults, that is, people 18 years or older. Youth may also serve in children's/youth ministries, however they are cannot be counted in terms of minimum supervision ratios.

Supervision ratios may be higher than the minimum ratios outlined above depending on other factors such as venue, time, duration and nature of the activity, age, ability and gender mix of the group.

To ensure the needs of children are met in ministry and church activities, children are often divided into groups based on age/school year. In discussion with the ministry leader or leader, where there is a need children may attend a younger age group. However younger children are not usually able to attend older age groups to ensure:

- the needs of the children involved are met
- children are participating in age appropriate activities to ensure their engagement and safety
- the provision of adequate supervision of other children.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/what-we-offer/regulation-and-accreditation/early-childhood-education-care/faqs>

## 6.2 Registration and permission forms

At church parents/carers complete registration forms which include relevant medical information. The forms should be reviewed / updated at the beginning of each year.

### a. Crèche and preschool

Parents/carers sign children in and out. Teachers confirm number of children present correlated with the sign in sheet. Children must be signed out by a parent or carer for safety and to allow an opportunity to provide handover information to parents/carers and 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 can give permission in discussion with teachers for other parents to sign their children out where necessary.

### b. Infants and primary

Children in the infants and primary rooms often walk up on their own. A roll is taken at the beginning of the lesson. If the children leave the room during the lesson everyone will walk down as a group, a head count is completed on arriving at the oval for example, and a head count is repeated on return to the room.

At the end of church, infants and primary children can walk down to on their own providing parents/carers have signed the list giving permission. Teachers in the older rooms will pass on any necessary feedback to parents/carers at morning tea. This provides a good opportunity to speak with newcomers, to provide information about kids church, and to get registration forms signed. Permission forms are completed for offsite activities.

## 6.3 Personal care

We want to encourage independence in personal care to support the natural development of children and to promote child safe behaviour. This means avoiding the provision of personal care assistance where it is possible for the child to perform the task for themselves. The following procedures provide additional guidance:

- Parents of pre-school children are encouraged to take children to the toilet before signing in at kids church.
- If a nappy change is required parents/carers are sent a text message and asked to come and change their child. If there is no response, a helper will go to church and ask the parent/carers to come and change their child.
- For crèche, preschool and infants children a female<sup>5</sup> helper will take a minimum of two children (preferably of the same gender) to the toilet, and generally no more than five children at a time.
- If a young child request assistance (eg with clothing or to be lifted onto the toilet) the helper should do this with the door open then leave the cubicle. In the occasional instance where assistance may be required with toileting disposable gloves are available in the kids church box.
- Primary 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.
- If it is necessary for a helper to escort older children to the toilet, the helper will remain in the entry doorway. Helpers are not able to enter the toilet cubicle to assist older children with personal care. If there is an incident where this was unavoidable the helper should notify the ministry leader.
- For children with special or additional needs, requirements will be identified in discussion with parents/carers before the child is left in care.

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<sup>5</sup> This does not prevent males being helpers in kids church - just from this one task. It is expected there will be at least one female helper rostered on younger classes.

## 6.4 Unsettled / upset children

Strategies to be implemented to minimise the likelihood of children becoming upset in the process of separating from parents or carers. In crèche on Sundays for example, parents are asked to pack morning tea (snack and drink) for their children, which the children have on arrival.

If a child becomes upset, helpers will aim to divert attention and engage the child in activities they enjoy. If however a child cries continuously and cannot be consoled for a period of 5 minutes, a text message is sent asking the parent or carer to attend. If there is no response, a helper will return to church and ask the parent to attend. There may be times where parents and helpers negotiate a longer time period, however if the child cannot be consoled, a helper will return to church and ask the parents or carers to return to crèche after a maximum period of 10 minutes.

## 6.5 Visitors

Sometimes adults may want to visit or stay in a children's/youth group. This is more likely in crèche or with younger children who may not be used to being left in a group or who may be having difficulty settling, or perhaps a potential new ministry worker wanting to observe. There is provision for visiting adults to attend/observe without having a working with children check, but they are not to perform 'work' for church. This means the visiting adult:

- should limit their involvement to observation, or involvement with their child, only
- must be under the supervision of, and readily take instruction from, the teacher or leader at all times.

In general, it would be expected a parent or carer would work out a short term plan with the ministry leader with the aim of progressing towards leaving their child to participate independently in the group and develop relationships with their peers. For the same reason, parents/carers with children in older groups are discouraged from attending. Older children with additional needs may attend with a paid support worker. In this instance, the support worker is there to support that particular child only and should not be involved with other children except in this capacity.

## 6.6 Activities and games

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 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>6</sup>.

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

- how teams are selected - does the process make anyone feel uncomfortable?
- does the game or activity encourage cooperation, team work, and inclusion?
- will everyone understand the game and be able to participate?
- how will you manage the situation if 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 helpers to ensure safety, facilitate inclusion, and moderate behaviour appropriately?
- have you carefully previewed any visual materials you will be using to ensure suitability?

## 6.7 Administering medication

Generally ministry workers cannot administer medication to children in their care. Parents are encouraged to return at the required time to administer medication. An exception is offsite or overnight activities where medication is essential and would prevent the child attending. In this instance medication must be provided in original packaging, with the child's name and dosage instructions clearly marked. Administering medication for any child or young person must be covered explicitly in a written permission slip, with clear written instructions regarding the name of the medication, the dose and time. This includes any medication to be self-administered by a young person.

<sup>6</sup> Faithfulness in Service 5.27 (2007)

## 6.8 First aid

The following strategies are employed to ensure safety:

- A registration form is completed to identify allergies and/or special food requirements, other special needs, and emergency contact details.
- Parents of children in crèche are asked to provide morning tea for their children and high allergy foods (eg nut, egg) are discouraged. Children are only allowed to eat the food their parents have provided, however with parent's consent a plain biscuit may be offered if children arrive without something for morning tea.
- For the wellbeing of other children, children who are unwell are unable to attend children's/youth ministry events. Where it becomes obvious children in care are unwell, the child will be taken back to their parents.
- A first aid kit is maintained at church in the storage room in the hall, and is available for offsite activities.

Children requiring minor first aid will be accompanied/assisted to the hall if practical, otherwise a trained first aider can be called (contact details in teacher's folder in kids church room). Trained first aiders will ensure our first aid procedures are followed including reporting. In the event of a significant injury, parents will be asked to attend immediately if they are onsite, or phoned if offsite. The decision making in relation to care will then rest with the parent, and helpers will provide whatever assistance they can. The teacher will complete an incident report form and notify the ministry leader as soon as possible.

## 6.9 Emergencies

Our work health and safety document includes comprehensive information on managing emergencies such as fire or flood. This includes an evacuation plan. In the event of an evacuation teachers are responsible for implementing the evacuation plan. A copy of the plan is included in the folder in each kid's church classroom.

In summary, in the event of an evacuation:

- a 'runner' will be sent from church to quietly notify teachers of the need to evacuate
- runners will assist teachers to evacuate (crèche especially), and parents of children with additional needs will be asked to attend to ensure their children are evacuated safely
- teacher will collect attendance sheet and advise children they have to go outside as quickly as possible
- teacher will assemble children in one or two lines and complete a head count
- teacher then leads the way, with a helper at the end of the lines
- calmly leave the room, take closest stairs, proceed across the COLA to the assembly point on the grassed oval (see site evacuation map)
- all children must remain with the class (parents have been instructed they cannot collect children until roll call)
- on arrival at assembly point teachers confirm via head count that all children are present, and notify the emergency warden that all children are accounted for
- children can be collected from class lines at this point but must be marked off on the attendance roll by the teacher as they are collected by parents/carers
- teachers, helpers and runners remain available to provide information, and receive instruction from the warden.

## 6.10 Communication

Ministry workers should never be alone with a child or young person. This principle extends to all forms of communication with children and young people. When considering other communication media (eg 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 communication with a child or young person.

Use of communication media between ministry workers and children/youth should be:

- limited to administrative or logistical content eg reminder about event, change of event time
- open communication eg a group email to participants, or copying in ministry leader on emails
- with the approval of, or under the direction of, the ministry leader and relate to the activities of church.

a. Facebook

- Youth may have a public Facebook page which ministry workers can utilize to engage with youth as this communication is open and allows parents to freely view all content.
- Ministry workers must not seek out and 'friend' youth with their personal Facebook account. If a young person seeks to 'friend' a ministry worker, they can accept the request but must keep all communication open.
- No photos are to be posted on Facebook unless parents have given written consent (in the case of Lighthouse Youth via a general permission form). Photos posted on Facebook will be classed as 'advertising'. Security settings of any Facebook page must be set to restrict non-administrators from posting photos.
- Content will be regularly reviewed by leader, and infrequently but (routinely) by pastor overseeing youth ministry and child protection rep for auditing / reporting/ training purposes.
- Ministry workers must ensure no bullying or inappropriate communication occurs between young people on the Facebook site. Anything inappropriate will be removed and, if necessary, a person can be 'blocked' from the page.

b. Informal meetings with youth

A youth leader is able to meet up with youth informally during the week if:

- parents have signed the General Permission Slip which includes a section regarding informal meetings
- youth are dropped off and picked up by parents (additional form of consent)
- meetings are in a public place eg shops, cafe, movies
- a minimum of two youth are present with the leader - two leaders are not required, however there may be times when the leader determines this is necessary given the participants, group dynamics, or other relevant factors.

c. Email and Txt/SMS

- Emails should be restricted to administrative/logistical content only.
- Permission should be included on relevant registration forms.

d. Phone

- Contact should be limited to short calls for primarily administrative/logistical purposes
- Consider whether it may be more appropriate to convey information by phone directly to parents
- Consider using home phone in preference to mobile phone. If parents answer the phone advise of the purpose of your call. 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 a later date.

If a child or young person is developing or displaying an interest in communicating with you outside the group regarding non administrative or logistical matters promptly seek the advice of your ministry leader.

## 6.11 Photography

Photographs should:

- focus on the activity and groups of children, rather than one child or young person
- be taken only with consent
- not be displayed in a public forum without consent (of parent and the young person themselves if appropriate)
- not to be kept on youth leader phones unless for an administrative (ie future advertising) purposes<sup>7</sup>.

Anyone involved in taking photographs of children or youth at Lighthouse Church events for church purposes (eg promotional purposes) should refer to LC01 Policy and procedure - Privacy and Information Management.

<sup>7</sup> Electronic communication policy [http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/safe\\_ministry\\_resources](http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/safe_ministry_resources)



## 6.12 Behavioural management

Our aim in all children's and youth ministry the aim is to engage children in age appropriate activities where they can learn and enjoy themselves. To assist in achieving this we aim to develop well prepared, structured lesson plans with a variety of activities to accommodate different interests, preferences and needs.

Children and young people are most secure when they know the limits or boundaries in which they can operate, and the behaviour that is expected and acceptable to those around them<sup>8</sup>. Having age appropriate rules and clear behaviour management strategies helps create a safe, fun and productive learning environment where kids can grow in their knowledge and love of God.

For young children:

- 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.
- 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 helper to seek advice from the leader or ask a parent/carer to attend.

For the infants and primary groups:

- Provide a clear, age appropriate explanation as to why the behaviour is undesirable.
- 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 it 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 teacher
  - 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
  - d. Repeat the process above if the behaviour continues on returning to the group
  - e. If necessary, send a helper to ask the leader for assistance.

If you have ongoing concerns or difficulties in relation to child behaviour in church activities, raise this early with your leader. If you are having difficulties, it is very likely other children's/youth ministry workers could be too. This provides the opportunities for the ministry leader to consider and develop a strategy in consultation with ministry workers and parents/carers if appropriate.

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 ie 'you are a ...'
- physically restrain a child (unless to protect or avoid an accident)
- use any form of physical contact as a disciplinary measure eg smacking
- isolate a young child (crèche / preschool) as a form of punishment.

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<sup>8</sup> Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual  
LC04 - Serving in kids and youth ministry

### 6.13 Physical contact

Our first option for affirming a child or young person should be verbal responses and appropriate attention. It is important to recognise the opportunity 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>9</sup>.

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 to direct or redirect them to an activity
- holding a preschool child who is crying, providing they want to be held, until they can be redirected<sup>10</sup>.

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 could even potentially be interpreted as being sexual in nature or overtone
- anything that could give the impression of favouritism or an inappropriate special relationship<sup>11</sup>.

In exceptional circumstances (eg immediate physical danger, medical emergency) there may be a need for physical restraint of a child or young person. In this instance the ministry leader must be informed of the circumstances of the incident as soon as possible, and it may be necessary to complete an incident report form.

### 6.14 Transport

#### During church related events

Lighthouse Church has a legal obligation to ensure the safety of children and youth in our care during church related events<sup>12</sup>. For this reason our key safe ministry principle that applies to all 'child related work'<sup>13</sup> says 'ministry workers should never be alone with a child or young person'.

Consequently, ministry workers should not be alone in a car with a child/young person when 'working' for Lighthouse Church (unless the child/young person is a family member). Where possible a vehicle 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 (eg emergency, or refusal likely to place child in danger) inform your ministry leader as soon as possible.

#### Outside church related events

Outside of a church related activity, responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children/youth transfers back to their parents/guardians. However, in the context of our church family, ministry workers/leaders are likely to have contact and relationships with children/youth they lead outside of church related events. Examples might include:

- a youth leader going to the shops with older youth group members
- a youth leader giving youth group members a lift to a church related event

<sup>9</sup> Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual

<sup>10</sup> Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual and Faithfulness in Service 2007

<sup>11</sup> Faithfulness in Service 2007

<sup>12</sup> Including Work Health and Safety Act 2011, Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 and NSW government Child Safe Standards

<sup>13</sup> Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012

- a music leader transporting young (under 18 years) team members to practice.

The relationship between a leader and the children/youth they lead – a relationship of influence and trust - continues beyond the context of the ‘work’ they perform for church at church related events. We want to ensure the safety of our children, youth and ministry workers in all circumstances – not just where we have a legal obligation.

For this reason, Lighthouse Church advises ministry workers/leaders to avoid being alone in a vehicle with a child or young person associated with Lighthouse Church (who are not family members) even outside of church related events. One exception to this may be transport outside of church events between youth leaders and youth members of similar age where:

- there was a pre-existing friendship, and
- the ministry worker/leader is not responsible for leading the youth member.

An example may be a 19 year old female youth leader transporting a 17 year old female youth member to go shopping together. In this instance, the following precautions should be taken:

- the ministry worker advises their team leader of the friendship/social interaction outside of church
- the person under 18 lets their parents know of the relationship/lift by the leader
- if there is uncertainty about what is appropriate the ministry worker will speak with their team leader.

It is important to remember this does not mean that ministry workers/leaders cannot transport children or youth in church, just that they can never be alone with a child or youth in the car. For example, a youth leader might transport their young siblings and then pick up other youth group members.

### Safe driver considerations

Vehicles used to transport children/youth as a necessary part of a church event must be registered, be safe and well maintained, and have appropriate insurance (comprehensive insurance is preferable but must have third party property at a minimum). Drivers must:

- have a full licence or a P2 licence (green ‘P’s)
- have a good driving record
- agree to drive responsibly including observing speed limits and ensuring seat belts are worn.

Lighthouse Church cannot impose the same requirements on transport arrangements made by parents outside of church events (including transport to and from church events). However, it is recommended that a young driver on a learner’s permit (driving under supervision) or P1 licence and/or their parents confirm with the parents of youth they are transporting that they are comfortable with these arrangements.

### 6.15 Overnight activities

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

1. An activity planning form (template) should be to completed to identify risks
2. Determine who will supervise the event, and who will be onsite overnight:
  - supervision ratios must be met (see 6.1 Supervision)
  - gender issues – male and female leaders for mixed gender events, segregated sleeping arrangements
  - where possible adult supervisors will not sleep in close proximity to a child or young person
  - any adult onsite overnight must have completed Lighthouse Church's screening process
  - leaders should be familiar information in *LC04 – serving in children’s and youth ministry* (this document).
3. Determine if our insurer needs to be notified of the event (high risk activities)
4. Need for signed permission slips including emergency contact details and relevant medical information such as allergies or dietary requirements (retain onsite for overnight events)
5. Arrange to take the offsite first aid kit.

6. Determine from permission forms if anyone requires medication and make necessary provision.

## 7. Addressing concerns and complaints (non reportable)

The best protection against any issues in children's/youth ministry is **prevention** and **communication**. Lighthouse procedures aim to prevent situations that might give rise to concerns or complaints relating to care provision. However, parents/carers and others are encouraged to provide feedback and raise concerns relating to the care of their child, content of the teaching program or other aspect of children/youth ministry. In this instance you should:

- listen carefully and receive the information willingly - do not dismiss the person's concerns or be defensive
- ensure you are clear about what aspect of the situation has caused concern
- confirm you will advise the relevant ministry leader.

It may be necessary to defer the conversation until children have been collected and/or a ministry leader can be part of the conversation. You should advise your ministry leader of any issue or complaint arising, even if you feel the matter was minor or does not require any further action.

The ministry leader may:

- ask the ministry worker to document the relevant information, or make their own record
- seek advice from, or escalate the matter to, the safe ministry representative and/or pastoral team if necessary
- report back to the parent or guardian as part of addressing the issue
- facilitate changes to safe ministry procedures if indicated.

## 8. Addressing reportable conduct, risk of harm and abuse

Church workers have authority over children because of their position, age, physical size and life experience. Abuse arises from a misuse of this authority. Due to the inherent imbalance of power, children are incapable of giving valid consent to abuse.

It is an offence in NSW for an adult engaged in child-related work to know another adult poses a serious risk of abusing a child, and they have the power to reduce or remove the risk, and they negligently fail to do so (Crimes Act 1900). At Lighthouse Church, you are required to meet this obligation by reporting 'reportable' conduct towards or in the presence of children.

Ministry workers have a legal obligation to report 'reportable' conduct towards or in the presence of children<sup>14</sup>.

Reportable conduct includes:

- physical assault (intentional or reckless application of physical force eg hitting, punching)
- sexual offence or misconduct (eg inappropriate touching, grooming, possession of child abuse material, sexual comments or suggestions to a child to act in a sexual manner)
- ill-treatment of a child (unreasonable, inhumane, cruel behaviour towards a child including inappropriate forms of behavioural management)
- neglect of a child (significant failure to provide adequate care or supervision, or to protect from harm)
- behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

The definition of reportable conduct are similar and related to the definition and types of child abuse. Refer to Appendix 1 for more information on child abuse, indicators and examples.

<sup>14</sup> Codes of Conduct: a guide to developing child safe Codes of Conduct. OCG. [kidsguardian.www.nsw.gov.au](http://kidsguardian.www.nsw.gov.au)



**You must report any conduct that meets or might meet the definition of ‘reportable’ conduct directly to the Safe Ministry Representative or Senior Pastor.**

You must report any of the following:

- any allegation, disclosure, complaint concern, incident or observation involving a Lighthouse Church ministry worker regardless of whether there is evidence or not
- any disclosure made to you by a child that indicates risk of significant harm or abuse
- where you have reasonable grounds in the context of your role as a ministry worker to suspect a child may be at risk of significant harm or abuse by an adult.

There may be times where a child or young person discloses information directly to you in your role as a ministry worker that raises concerns about their safety or wellbeing. It is important you are aware of how to manage this situation beforehand. The following information provides a helpful guide:

- DO listen and stay calm (avoid displaying strong reactions)
- DO reassure the child, let them know you are listening and will decide what to do next
- DON'T make promises (eg not to tell - you will need to inform your ministry leader)
- DON'T ask more questions than are necessary to be clear about what the child is telling you
- DO write a record of what the child or young person said (using their exact words) as soon as possible
- DO report directly to the Safe Ministry Representative or Senior Pastor
- DON'T discuss the matter with anyone else including parents or caregivers - this is not your role<sup>15</sup>.

Confidentiality is an important aspect of relationships with children and young people, however you must report information disclosed to you when a person is in danger, threatens to harm themselves or others, or you become aware that a criminal offence may have been committed. It is **not** possible to withhold a person's identity if a person perpetrating alleged or suspected abuse is involved in church, or an incident occurred at a church event.

### After making a report

Your role usually ceases once you have made a report to the Safe Ministry Representative or Senior Pastor. The process of evaluating the information and determining an appropriate course of action is undertaken by the Safe Ministry Representative and Senior pastor for the following reasons:

- The senior pastor as ‘head of relevant entity’ is legally responsible for compliance with child protection requirements including reporting and managing child protection issues and risk.
- The process allows those with detailed knowledge about reporting requirements to collaboratively determine the necessary course of action based on the definitions of ‘reportable conduct’, ‘reasonable grounds’, and risk of ‘significant harm’ or abuse with the assistance of external professional advice if necessary
- This ensures the person who is reporting externally is appropriately supported, and provides our volunteer ministry workers with some protection from what could be a difficult process.

The document *LC03 – managing safe ministry in church* outlines the reporting process that will be followed by the Safe Ministry Representative and Senior Pastor.

### Related policy and procedures

The following related policy and procedures are available at <https://www.lighthouse.net.au/policies-and-procedures/>

- Child safe policy
- Child safe code of conduct
- LC03 – managing safe ministry in church

<sup>15</sup> Disclosure of risk by a child/young person guidelines <http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/youthworks>  
Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual [www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/links\\_anglican](http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/links_anglican)

- LC01 Policy and procedure – privacy and information management.

## Appendix 1 – Behaviours that constitute child abuse

### Child abuse

Child abuse is any act resulting in actual or the likelihood of harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power<sup>16</sup>. Abuse may be physical, sexual, psychological, ill treatment or neglect.

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse refers to non-accidental injury to a child by a parent, caregiver or another person responsible for the child. Physical abuse includes:

- hitting, punching, kicking, dragging or pushing a child
- using items to hurt a child
- threatening to hurt a child
- a pattern of hostile or unreasonable and seriously inappropriate physical conduct.

Indicators can include:

- injuries without a plausible explanation, bruises, welts or burns in unusual configurations, fractures
- multiple injuries in varying stages of healing
- evasive answers or improbable explanations
- unusual fear of physical contact eg flinching, wariness or fear of parent/caregiver, reluctance to go home
- habitual absences from school or other regular activities
- aggressive, withdrawn or sad eg frequent crying.

From online mandatory reporting guide: While corporal punishment is not endorsed, it is not prohibited as long as physical force is not applied to the head or neck, or any other part of the body in such a way as to be likely to cause harm to the child that lasts for more than a short period. (Crimes Act 1900 s 61AA; Education Act 1990).

### Sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse is any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child. Adults or adolescents who perpetrate child sexual abuse exploit the dependency and immaturity of children. Coercion, which may be physical or psychological, is intrinsic to sexual abuse and differentiates such abuse from consensual peer sexual activity.

The sexual abuse of a child commonly has the following characteristics:

- usually starts with something minor and gradually builds to more involved behaviours through 'grooming'
- secretive and generally known only to the abuser and victim making it extremely difficult to detect;
- perpetrated by someone known to the child and/or held in a position of trust by the child or their parents
- rarely a one-off incident but part of an ongoing relationship that is corrupting and distorting.

Indicators can include:

- inappropriate sexual activity and/or sexual knowledge beyond their years
- unusual fear and anxiety
- deteriorating relationships with peers and adults
- sudden decline in performance at school
- avoiding going home or to another venue they previously enjoyed visiting
- evidence of grooming eg unexplained gifts
- injury, discomfort in the genital areas, inflammation or recurrent infections eg urinary tract infections.

Sexual abuse is often preceded by grooming. The grooming process is a **pattern** of behaviour that can include:

- developing a 'special' relationship – spending special time with the child, establishing a relationship outside 'work' context, giving gifts or showing special favours, allowing the child to overstep rules etc
- testing boundaries – undressing in front of a child, talking about sex, 'accidental' inappropriate touching.

<sup>16</sup> <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/what-child-abuse-and-neglect>

**Psychological or emotional abuse**

Encompasses a range of behaviours by a parent or caregiver resulting in significant psychological or emotional harm, deprivation or trauma. It involves impairment of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and intellectual development and/or disturbance of a child's behaviour. Indicators can include:

- low self-esteem
- Fear of failure, overly high standards, excessive neatness or cleanliness, anxiety
- behavioural problems – unexplained mood swings, unusually demanding or overly passive behaviour, behaviours that are not age appropriate ie overly infantile or parenting behaviours, attention seeking behaviour
- delays in emotional and/or physical development
- unconcerned parents and/or very limiting in terms of contact with other children.

**Neglect**

Neglect occurs where a child is harmed by failure to provide the basic physical and emotional necessities of life such as adequate and proper food, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging. Neglect can be ongoing or a single significant incident. However, neglect typically develops as a pattern of behaviour that results in harm to a child over a period of time. When considering whether a child is being, or has been, neglected, it may be useful to focus on the effect on the child. Incidents that do not suggest any impact on the long-term physical, emotional or intellectual well-being of the child are unlikely to constitute neglect.

Indicators can include:

- hunger, begging or stealing food, gorging when food is available
  - consistently poor hygiene and/or inappropriately dressed for weather conditions
  - unattended health problems and lack of routine medical care eg gum disease, untreated sores
  - tired, listless, falling asleep in class
  - behaviours such as tiredness, irritability, inability to concentrate
  - evasive in discussions about home, address, when parents are home
  - withdrawn, alienation from peers, poor socialising habits
- poor or irregular school attendance or staying at school long hours.