



NORTHRIDGE
VINEYARD | CHURCH

“Caring for our Kids”

Guidelines for Youth Ministry Leaders

Northridge welcomes feedback on this Policy, particularly on the effectiveness of our approach to child safety. Please contact the Church Office with any comments:
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Thank you!

1. Jesus loves our young people

We are so pleased you have agreed to help lead on our Youth Ministry team! This ministry for young people in the age brackets covered by students attending School Years 6-12 inclusive is a significant part of the life of Northridge. Thank you!

Teaching young people about Jesus is kingdom work carrying important responsibilities for the wellbeing of those in our care. We must provide an environment safe from any form of harm.

2. The Northridge commitment

“They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.” Isaiah 61:3

Northridge is committed to its Leaders introducing children* to Jesus Christ in a safe, secure and loving environment as oaks of righteousness honouring His name. This Child Protection Policy reflects our desire and dedication to:

- promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children during their participation in activities involving children organised by Northridge, including Kids Church, Youth, worship, special events and conferences;
- assist employees, volunteers and others to recognise child abuse; and
- report child abuse and other misconduct to the NSW Police or other authorities in accordance with our legal obligations, or where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting a child is at risk of significant harm.

***In this booklet the term ‘child’ includes a young person.**

Terminology

3. Key terminology used in this booklet

Activity:	An activity involving children organised by Northridge, including an Event. Examples are Kids Church, Youth on Sunday mornings, Youth on Friday nights and regular church services attended by children.
Activity Environment:	The environment (including any room or other space) used for an Activity.
adult:	A person aged 18 or over who is NOT a participant (as distinct from a Leader) in Youth Ministry Activities. ¹
Authorised Person:	A person authorised in writing (including a text) by a parent of a child to collect the child from an Activity or otherwise care for the child for a

¹ The law defines an adult to be a person aged 18 or over. For the purpose of this Policy, we have modified that definition in order to include in the concept of ‘young person’ those aged 18 or over but still at school and participating in Youth Ministry Activities.



	short period (including a person nominated by a parent on a sign-in form to collect their child at the end of an Activity).
child:	A person who is either: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• under the age of 18, or• aged 18 or over who is a participant (as distinct from a Leader) in Youth Ministry Activities.
child abuse:	An act or omission endangering the physical, emotional or spiritual health or development of a child, as more fully explained in clause 18 of this booklet.
Children’s Ministry:	A Ministry primarily organised for and attended by children up to and including School Year 5.
Coordinator:	In respect of a Ministry or Activity, the person appointed to be the leader of the Ministry or Activity.
Event:	An occasional Activity not being a regular Children’s Ministry Activity, a regular Youth Ministry Activity or a regular church service. Examples are Excite and the Storehouse Christmas Party. ‘Event’ includes an Event (such as Cracker Night) taking place at an activity not organised by Northridge.
First Aid Officer:	A person appointed to provide first aid at an Activity.
guardian:	A person with legal authority and obligation to care for a child.
Leader:	Anyone (including an employee or a volunteer) working with children in an Activity (either in a leadership role or by assisting leaders). ‘Leader’ includes Coordinators and Supervisors.
Ministry:	One or more Activities (which, if more than one, are linked primarily because of the demographic of the children intended to be involved in them). Examples of Ministries are ‘Kids Church’ and ‘Youth’.
Parent:	Includes a guardian and any other person (such as a grandparent) who signs a Youth Ministry Annual Permission Form.
Session:	The period during which an Activity occurs.
Supervisor:	A person appointed by a Coordinator to be the leader of an Activity during the Activity’s Session.
young person:	A person in the age brackets covered by students attending School Years 6-12 inclusive, including a person aged 18 or over who is a participant (as distinct from a Leader) in Youth Ministry Activities.
Youth Ministry:	A Ministry primarily organised for and attended by young people.
WWC number:	A NSW Working with Children Check number issued by Service NSW on behalf of the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian.



Pre-requisites

4. Pre-requisites to be a Leader

4.1 The need to protect children

Sadly, many children have been abused physically, sexually and emotionally by trusted members of their communities, including people in churches. As a result, both the government and Northridge have requirements to be complied with before anyone can participate in activities involving young people.

4.2 Legal requirements

Whether you are an employee or a volunteer, you are obliged to obtain a WWC number. Northridge is then obliged to verify your WWC number with the Office of the Children’s Guardian.

4.3 Additional Northridge requirements

Before participating in Activities, you must complete the Northridge online training applicable to the role in which you will be involved by answering all questions correctly in an online test. Also, you must successfully complete refresher training every 3 years.

4.4 Non-compliance

While we hope and expect this will not occur, we will need to have a discussion with you about your ongoing participation in the Youth Ministry if you were to consistently either refuse or fail to comply with the Code of Conduct or other guidelines in this booklet.

Some overall guidelines

5. Codes of Conduct

Northridge has a general Code of Conduct which establishes standards by which all employees and volunteers of Northridge are expected to conduct themselves, A copy of that Code of Conduct can be found on the General Resources page of the Northridge website <https://northridge.org.au/general-resources/>. Accordingly, all Leaders are expected to comply with that general Code of Conduct.

All Leaders are expected also to comply with the following Child Protection Code of Conduct.

Northridge has adopted this Child Protection Code of Conduct to protect:

- Children taking part in Activities; and
- You as a leader from situations where your integrity or actions might be questioned.

Child Protection Code of Conduct

In addition to any other Northridge policy or code of conduct applying to them, Leaders must, in the exercise of their ministry:

- Never engage in child abuse.
- Never groom a child or otherwise cultivate relationships to initiate or conceal child abuse.



- Never be alone with a child away from the presence of other adults during an Activity.
- Never have children to their home or visit children in their home when no other adult is present, and never meet privately with a child outside of Activities, except with the permission of a parent.
- Never touch a child inappropriately².
- Never provide intimate care to a child (eg toileting or changing clothes).
- Never discipline a child physically.
- Never make available to a child:
 - a substance or product whose supply to, or use by, children is prohibited by law, such as illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco products and gambling products; or
 - without the express approval of a Community Pastor, a publication, film or computer game classified by the Office of Film and Literature Classification as being other than ‘unrestricted’ in the case of publications or ‘G’ in the case of films or computer games.
- Never develop special relationships with children that could be seen as involving favouritism or any form of special treatment.
- Never engage in any form of secretive contact with a child (including physical or electronic contact).

6. The four Golden Rules

There are four Golden Rules applicable to all the guidelines for Leaders of Youth ministry:

The Golden Rules

Use common sense

Leaders must always take reasonable care to ensure the safety and welfare of children in their care.

Two or more

There must always be at least two Leaders aged 18 or over present for all Activities.

Never alone

A Leader must not be alone with a child during an Activity, and should make sure, as far as possible, that another Leader is not left alone with a child.

Stranger danger

Leaders should be on the alert for people wandering around – a person unknown to the Leaders or not part of the Activity should not be allowed access to the Activity Environment and should be reported to the Coordinator immediately.

² See clause 13.7



7. Leader ratio

Although the Coordinator has overall responsibility for determining the appropriate ratio of adults to children, we also ask all our Leaders to be mindful of whether there is adequate supervision of children in their care. The degree of supervision required will vary depending on the nature of the environment and the activity, the age and maturity of the children and the size of the group.

There must always be at least two adult Leaders in each Activity Environment until all children have left the Activity Environment.

In addition, for Youth Ministry Activities, typically, the ratio of adult Leaders to young people should be a minimum of: 1:10.

If you ever have concerns about the ratio of adults to young people, you should raise this with the Coordinator immediately.

If a young person arrives at an Activity and you are the only adult Leader present, you must ask the person who has brought the young person to remain with the young person until another adult Leader arrives.

8. Physical safety of children

You must:

- be alert to possible physical danger to children such as unsafe furniture, broken glass or liquid on floors which could cause a slip hazard, and take appropriate remedial action; and
- be familiar with information parents provide about physical (eg allergies), mental health needs (eg depression) or safety needs of children in their care,
- **NEVER** administer medications to a child unless in your role as a First Aid Officer in a first aid setting, and
- become familiar with evacuation procedures and the location of fire extinguishers and first aid kits.

If an incident occurs at an Activity resulting in illness or injury to any person (or which created an unsafe environment which could have resulted in significant illness or injury) then you must report this to the Coordinator immediately. The Coordinator will decide whether first aid or reporting to a parent is required and may require you to complete a written report on the incident on a form they will provide you.

9. Appropriateness of activities

You must consider thoughtfully what messages children may learn from how Activities are organised or conducted. Games or other activities which could emphasise gender, physical, intellectual or ethnic differences must be assessed for their appropriateness.

To minimise the possibility of children being harmed, you must carefully consider the appropriateness of games or other activities requiring children to act alone or in pairs independent of Leaders.



You must review in their entirety DVDs, videos, computer games, graphics, photographs or lyrics you intend to show children. In assessing whether something is appropriate, you must be governed by the age of the youngest child present. Censorship ratings must be kept to ‘G’ or ‘unrestricted’ unless specific permission is granted by a Community Pastor.

10. Photos and moving images

10.1 Recording photos and moving images

You must:

- **ALWAYS** get the approval of the Coordinator or a Community Pastor before taking a photo or moving image (eg a video) of children at an Activity,
- **ALWAYS** be circumspect about taking an image of children at an Activity, and if you do, ensure children are appropriately dressed (eg not in swimsuits or pyjamas) and that the image is not potentially embarrassing, offensive or otherwise inappropriate,
- **GENERALLY**, take images of groups of children rather than individuals,
- **NEVER** take an image against the wishes of a child, and
- **NEVER** take an image of a child if a Coordinator has told you a parent has prohibited images being taken of their children. The exception to this is when a “PHOTO PERMISSION NOTICE” has been displayed at the entrance to an Event stating words to the effect that by entering the Event, parents consent to images being taken of them and their children.

10.2 Use of images

You must:

- **NEVER** show others or publish in any way (including on the Internet or in social media) an image of a child taken at an Activity (or identify the child’s name in such a showing or publication) without written consent from both:
 - a parent of the child, and
 - a Community Pastor, and
- whether or not any such permission has been granted, **NEVER** upload to the Internet (including on the Northridge website or any social media platform) an image of a child in School Year 6 or under which enables the child to be recognised.

11. Alcohol, tobacco and drugs

11.1 Consumption, serving or use of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs

The consumption:

- of tobacco or illegal drugs by any person, of any age, must not be allowed or condoned by any Leader in any Activity,



- of alcohol by any child* must not be allowed or condoned by any Leader in any Activity. ***NOTE: In this Policy child includes a young person,**
- or serving of alcohol by any adult is strictly prohibited on church grounds, unless expressly permitted by a Community Pastor for community events or fundraisers.

11.2 **Children affected by alcohol or illegal drugs**

If a child is found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs:

- a parent of the child must be contacted immediately and asked to come and collect their child immediately,
- the child must be removed from the Activity and monitored by at least two Leaders until collected by a parent, and
- the Coordinator must call an ambulance if they believe the child requires urgent medical care.

11.3 **Confiscation**

Leaders may confiscate alcohol or illegal drugs found in the possession of a child on church grounds. Any confiscated goods must be given to a Community Pastor.

12. **Praying with young people**

12.1 **Pre-conditions to praying**

A Leader must:

- not pray with a young person unless the young person invites the Leader to pray with them or demonstrates they would like a Leader to pray with them by walking to the front of a meeting during a prayer or worship time,
- where appropriate, inform a young person before any discussion between them takes place that it may not be possible for the Leader to keep confidential prayer requests or disclosures made by the young person if the Leader becomes concerned for the young person's safety,
- ensure there are always a minimum two people present when praying with a young person, with at least one person of the same gender as the young person. One of the two people must be a Leader and preferably the other person also is a Leader. However, if the Leader considers it appropriate, the other person can be a mature young person but in those circumstances the Leader must be the same gender as the young person being prayed for,
- not pray one-on-one with a young person unless expressly permitted by the Coordinator of the Activity in which the prayer ministry is occurring,
- before they start praying, ask the young person to describe their prayer request. Listen carefully and do not ask leading questions or more questions than necessary, and



- if a young person discloses abuse or information that gives a Leader cause to be concerned for their (or another child’s) safety or welfare, follow the procedures in the ‘Recognising and reporting child abuse’ section of this Policy.

Coordinators and service leaders (including Community Pastors) must monitor whether people offering to pray with young people (particularly in worship services open to all ages) have been trained in this clause and, if necessary, gently direct young people wanting prayer to people who have been trained in this clause.

12.2 **Conduct when praying**

When praying:

- verbal permission must be obtained from a young person before anyone lays a hand on the young person,
- if laying a hand on a young person:
 - only one hand may be placed on the young person,
 - a hand may be placed only on the shoulder, arm, or upper back,
 - if praying for healing, seek permission to place a hand on the infirmed area (and do not place a hand on the infirmed area if to do so would constitute inappropriate touch with reference to clause 13.7) , and
 - in all cases hands must remain as still as possible (no stroking or patting),
- the person praying must:
 - keep their eyes open as much as possible,
 - seek permission before ‘praying in tongues’ audibly, and
 - ‘check in’ with the young person at regular intervals and ensure they are comfortable with the process,
- if a young person falls to the floor in prayer (or appears about to fall to the floor):
 - if possible, provide a seat for them before they fall,
 - make sure they are appropriately covered (e.g. if a young person’s clothing has moved during their fall, cover them to ensure they are not exposed), and
 - appropriately clear the space around them and give them room, and
- **DO NOT** share with the young person any word or picture (negative or positive) which predicts or describes future events. Instead, consider sharing it with the Coordinator or a Pastor.

12.3 **When to stop praying**

Some young people may be unfamiliar with prayer ministry or the work of the Holy Spirit. The Leader should explain what is happening and what they are doing, regularly checking the young person feels safe and comfortable. If a young person says they do not feel safe or comfortable (or they appear not to be feeling safe or comfortable), stop praying immediately.

Youth Ministry specific guidelines

13. **Youth Ministry specific guidelines**

13.1 **Signing in**

Young people do not need to be signed into Youth Activities. However, an attendance roll must be taken for all Youth Activities. The Coordinator must provide a copy of each attendance roll to the Child Protection Officer for permanent retention.

13.2 **Visitors**



The Coordinator must ensure a *Visitor Details Form* is completed when a young person first attends a Youth Activity. The Coordinator must provide a copy of each Visitor Details Form to the Child Protection Officer for permanent retention.

13.3 End of Session procedures

Young people do not need to be signed out at the end of the Session of a Youth Activity and Northridge’s responsibility for them ends when they leave the Activity.

13.4 School Years 5 and 6 children

School Year 6 children can attend the Youth Ministry Activity held during the Thornleigh Morning Community meeting from the beginning of School Year 6.

Generally, children in School Year 6 can attend the Youth Ministry Friday nights at Thornleigh Activity from the beginning of Term 4.

Otherwise, children in School Year 6 (and occasionally School Year 5) can attend Youth Activities when approved by a Community Pastor.

When a School Year 5 or 6 child attends a Youth Ministry Activity they are taken to be a young person.

13.5 Health and safety (including toileting)

Leaders must:

- allow parents, in consultation with a Leader, to have access to their young people during a Session,
- ensure windows are kept clear to allow outside observation,
- not allow a young person to leave the Activity Environment during a Session unless:
 - they need to use the toilet, or
 - taken by a Leader directly to one of their parents, or
 - accompanied by a parent, and
- ensure young people are aware of toileting arrangements and emergency evacuation procedures.

After informing a leader, a young person may visit the bathroom on their own. The young person must be instructed to use the closest available bathroom. If they have not returned after 5 minutes a Leader must arrange for two adult Leaders of the same gender as the young person to enter the bathroom to ensure the young person’s safety.

13.6 Physical contact

While it is acceptable in cases of physical danger or a medical emergency, generally young people have the right to refuse being touched. Generally, physical contact should be initiated by the young person or occur with their permission.

Appropriate and inappropriate physical contact for Youth Ministry



Appropriate physical contact includes:

- Offering open side hugs (placing one arm around a young person’s shoulders) to welcome or comfort a young person
- Light touching on a young person’s arms or back

Inappropriate physical contact includes:

- Kissing or coaxing a young person to kiss a Leader
- Encouraging a young person to sit on a Leader’s lap
- Tickling
- Hitting or shaking
- Forceful grabbing or picking up
- Touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimsuit
- Touching that may be offensive given a child’s cultural background.

13.7 **Behaviour management**

Northridge aims to provide a positive experience where young people and Leaders enjoy their time together sharing mutual respect.

To achieve this, it is important Leaders are united and consistent in their approach to behaviour management.

Northridge believes most young people can develop mature self-reflective responses given a supportive environment for self-development. To this end Leaders should adopt an engaged, conversational approach to behaviour management using the following guidelines:

- If a young person is engaging in inappropriate, dangerous, aggressive or disruptive behaviour, they must be removed as gently as possible from the rest of the group and engaged in a conversation about their behaviour. The hope is that, from this conversation, they will understand why their actions are not acceptable and will address their behaviour, making the choice to learn from the situation and engage appropriately in the group.
- If the young person does not modify their behaviour appropriately, Leaders should engage them in a second conversation to address the situation (involving the Youth Pastor as appropriate).
- After two conversations, if the young person still does not modify their behaviour appropriately, a parent of the young person must be asked to collect them immediately. If a parent cannot be reached immediately, the young person must be removed from the group and supervised separately by two adult Leaders until a parent collects them.
- Northridge may ask for a follow up meeting or conversation later between the young person, a parent and the Youth Pastor.

While it is hoped more serious situations do not occur, Northridge has the following policies:

- Leaders may contain an aggressive young person by means considered reasonably necessary (eg light holding of the wrists) to prevent physical harm to themselves or others until a parent arrives. Should any containment become necessary, the Coordinator and a Community Pastor or Senior Pastor must be notified immediately.



- If a young person appears to be under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol, a parent must be asked to collect them immediately. If a parent cannot be reached immediately, the young person must be removed from the group and supervised separately by two adult Leaders until a parent collects them.
- If a Leader believes a young person is at risk of injuring themselves or others, this must be treated as an emergency and:
 - If the young person is being physically violent or aggressive, the police may be called (after the Leader confirms this with the Coordinator), or
 - If the young person appears to be under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol and a Leader believes they are medically compromised, an ambulance may be called (after the Leader confirms this with the Coordinator)

If any of these more serious situations occurs, the Leader must complete a written *Incident Report* the Coordinator will provide to them. The Incident Report must be sent to a Community Pastor and the Child Protection Officer as soon as possible after an incident occurs.

13.8 **Communications**

Northridge expects all communications involving any Youth Leader, young person or parent relating to Youth Ministry Activities to be respectful and transparent.

Leaders must:

- always copy another Leader on any non-face-to-face communication to one or more young people (including ensuring another leader is part of a group messaging system),
- not speak over the phone with a young person without a written consent from a parent of the young person, and
- use only the following forms of communication:
 - Mail (only to parents)
 - Telephone (with parental permission)
 - Email
 - Whatsapp
 - Facebook
 - Group text messages.
- immediately forward, or send a copy, to the Youth Pastor of any non-face-to-face communication they receive which they believe contains sexually suggestive, explicit or offensive language or images, or that would otherwise reasonably be considered inappropriate communication.

If a Leader receives a communication sent other than via a permissible method, they must not respond to it via that method. Instead, if a response is required, respond through a permissible method.

If a Leader receives a private text message from a young person, any reply must have another adult Leader included.



If a special circumstance arises where a non-permissible communication method is proposed, a Leader must not engage in the communication unless a parent has given written consent to the communication which sets out the reason for the method of communication and an expiry date for using the method.

14. Youth Camps

Whenever a Youth Ministry Activity involves young people sleeping over (such as at the annual Youth Camp or Soul Survivor) Leaders must:

- ensure (where possible) that sleeping accommodation is segregated between males and females,
- ensure (where possible) that each group of segregated males and females is supervised by more than one Leader of the same gender as the young people being supervised, preferably including a parent of one of the group,
- ensure Leaders do not share a bed or otherwise sleep near a young person, unless they are a parent of the young person,
- ensure a young person does not share a bed with another young person,
- ensure Leaders never share accommodation with only one young person, unless they are a parent of the young person,
- ensure everyone is aware that access to bathrooms, toilets, bunkrooms and tents of the opposite gender is not permitted (except for Leaders in an emergency),
- take reasonable steps to protect the privacy of everyone, particularly when changing clothes, washing and toileting, and
- emphasise to everyone the importance of adhering to health and safety rules of the accommodation provider.

15. Pastoral care

Occasionally, it may be appropriate to offer a young person pastoral care because of an emergency, a personal tragedy or a significant personal issue. Such an offer may be made only by an employee after consultation with a Community Pastor. Written consent must be obtained from a parent specifying:

- the intended location of the meeting (which must be in a public place visible to others (such as a coffee shop or a hospital room with the door open)), and
- the agreed time frame for the meeting.

The same procedure must be used for any follow up meeting.

Guidelines for Events

16. Events where Northridge does not take responsibility for children

16.1 Northridge not responsible for children



When an Event does not involve Leaders taking formal responsibility for caring for children, the Coordinator must ensure:

- (a) if it is an Event (such as Excite) where children typically arrive with parents or other adult carers, the parents or other adult with whom children arrive (in this clause 16 and clause 17 such adults are to be taken to be ‘parents’) are informed both verbally and by appropriate signage (usually at the entrance point to the Event) that they will be responsible for their children throughout the Event, including toileting, or
- (b) if it is an Event (such as Cracker Night) where Northridge is providing services to anyone (including children) who attends the Event (such as face painting or handing out balloons), there is signage (usually at any entrance point to the Event (as distinct from any entrance point of a broader activity within which the Event may be occurring)) stating that Northridge does not take responsibility for children entering the Event.

16.2 Unaccompanied children

If a child attends an Event referred to in clause 16.1 (a) but is not accompanied by a parent, the Coordinator must contact a parent of the child and ask them to either collect the child, come and stay with them for the duration of the Event or nominate an adult present at the Event who they consent to act as the child’s Authorised Person (to be confirmed by a text). Two adult Leaders must stay with the child until a parent or Authorised Person arrives or has been assigned to the child.

17. Events where Northridge takes responsibility for children

17.1 Optional children’s program

If a child arrives at an Event where Northridge provides an **optional** program involving Leaders taking formal responsibility for caring for children:

- (a) **Unaccompanied children:** and the child is not accompanied by a parent, the Coordinator must contact a parent of the child and ask them to either collect the child, come and stay with them for the duration of the Event or nominate an adult present at the Event who they consent to act as the child’s Authorised Person (to be confirmed by a text). Two adult Leaders must stay with the child until a parent or Authorised Person arrives or has been assigned to the child, and
- (b) **Notification to parents:** the Coordinator must ensure parents are informed both verbally and by appropriate signage (usually at the entrance point to the Event) that:
 - if they wish, they can place their children in the children’s program, but their children must be both signed in and signed out, and
 - whenever their children are not in the children’s program, they will be responsible for the children, including toileting.

17.2 Leader ratio

Whenever an Event has a children’s program (including a program specifically for young people) involving Leaders taking formal responsibility for caring for children, and whether or not the program is optional, then the Leader ratio requirements set out in clause 7 apply to that program.

17.3 Children’s programs open to children of any age



If a program involving Leaders taking formal responsibility for caring for children offered at an Event is open to children of any age, then Leaders must:

- ensure all children are signed in and signed out by a parent or Authorised Person and that emergency phone numbers and special dietary requirements are noted on the sign in form,
- if the program involves Leaders taking formal responsibility for caring for **all** children at the Event, confirm, when each child arrives, that, if their parent is not intending to stay for the entire Event, the child can use the toilet without help from Leaders. (A child unable to use the toilet without help and whose parent does not stay at such an Event is not permitted to attend the Event),
- take an attendance roll. (The Coordinator must provide a copy of each attendance roll to the Child Protection Officer for permanent retention.),
- allow parents, in consultation with a Leader, to have access to their children during the Session,
- ensure any door to the entrance of the Activity Environment is kept closed during the Session but windows are kept clear to allow outside observation. If the entrance to the Activity Environment does not have a door, the Coordinator must ensure an appropriate barrier or process is established designed to prevent children leaving the Activity Environment without appropriate permission,
- not allow a child to leave the Activity Environment during the Event unless:
 - they need to use the toilet, or
 - taken by a Leader directly to one of their parents, or
 - accompanied by a parent,
- if a child needs to use the toilet and a Leader has confirmed they can do so on their own, ensure a Leader stands with a clear view of the child walking to and from the bathroom and in hearing distance of the child. If the Activity Environment is at Thornleigh, children should use only the disabled bathroom on the ground floor of the auditorium. They must be instructed not to lock the bathroom door,
- if a child needs to use the toilet but has told a Leader they need help, take the child to a parent,
- if a child has not returned from the toilet within 5 minutes and:
 - is unresponsive to a knock on the bathroom door, or
 - calls out for help,

arrange for two Leaders of the same gender as the child to enter the bathroom to ensure the child's safety.

17.4 **Youth Ministry Events**

If an Event is a Youth Ministry Activity involving Leaders taking formal responsibility for all young people attending, then Leaders must:



- take an attendance roll but young people do not need to be signed into or out of the Event. (The Coordinator must provide a copy of each attendance roll to the Child Protection Officer for permanent retention.),
- ensure all young people attending the Event have provided a parent permission form prepared specifically for the Event,
- allow parents, in consultation with a Leader, to have access to their young people during the Event,
- ensure any windows are kept clear to allow outside observation,
- not allow a young person to leave the Activity Environment during the Event unless:
 - they need to use the toilet, or
 - taken by a Leader directly to one of their parents, or
 - accompanied by a parent, and
- ensure young people are aware of toileting arrangements and emergency evacuation procedures. After informing a Leader, a young person may visit the bathroom on their own. The young person must be instructed to use the closest available bathroom. If they have not returned after 5 minutes a Leader must arrange for two adult Leaders of the same gender as the young person to enter the bathroom to ensure the young person's safety.

Recognising and reporting child abuse³

18. Recognising child abuse

18.1 Core meaning of child* abuse

child abuse means an act or omission endangering the physical, emotional or spiritual health or development of a child including the following conduct in relation to a child:

- bullying
- emotional abuse
- harassment
- neglect
- physical abuse (including domestic violence)
- sexual abuse, or
- spiritual abuse

***NOTE: In this Policy ‘child’ includes a young person.**

ALSO, note these terms have been listed alphabetically which is not intended to reflect any order of importance or severity. All are important. However, the concepts of sexual abuse and physical abuse are the most common forms of abuse giving rise to meeting the threshold of child abuse reportable to the authorities. Having said that, Leaders must report to a Pastor under clause 19 below any form of suspected child abuse.

³ If you are personally emotionally affected in any way by reading this information and would like support, we encourage you to contact one of the pastoral team at Northridge or call Lifeline on 13 11 14.



Further explanation of these terms and indicators of this type of activity are set out in clause 18.2. If a Leader is in doubt about any of this terminology, they should seek further clarification from the Child Protection Officer, a Coordinator or a Community Pastor.

18.2 Expanded explanation of child abuse

Set out below is an explanation of each of the terms used in clause 18.1 and potential indicators of each type of child abuse:

BULLYING means behaviour directed to a person which:

- is repeated
- is unreasonable (being behaviour a reasonable person, considering the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening behaviour), and
- creates a risk to their health or safety.

Potential indicators of **bullying**

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics or jewellery
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviours such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide

EMOTIONAL ABUSE means acts or omissions causing, or which could cause, emotional harm or lead to serious behavioural or cognitive disorders. It includes:

- subjecting a person to excessive and repeated personal criticism
- ridiculing a person, including using insulting or derogatory terms to refer to them
- threatening or intimidating behaviour that leaves a person feeling frightened
- ignoring a person openly and pointedly,
- behaving in a hostile manner or in a way that could reasonably result in another person feeling isolated or rejected, and
- isolating a person from normal social experiences and opportunities to develop friendships

Potential indicators of **emotional abuse**

- Feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves
- Extremely low self-esteem
- Compliant, passive, withdrawn, tearful
- Inability to value others
- Serious difficulties with peer or other relations
- Extreme attention seeking behaviour

HARASSMENT means unwelcome conduct, whether or not intended, in relation to another person where the person feels with good reason in all the circumstances offended, belittled or threatened. This behaviour may consist of a single incident or several incidents over time. It includes:



- making unwelcome physical contact with a person
- making gestures or using language that could reasonably give offence including continual or unwarranted shouting
- making unjustified or unnecessary comments about a person’s capacities or attributes
- putting on open display pictures, posters, graffiti, or written materials that could reasonably give offence
- making unwelcome communication with a person in any form (eg phone calls, email, texts, social media),
- posting offensive or unauthorised material on computers (including in emails, websites, blogs or social networking sites), and
- stalking a person

Potential indicators of harassment

- Symptoms of depression or anxiety
- Anger, fear, frustration, irritability, embarrassment, shame, self-consciousness, low self-esteem, guilt, confusion, self-blame and a tendency to isolate
- Stomach ailments, headaches, insomnia, lethargy, nausea
- Constant nervousness
- Poor appetite, over eating, weight loss, weight gain

NEGLECT means the failure to provide the necessities of life where a child’s health and development are placed at risk of harm. It includes being deprived of:

- food
- clothing
- shelter
- hygiene
- education
- supervision and safety
- attachment to and affection from adults, and
- medical care.

Potential indicators of neglect

- Poor standards in hygiene leading to social isolation
- Medical conditions not being treated adequately or appropriately
- Scavenging or stealing food
- Extended stays at school, public areas, other homes
- Statements from a child that no one is home to care for them
- Being focussed on basic survival
- Extreme longing for adult affection
- A flat and superficial way of relating, lacking a sense of genuine interaction
- Anxiety about being abandoned by others
- Difficulty trusting adults
- Self-comforting behaviours, e.g. rocking, sucking
- Carer presents with bizarre/irrational behaviour or seems indifferent to child’s needs

PHYSICAL ABUSE means any intentional or reckless act, use of force or threat to use force causing injury to, or involving unwelcome physical contact with, another person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, or grabbing. It includes exposing a person to domestic or family violence (either as a witness or as a person on whom it is perpetrated), being violent, and abusive and intimidatory behaviour perpetrated by one person against another in a personal, intimate relationship. It does not include discipline by a parent which is reasonable in the circumstances. (However, physical force to a child’s neck



or head (unless trivial or negligible in all the circumstances) or which otherwise causes harm for more than a short period is NOT reasonable).

Potential indicators of **physical abuse**

- Bruises on face neck or head
- Other bruises or marks which may show the shape of the object which caused it
- Lacerations and welts
- Head injuries where the infant may be drowsy or vomiting or have glassy eyes, fixed pupils or pooling of blood in the eyes suggesting the possibility of having been shaken
- Adult bite marks and scratches
- Bone fractures, especially in children under three (3) years of age
- Dislocations, sprains, swelling
- Burns marks and scalds
- Multiple injuries or bruises
- Child or parent’s explanation inconsistent with injury
- Abdominal pain (may be caused by internal organ damage)
- Ingestion of poisonous substances, alcohol or drugs
- General indicators of female genital mutilation

SEXUAL ABUSE of a child means the use of a child by another person (including a child) for their own sexual stimulation or gratification or that of others. It includes:

- making sexual advances to a child using any form of communication
- exposing oneself indecently to a child
- having or attempting to have vaginal or anal intercourse with a child
- penetrating or attempting to penetrate a child’s vagina or anus with an object or any bodily part
- kissing, touching, holding or fondling or attempting to kiss, touch, hold or fondle a child in a sexual manner
- staring at or secretly watching a child for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification
- making any gesture or action of a sexual nature in a child’s presence
- making sexual references or innuendo in a child’s presence using any form of communication
- discussing or inquiring about personal matters of a sexual nature with a child
- possessing, creating or exposing children to child exploitation material of a sexual nature
- exposing a child to any form of sexually explicit or suggestive material including clothing with sexually explicit images or messages
- giving goods, money, attention or affection in exchange for:
 - sexual activities with a child, or
 - images of a child for sexual gratification of themselves or others, and
- encouraging, or forcing or attempting to encourage or force a child:
 - to sexually touch or fondle another person
 - to perform oral sex
 - either to masturbate self or others, or to watch others masturbate, or
 - to engage in or watch any other sexual activity.

Potential indicators of **sexual abuse**

- Direct or indirect disclosure
- Describing sexual acts



- Overtly sexual themes in artwork, play or writing
- Persistent running away from home
- Anorexia or overeating
- Going to bed fully clothed
- Regression in developmental achievements
- Child being in contact with a known offender
- Unexplained accumulation of money and gifts
- Bleeding from vagina, external genitalia or anus
- Injuries such as tears or bruising to the genitals or anus
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen and thighs
- Developmentally inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Persistent habit disorders, e.g. Sucking, biting, rocking
- Self-destructive behaviours, e.g. Suicide attempts, substance abuse, deliberate self-harm.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE means the mistreatment of a person by actions or threats when justified by appeal to God, faith or religion. It includes:

- using a position of spiritual authority to dominate or manipulate another person or group
- using a position of spiritual authority to seek inappropriate deference from others
- isolating a person from friends and family members, and
- using biblical or religious terminology to justify abuse.

Potential indicators of **spiritual abuse**

- Highly compliant, fear-based obedience
- Going along with activities despite obvious discomfort or doubt
- Fear of expressing ideas and beliefs freely
- Excessively idolising leaders
- Disclosure that a person is being prevented from practising their faith or religion
- Disclosure that a person is being forced to act against their spiritual or religious beliefs
- Disclosure that a person is being accused of being too religious or not religious enough
- Disclosure that a person’s understanding of religious practices or beliefs is being ridiculed.

19. Reporting suspected child abuse to a Pastor

If:

- a Leader observes what they believe or suspect to be child abuse or indicators of child abuse,
- another person tells a Leader they suspect or know a child is being subjected to child abuse,
- a child tells a Leader they, or another child, is being subjected to child abuse, or
- a Leader suspects on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk of significant harm,

then the Leader must:



- **GIVE** this information immediately to the Kids Church Pastor, the Youth Pastor a Community Pastor or a Senior Pastor. In an emergency call 0416 024 244
IMPORTANT:
 - **The obligation of a Leader to report this type of information to a Pastor is not limited to situations where the belief or suspicion arises in connection with Activities. It is irrelevant where the possible child abuse may have taken place or who may have perpetrated it.**
 - **If the perpetrator of the possible child abuse is a Pastor, the Leader must not give the information to that Pastor but instead give it to another Pastor not related by marriage or otherwise to the possible perpetrator.**

IMPORTANT

IF A CHILD TELLS A LEADER THEY, OR ANOTHER CHILD, HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO CHILD ABUSE, THE LEADER MUST:

- Listen to their story carefully
- Comfort them with words if they are distressed
- Let them know they did the right thing and they have the right to both feel, and be, safe
- Let them know the Leader is concerned about what they have told the Leader and the Leader will be getting advice as soon as possible about how best to help them.
- **NOT** promise to keep the information secret
- **NOT** ask more questions than are necessary to understand what has occurred
- **NOT** ask leading questions ie questions which suggest an answer
- **NOT** touch the child inappropriately
- **NOT** suggest the child will need to prove what has been disclosed
- **NOT** promise the abuse will stop, and
- **NOT** notify parents (this issue will be dealt with by the Northridge leadership)

- **NOT GIVE** the information to anyone else other than the Child Protection Officer (ie keep the information **CONFIDENTIAL**)
- **PREPARE** a written report of the information in conjunction with a Pastor and the Child Protection Officer within 24 hours from when the Leader receives it on a *Risk of Harm Report* the Pastor will provide to the Leader.

AFTER the Leader has given a report under this clause to a Pastor, they must not have further interaction with a child:

- the subject of, or
- who disclosed

the possible child abuse unless it is expressly approved by a Pastor. This is because it is important for the protection of all parties for the procedure following receipt of this type of information to be co-ordinated by the Northridge leadership.

