



VOYAGE CHURCH
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Safe Ministry Blueprint for Lead Pastors

**Safe Ministry with Children and Other
Vulnerable People**

Safe Ministry Blueprints

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Introduction

Ministry to children and young people is vibrant and exciting work, and also greatly significant to the life of the church. Teaching children and youth about Jesus is kingdom work. It is a service to the children and youth, the church family, and to God himself that offers great opportunities, but also carries significant responsibilities for the wellbeing of the children and young people in our care. If we as a church take the teaching and leadership of children and young people seriously then we must do all we can to provide an environment that is safe from any form of harm.

As the Lead Pastor of a church, the responsibility for safe ministry in your church primarily lies with you. This booklet sets out those responsibilities and should be read alongside of the Voyage Safe Ministry Blueprint for Church.

Except where a particular age bracket is indicated, or a distinction is drawn between children and youth, references to children in this document are references to anyone under the age of 18.

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A. Your safe ministry responsibilities

As Lead Pastor, it is ultimately your legal and moral responsibility to make sure that ministry conducted throughout the church is safe for children and young people. Your responsibilities are summarized below, and outline in more detail in the remainder of the document. In order to faithfully execute your responsibilities with regard to safe ministry you need to:

- 1. UNDERGO TRAINING** – You must complete safe ministry training at the required intervals;
- 2. IMPLEMENT and APPOINT** – You must implement the Safe Ministry Policy and appoint a Safe Ministry Representative;
- 3. COMPLY**– You must make sure Voyage complies with its obligations under the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*;
- 4. MEET** – You must meet regularly with the Safe Ministry Representative on at least an annual basis to review the implementation of the safe ministry policies in the church;
- 5. MONITOR** – (with the Safe Minister Representative) all basic health and safety issues in order to avoid obvious hazards on church property, particularly in rooms used by infants, preschoolers and primary age children;
- 6. REPORT** – Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, you must report your suspicions to the relevant authorities;
- 7. FULFIL** – To fulfil such other responsibilities as are required by chapter 5 of Faithfulness in Service.

1. UNDERGO TRAINING

You must complete safe ministry training at the required intervals. You must have satisfactorily completed safe ministry training within the last three years before beginning your work, or within three months of your role commencing. You must complete the training every three years while in office.





2. IMPLEMENT and APPOINT

You must implement the Safe Ministry Policy and appoint a Safe Ministry Representative.

The Safe Ministry Policy states:

Voyage is committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all people, particularly within its own community. To ensure the safety of children and vulnerable people in our communities, Voyage will –

- *Carefully recruit and train church workers,*
- *Adopt and encourage safe ministry practices by its church workers,*
- *Respond promptly to each concern raised about the behaviour of its church workers*
- *Offer pastoral support to any person who has suffered abuse, and*
- *Provide supervision of and pastoral accountability (within the context of the ministries) to any person who is a member of Voyage and who is known to have abuse a child or another vulnerable person.*

A Safe Ministry Representative must:

- be 21 years or older,
- have completed Safe Ministry training within the last three years or within three months after their appointment (and every three years after that),
- hold a Working With Children Check clearance which has been verified with the Office of the Children's Guardian,
- have an email account (for administrative purposes),
- have good administrative skills, and
- be capable of maintaining a computer spreadsheet.

He or she must not be bankrupt or mentally ill, or otherwise incapable of acting in the capacity of Safe Ministry Representative.

An added help is if the Safe Ministry Representative has professional training or expertise in child protection issues (such as a teacher, children's worker, youth worker or a person with behavioural or social sciences qualifications and experience). And, it helps if the Representative is not a member of the staff or related to a member of the staff. Otherwise, a church member might feel uncomfortable speaking to the Safe Ministry Representative about concerns regarding a staff member. These are desirable, rather than required, things.

Upon the appointment of a Safe Ministry Representative, Voyage will promptly notify the church community via email, website and noticeboard. More information can be found at www.voyage.church/child-protection

If you think it is necessary, you may revoke the appointment of the Safe Ministry Representative and appoint someone else to the role.



3. COMPLY

In conjunction with the Safe Minister Representative, you must make sure the church complies with its obligations under the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (NSW).



You are responsible for making sure that your parish obeys the law in terms of NSW Working With Children Check (WWCC) requirements. The Safe Ministry Representative's job is to assist you with implementing that compliance.

In particular you must make sure that any and every person engaged in child-related work in Voyage either:

- a. holds a Working With Children Check clearance that has been verified with the Office of the Children's Guardian and is not subject to a bar;**
- b. has a current Working With Children Check application before the Office of the Children's Guardian; or**
- c. is subject to an exemption.**

Ordinarily, every person engaged in child-related work must obtain a WWCC clearance. This applies to both paid workers and volunteers.

"Child-related work" generally means work involving activities primarily related to children (including - in the case of religious bodies - youth groups, youth camps, teaching children and child care) that involve physical or face-to-face contact with children. However, the general meaning is subject to a number of exemptions (including workers who are under 18 years of age) and extensions (including the minister, an assistant minister (pastor/leader) and a volunteer minister (pastor/leader/regular preacher) as they are deemed to be undertaking child-related work where there are children in a congregation).

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years and therefore "child-related work" includes youth ministry activities.

Before the applicant can begin child-related work, Voyage must check that he or she has a WWCC clearance. To do this, you or the Safe Ministry Representative need to log into the parish's account with the Office of the Children's Guardian at www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au. You will need to enter the following:

- full name of applicant,
- applicant's date of birth,
- applicant's WWCC clearance number or application number.

If the person is barred, you must immediately stop their involvement in all child-related work and notify the Professional Standards Unit that they are barred.

If the person is from interstate or overseas, you should also consider obtaining a criminal record check from that state or country in addition to the WWCC. You will usually only be able to do this with the involvement and consent of the person.

See the Working With Children Check appendix at the end of this document for further information.

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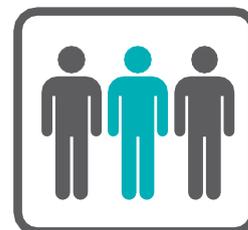


4. MEET

You must meet regularly with the Safe Ministry Representative at least once a year to review the implementation of the safe ministry policies in the church;

It is the job of the Safe Ministry Representative to:

- monitor how children and young people are kept safe by the systems and practices used in your activities;
- provide an annual report that includes current safe ministry policies and practices and any suggested changes to ensure the safety of the children and young people involved in Voyage activities.



5. MONITOR

One of the ways that we can protect children in our churches is to make sure that they are meeting in a physical environment that is appropriate and safe for them.

Along with the Safe Ministry Representative, you must monitor all basic health and safety issues in order to avoid obvious hazards on rented church property, particularly in rooms used by infants, preschoolers and primary age children.

Consider particularly the suitability of the space, the safety of the space, and the safety measures in place by asking the following questions. Ideally it is preferable if you are objectively able to tick all the following boxes 'yes'.





Suitability of the space

- Are toilet facilities available?
- Is the space appropriate for activities such as games and craft activities?
- Is the equipment being used suitable and appropriate for the ages using it? (this is a particularly pertinent question to ask if there is any climbing equipment)
- Is the floor non-slip and splinter-free?

In regard to areas used by toddlers and preschoolers:

- Is the area fenced off or contained in a room?
- Is there a designated area for strollers that are not in use?

Safety of the space

- Is the area to be used a safe distance from roads or traffic?
- Is the area far removed from places where people may engage in unsafe behaviour (such as smoking or drinking alcohol)?
- Is any glass installed at floor level safety glass?
- Are all child-height cupboards fitted with child-proof locks?
- Is the heating safe to use near children (i.e. is the source of heat removed away from small inquisitive fingers)?

- Are all electrical wiring, sockets and appliances regularly maintained and in a safe condition?
- Are all sockets child-proofed?
- In regard to areas that may be used for games and outside play, has the area been checked for items that may pose a potential hazard and such items safely removed (such as broken glass, or discarded needles)?
- Is all furniture in a safe condition and without risk of toppling onto a child (such as any stacks of chairs being at a low height)?

First aid and safety measures

- Is there a fire extinguisher or fire blanket available on-site?
- Is there a well-stocked first aid kit at the activity site?
- Is there a specific person in the church who is responsible for checking the first aid kit regularly and replenishing it?
- Is there a specific person on-site who is trained in first aid?
- Are all leaders aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures?



6. REPORT

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



If a child or adult tells you about any abuse or sexual misconduct, you should:

- listen to their story;
- comfort them if they are distressed;
- let them know you're glad they told you and that they did the right thing;
- let them know you are going to get help about what to do next and that you will get back to them.

As soon as possible after the disclosure you must:

- a. write down the details of what was said, and
- b. report the information to the appropriate authorities.

a. WRITE DOWN the details of what was said including such details as:

- who you spoke to,
- date, time and
- place, what you said,
- what the person said, and
- any grounds for forming the belief that abuse has occurred.

Keep to the facts about what was said and don't express your opinion. Be aware that this document must be signed and dated and could be subpoenaed in court proceedings.



b. REPORT the information to the appropriate authorities

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES

Issue or Concern	Report to:
General Suspicions	Lead Pastor* or Safe Ministry Representative**
Child or young person currently at risk of significant harm	<p>FaCS (Family and Community Services) If possible discuss with your Head Ministry Leader or Safe Ministry Representative first and use the Mandatory Reporters Guide https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg</p> <p>Police Contact the police first if the situation requires emergency assistance.</p> <p>Lead Pastor* or Safe Ministry Representative** Where the alleged perpetrator is a church worker, congregational member or church attender.</p>
Knowledge of relevant criminal offences regarding a church worker, congregational member or church attender.	<p>Police</p> <p>Safe Ministry Representative** or Lead Pastor/s*</p>
Child abuse by a church worker, congregational member or church attender.	<p>Lead Pastor* or Safe Ministry Representative**</p> <p>Police</p>

- **Do not report to the Lead Pastor if the allegation is regarding the Lead Pastor*
- ***Do not report to the Safe Ministry Representative (SMR) if the allegation is regarding the SMR*

Do not undertake an investigation, and do not disclose the allegations to the alleged offender at this initial stage.

Under NSW law, you have a legal obligation to report, as soon as practicable, to Family and Community Services the name of a child if there are reasonable grounds to suspect the child is at risk of significant harm.



If the Lead Pastor/s become aware that an adult child worker (paid or unpaid) poses a risk of child abuse; by law they must remove that person from the position. Negligently failing to do so is a criminal act with a maximum penalty of 2 years in jail.

Definition – “At risk of significant harm”

A child or young person is “at risk of significant harm” if current concerns exist for the safety, welfare or well-being of the child or young person because of the presence, to a significant extent, of any one or more of the following circumstances:

- a. the child’s or young person’s basic physical or psychological needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met,
- b. the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care,
- (b1) in the case of a child or young person who is required to attend school in accordance with the Education Act 1990—the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive an education in accordance with that Act,
- c. the child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated,
- d. the child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm,
- e. a parent or other caregiver has behaved in such a way towards the child or young person that the child or young person has suffered or is at risk of suffering serious psychological harm,
- f. the child was the subject of a pre-natal report and the birth mother of the child did not engage successfully with support services to eliminate, or minimise to the lowest level reasonably practical, the risk factors that gave rise to the report.

Note. Physical or sexual abuse may include an assault and can exist despite the fact that consent has been given.



REPORTING SUSPECTED ADULT ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES

Anyone who suspects that a church worker, congregational member, or church attender is engaging in sexual misconduct, abusive behaviour towards another adult or conduct that constitutes a serious breach of the Voyage Safe Ministry Blueprints and Training should report it to the appropriate authorities. Similarly, any criminal conduct or threat of harm should also be reported.

Issue or Concern	Report to:
Sexual abuse of an adult by a church worker, congregational member or church attender.	Lead Pastor* or Safe Ministry Representative** Police
Other abusive behaviour e.g. physical violence, bullying	Lead Pastor* or Safe Ministry Representative** Where the alleged perpetrator is a church worker
Criminal Conduct	Police Safe Ministry Representative**
Threat of harm to self or others	Police, Ambulance, Mental health service (as required) Lead Pastor* or Safe Ministry Representative**
Other conduct by a church worker** (refer to the Blueprint which includes the code of conduct)	Ministry Team/Department Leader Lead Pastor* or Safe Ministry Representative**

- **Do not report to the Lead Pastor if the allegation is regarding the Lead Pastor*
- ***Do not report to the Safe Ministry Representative (SMR) if the allegation is regarding the SMR*
- ****A church worker includes a minister (pastor), any leader or ministry volunteer (eg, V Group Leader, Sunday School teacher, youth group leader, musician, etc.), visiting minister.*



RESPONDING TO ABUSE

Confidentiality

Any suspicion, knowledge or disclosure of abuse must be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Apart from reporting it to the relevant authorities, the information must not ordinarily be shared with anyone else.

Investigations by Police or Family and Community Services

In some cases, a report will lead to an investigation by the Police or Family and Community Services and the matter will be taken out of the hands of the church. In other cases, there may be no action taken by the civil authorities (for example, because the complainant does not want to go through a criminal trial) and Voyage will need to determine its response to the matter. In both cases, legal advice should be consulted on how to proceed.

Pastoral care

A victim of abuse may require immediate specialist counselling or other support in a compassionate and timely response. Victims often need ongoing contact and support and the Lead Pastor/s should ensure that an appropriate person is appointed to follow up with them. Other members of the church may also need specialist support.

If a leader informs the Lead Pastor or Safe Ministry Representative that a child has disclosed abuse to them, they should make sure that the above steps are taken. They should also ensure that the leader is appropriately cared for and supported. The leader may need to debrief about how the experience has affected them.





Emergency Evacuation Procedure

In the case of an emergency evacuation: **STOP**

1. Team Leader calls: **STOP** and blows a whistle
2. Everyone stops and turns to face the Team Leader and **FOLLOWS** the team leader to the designated meeting area away from the building.
3. The last leader is to perform a quick check of the rooms and toilets, calling for anyone to leave the building and assisting anyone leaving the building to the designated meeting area.
4. The team leader is to call **000** emergency service while the other leaders checks everyone is at the designated area.
5. Everyone is to **STAY** at the designate meeting area away from the building until emergency services calls the all clear.



Key policies you need to know about and contact details



i. Key documents

The following documents are available at: <https://www.voyage.church/child-protection>

Voyage Safe Ministry Blueprints For:

- Voyage Overall
- The Lead Pastor
- Safe Ministry Representative
- Children's Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- Parents and Church Members

Other documents of the Voyage Safe Ministry Plan

- Role Description
- Application Form
- Safe Ministry Pledge
- Safe Ministry Online Training <https://safeministry.training/>



ii. Contact details

Voyage Safe Ministry Representative

- Phone: 0427 203 477
- Email: smr@voyage.church

Family & Community Services and other Crisis Numbers

- NSW Child Protection Helpline: 132 2111
- Mandatory Reporters Guide: reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/
- Domestic Violence Line: 1800 656 463
- NSW Elder Abuse Helpline: 1800 628 221
- National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1800 880 052
- Disaster Welfare Services: 1800 018 444
- Mental Health Line NSW: 1800 011 511
- NSW Victims Access Line: 1800 633 063

Police

- **Emergency Assistance: 000**
- Local Police: 6691 0799
- Crime Stoppers: 1800 333 000
- Police Assistance Line: 131 444

Other Services

- Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) for WWCC: 02 9286 7219
- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 880
- Headspace – Youth Mental Health Foundation: 66 521 878
(45 Little Street, Coffs Harbour)
- Lifeline: 131 114

Anglican Safe Ministry Team (Professional Standards Unit)

- Director: 02 9265 1514
- Request protocol and other documents: 02 9265 1604
- Safe Ministry website: <https://safeministry.org.au>
- Safe Ministry training website: <https://safeministry.training>