

Engadine Congregational Church Safe Ministry Guidelines – Playtime and Creche¹

These guidelines relate to the ministries of Playtime and Creche at Engadine Congregational Church and are to be read in conjunction with the church's broader and over-arching '*Safe Ministry Policy*' and '*Code of Conduct*'. This document relates specifically to the exercising of appropriate practices amongst very young children (ages 0-5 years old) and applies to all leaders, coordinators, volunteers, and anyone working on behalf of Engadine Congregational Church.

Our policy endeavours to see that:

- all people are respected and valued.
- leaders and programs are safe.
- the risk of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of positional power is minimised.
- all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly and sensitively.

We commit to providing ministry that is safe in the following specific ways.

Appropriate leadership

Given the high vulnerability and dependency of this age group, leaders should work in pairs as much as possible. If this is difficult because of a lack of leaders, groups should meet where they can be clearly seen by others.

Leaders should assist and encourage independence in children, as this shows love and concern.

Toileting and first aid is best done by parents or experienced female leaders.

Sit children beside you to read a book or do an activity.

Should a child become upset or frustrated, try to re-direct their attention. Leaders should not physically discipline a child. Rather, consequences that do not include corporal punishment can be imposed on children for overstepping stated boundaries.

¹ This policy has been developed using material from: the Fellowship of Congregational Churches Safe Ministry Training seminars; and the Safe Ministry Handbook of the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney Professional Standards Unit (www.safeministry.org.au).

Except for safety reasons, young children have the right to refuse contact from an adult. When children initiate touch, keep it brief and re-direct them. Appropriate physical contact towards children in this age group includes: rocking and talking in reassuring tones to comfort a child; sitting a child on a caregiver's lap to check discomfort or ill health; and carrying a child for a short period of time to reassure if hurt or to facilitate separation from a parent. Unacceptable forms of physical contact towards children in this age group include: slapping, hitting or shaking; forceful grabbing or picking up; and intentional touching of genital areas. There is to be no contact above the shoulders, unless for safety or medical reasons. It is also important to be aware of what is acceptable especially to children of parents from particular cultures (e.g. restrictions concerning touch between males and females). Male leaders should be particularly aware of their behaviour towards children and young people, keeping unavoidable physical contact to a minimum.

Best practices

A registration form should be completed, giving details of: names, addresses and phone numbers of participant and parent/carer; name and phone number of a contact person in an emergency situation; important medical information (e.g. allergies, disabilities, special diets); permission for leaders to obtain medical treatment in an emergency; names of people allowed to collect the child (e.g. carefully note if there is a non-custodial parent to whom the child should never be handed over). These details should be accessible at all times.

Care should be shown with regards to hygiene. Anyone handling food should wash their hands first or wear disposable gloves. Activities or games should not encourage unhygienic practices (e.g. using the same spoon in an activity that requires putting the spoon in mouths). If a child vomits or soils an area, the area should be disinfected as soon as possible. Toys and equipment should be cleaned regularly.

When assisting with toileting or other personal care issues a leader should consider what is appropriate for the child's age and ability whilst avoiding being alone. Where possible, parents should change nappies and take children to the toilet. Otherwise it is highly recommended that females rather than males and experienced over inexperienced carers assist in toileting.

A well-stocked first aid kit should be kept handy. At least one leader should be able to administer first aid (having done, for example, a St John Ambulance First Aid Course). It is highly recommended that females rather than males and experienced over inexperienced carers administer first aid. When administering first aid, at least two leaders should be present and any treatment documented. Parents/carers should be informed of any injury as soon as possible.

Safe environments

The designated area and its contents should be safe and suitable for the particular ministry activity. Consider particularly: the proximity to roads and traffic; availability of toilet facilities; enough room for appropriate activities (e.g. games and craft); safety glass at floor level; location of tea and coffee-making facilities; possibility of grounds where games will be played being littered with dangerous objects (e.g. discarded needles or broken glass); suitability of equipment being used; a fire extinguisher or fire blanket should be available; any heating should present no danger to the ministry participants; electrical wiring, sockets and appliances should be maintained in a safe condition, and sockets should be child-proofed.

Be on the alert for people wandering around. A person unknown to the leaders should not be allowed access to the program or participants.

Important Contact Information

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Safe Ministry Representative: Jane Rummey – 0410 524 954 (safeministry@econg.org.au)

Fellowship of Congregational Churches: (02) 9588 5128; fcccong@bigpond.com

Family and Community Services (FaCS) Child Protection Helpline: 132 111