

Engadine Congregational Church Safe Ministry Guidelines – Youth¹

These guidelines relate to Youth Group ministry 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 young people (ages 12-18 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

Working in teams or in pairs is highly desirable. If this is difficult because of a lack of leaders, groups should meet where they are visible to others. All contact and conversations should be in the open.

Physical restraint is not to be used, unless for obvious safety reasons. Appropriate physical contact with this age group includes: high fives; handshakes; contact with the shoulders, upper arm or back. It is important to remember that a leader's first response should be non-contact. 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 should be the young person who initiates physical contact. When a young person initiates touch, keep it brief and re-direct them. Any physical contact made by a leader should occur with the young person's permission. 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 young people, keeping unavoidable physical contact to a minimum.

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

Leaders should be aware of their positions as role models to young people, so they should be very careful of their standards of dress, language, driving and other habits. Lewd and suggestive language should be avoided completely. Leaders should not visit the home of a group member if the parents are absent.

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.

With regards to communication it is important to be mindful of the position of trust and power entrusted to leaders. For those in the lower end of high school (e.g. Years 7-9), phone contact should be for ministry purposes and should be with parents first and then, if appropriate, with the young person. For those in the upper end of high school (e.g. Years 10-12), phone contact for ministry purposes is permissible, however long conversations are to be avoided. SMS should be limited to logistical purposes – e.g. event reminder. Emails should be limited to logistical purposes and basic encouragement. All emails should be sent to the young person with a BCC or CC to a senior leader for accountability, safe keeping and future reference. More significant conversations should be held in person. Leaders can use closed (not secret) Facebook groups. The information posted on these groups should be for logistics, encouragement and prayer. Leaders must not transmit, retrieve or store any communication that is: discriminatory or harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic, defamatory, threatening, for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to the code of conduct.

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 a team game that requires putting the spoon in mouths).

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.

Should transport be required, leaders should not be alone with a young person in a car. Where this is unavoidable, another leader should be informed of the trip and its reason. All drivers should be responsible, experienced (green P's or higher) and not impaired by alcohol or drugs. Vehicles should be appropriately maintained. Seatbelts should always be used. Leaders should not be responsible for driving young people home. If it is absolutely necessary, have another leader with you, and wherever possible, obtain parental permission before doing so. 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

Elders: Roy Arellano – 0450 781 041 (roy@econg.org.au); Greg Jones – 0438 366 803 (info@econg.org.au); James Stone – 0450 313 991 (james@econg.org.au)

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