

Safe Ministry To Children and Young People Guidelines

PURPOSE

The Safe Ministry To Children and Young People Guidelines has been prepared to fulfil the church's commitment to be a safe space as outlined in our Safe Ministry Policy. These guidelines are to be read in conjunction with our Safe Ministry Policy and team/ministry specific handbook (where applicable). It is a requirement that all staff and volunteers adhere to these guidelines; failure to adhere may result in disciplinary action. Depending on the seriousness of the misconduct, this may include dismissal (in the case of staff) or removal from the serving role (in the case of volunteers).

BEHAVIOUR OF LEADERS

Your Role

When serving in a Ministry with children/young people, you are responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the children/young people in your care. While it's important for children and young people to feel they can trust and confide in you, it is equally important to avoid encouraging any inappropriate dependence.

Your authority over children and young people comes from your position, age, maturity, and physical presence. Abuse occurs when this authority or power is misused. Any form of child abuse is always unacceptable, and Liberti Church maintains a zero tolerance policy toward it.

Equity

You are expected to treat all children and young people fairly, equally and with dignity. Children and young people have the right to be respected, listened to and have their particular needs addressed in all ministries. No child or young person is to be discriminated against for any reason. Your actions and behaviour must be non-discriminatory and always in the best interests of the child. Discrimination of any kind will be met with zero tolerance. This is an outworking of Jesus' command to love your neighbour as yourself.

Sexual Misconduct

Under no circumstance is any form of sexual behaviour to occur between, with, or in the presence of, children and young people participating in any of our ministries. Engaging in sexual behaviour with any children and young people in Liberti Church is prohibited, even if those involved are above the legal age and give consent.

This is included, but not limited to:

- Contact behaviour - such as kissing, sexual contact, sexual intercourse
- Non-Contact behaviour - such as flirting or inappropriate texting
- Use of electronic media of any kind for the purpose of sexually based content
- Exposing children or young people to Inappropriate photography, including pornography or nudity
- Inappropriate conversations, or conversations of a sexual nature with, or within the presence of, a child or young person

Language And Tone

All children and young people should be communicated with in a manner that respects and values them. At no point should children or young people ever feel threatened as a result of inappropriate language or tone. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Screaming or yelling
- An aggressive tone
- Insults
- Verbal communication that is sexual in nature of any kind
- Derogatory comments or jokes made at the expense of the child/young person

Physical Contact

Physical contact between volunteers and children/young people needs to be treated with great care. In general, physical contact should be initiated by the child/young person, or occur with their permission. Be respectful of the child/young person's feelings, and make sure you are observed by other leaders. If a situation arrives where it is necessary to physically restrain a child/young person, there are a number of considerations to be made. This kind of physical contact should be a last resort, aimed solely at preventing harm to the child/young person or others, and the level of force used must be appropriate to the specific circumstances. Such an incident must be reported right away to the Ministry Director, or another member of the Safe Spaces Team. The Ministry Director/Safe Spaces Team will then ask you to provide a written account of this incident, so that it can be documented and addressed accurately and appropriately.

Should a child or young person initiate physical contact that is sexual and/or inappropriate, you must report this immediately to the Ministry Director or another member of the Safe Spaces Team. Once again, you will be asked to provide a written account of this incident, so that it can be documented and addressed accurately and appropriately. This is in order to prioritise the safety of all involved - for the child/young person, for yourself, and for any others implicated.

Listed below is an example of appropriate and inappropriate physical contact with a child/young person. Please note these lists are not exhaustive, rather serve as a guide to what appropriate physical contact with a child/young person should look like.

Appropriate physical contact includes:

- Bending down to the child's eye level, speaking kindly and listening attentively
- High fives and fist bumps
- Gaining permission before hugging a child and respecting their right to say no
- Taking a young child's hand and leading them to the planned activity
- Comforting an upset child by placing an arm around their shoulder or holding a young child with their permission

Inappropriate contact includes (list is not exhaustive):

- Kissing or coaxing a child into physical contact with you
- Tickling
- Extended hugging
- A child sitting on your lap (excluding infants or toddlers)
- Touching children or young people in areas that would normally be covered by swimming attire (breast, buttocks or groin areas)
- Overly physical contact, for example: wrestling
- Any physical contact that the child has said no to (with the exception of a life-threatening situation)
- Grabbing or hitting a child in anger, as a means of discipline

Gift Giving

Within our ministries gifts/prizes may be given to individuals/teams for participating in games, celebrating birthdays, etc. These gifts/prizes are given under the direction of the Ministry Director on behalf of Liberti Church. Should a leader or Volunteer want to purchase/organise a gift, this must be done for an entire group (for example, all children in the Prep-Year 1 Room) and permission must first be given by the Ministry Director before any gifts are given. Singling out an individual child to give a gift is not permitted.

Clothing

When working with children and young people, you will often be sitting on the floor to interact alongside them, or sitting on a seat while the children/young people are on the floor. With this in mind, please consider modest and appropriate clothing. Take note of clothing that is appropriate for bending, kneeling, and getting up and down from the floor.

Ministry specific identification (lanyards/t-shirts) are to be worn, to allow people to clearly identify that you are the leader.

Discipline

Working with children and young people is a privilege. Even though we are not expecting that the children and young people who walk into our ministry spaces will behave perfectly, it is important that each child or young person understands our behaviour expectations. If a child or young person is misbehaving, it will be more than likely that one of the room expectations is not being met. In the case that a child acts in a disrespectful way, please take the following steps:

1. Get down to the child's level (or position yourself at an appropriate proximity to a young person) and talk with them about the desired behaviour
2. If behaviour continues, please remove the child/young person from the current activity and warn them that if their behaviour continues, their parent/carer will have to be contacted, and that they may have to be removed from the Ministry
3. If the parent/carer has to be contacted due to the fact that the child/young person continues to be disrespectful, please inform the parent/carer of the situation and ask that the child/young person remain with the parent/carer outside of the current Ministry program

When it comes to correcting children and young people, it is vital that we keep at the forefront of our minds the grace that God has so extravagantly and unconditionally given to us. We want children and young people to recognise their actions and the effects it has, not only on themselves but also on others, and their relationship with Jesus. So, when it comes to correcting a child, as Paul Tripp says, our goal "is one of restoration, not condemnation."

If a child's behaviour seems unusual, inform the Safe Spaces Team, inclusive of the Ministry Director. The Safe Spaces Team will record the child's name, date, time, and a brief description of the child's behaviour/the events that took place. As necessary, the Safe Spaces Team will then notify the appropriate authorities and/or the child or young person's parent/carer.

Toileting Procedure

Liberti Kids Ministry

In Liberti Kids, parents/carers are responsible for assisting their own children with any toileting needs (including changing soiled nappies or clothes). If for some specific reason this is not possible, then two Liberti Kids leaders must be present to walk the child to the bathroom. The child is required to undertake all necessary actions of going to the toilet themselves, including removing their clothing and putting it back on. Both leaders will stay within eyesight of one another the entire time.

When a child says they need to go to the toilet in the younger rooms (1-4 years old), please contact the parent/carer using the contact number on their Liberti Kids name tag. If the parent/carer does not respond and come to collect their child, please contact the number listed in the Liberti Kids resource folder. This person will locate the parent/carer to tend to their child's toileting needs.

Liberti Kids leaders can use this text template:

"Hello, my name is <insert name>, I am a Liberti Kids leader in the <insert room name>. <Insert child's name> needs to go to the toilet. Can you please come to the room to take them to the toilet? Thank you!"

Children in the primary school age group (Prep-Year Six) will let their leader know when they need to use the bathroom. In this instance, leaders will stay within eyesight of one another at all times. One leader will walk the child towards the bathroom, and supervise them entering/exiting the bathroom. (This is due to the location of the bathroom from those rooms). That leader will not enter the bathroom with the child, or assist the child with any aspect of toileting. When the child has finished using the bathroom, both the leader and the child will walk back to their Liberti Kids Room and re-join the program.

All children are reminded to use the bathroom (under the supervision of their parents) before they enter the Liberti Kids program.

Liberti Youth

Liberti Youth students will use the bathroom independently. Liberti Youth leaders will never be alone with a child/young person, and this includes settings like bathrooms, during the course of the Youth program. If a Youth leader needs to enter the main women's/men's bathroom while Youth students are in there, they will make sure another Youth leader, of the same sex, is with them.

Leaders who need to use the bathroom themselves during the Youth program will use the ambulant toilet.

Digital Communication

Leaders are expected to abide by the Liberti Church Code of Conduct at all times, whether engaging with children and young people face-to-face, or via digital communication platforms. Communicating via digital technologies is only permitted with young people who are in high school (not with children 12 and younger).

Any communications with a young person using digital technology is to be conducted:

- on an age appropriate medium (noting that many social media sites currently have a minimum age of 16). Leaders are not permitted to use digital platforms designed for anonymous communication, or for which no record of conversations exist (e.g. Snapchat), when communicating with young people,
- according to the terms of service of the provider,
- in an open manner when possible (i.e, primarily two adults included in the conversation with any young people). When digital communication occurs between a Youth leader and a Youth student without another adult included in the conversation, the Youth leader must ensure that both the Ministry Director and the student's parent/carer is aware of, and comfortable with, that arrangement,
- in line with Liberti Church policies and procedures, including this document.

When communicating with a young person using digital technology, leaders must take care to ensure that:

- it is an appropriate way to communicate with a young person,
- you are sensitive to the impact of your words, images and actions on the young person and any other person who may access it,
- you do not use sexually suggestive, sexually explicit or offensive language or images,
- the circumstances of the communication, including the language and images used, do not suggest your relationship with the child is inappropriate,
- when using digital platforms, conversation topics likely to encourage the disclosure of pastorally sensitive matters, e.g. "How can I pray for you this week?". Such conversations should take place in-person,
- Digital interactions with young people are never deleted. Digital interactions with young people must be disclosed to Liberti Church staff on request.

Leaders must not initiate social media friendships with young people. Friend/follow requests by young people to leaders should be assessed on a case by case basis. Leaders are under no obligation to accept friend/follow requests and should not do so unless engagement with the child on the digital platform can be done according to these guidelines.

Face-to-face interactions are the best way to build relationships with, and minister to, children and young people. Digital communication is not suitable for matters that are pastorally sensitive, emotionally charged or that require a back-and-forth conversation. In those cases, the conversation should be conducted in-person. If a young person initiates a pastoral conversation with a leader using a digital medium, the leader should seek to move the conversation to an in-person context as soon as practical.

Phone calls are a non-preferred form of communication between Youth leaders and Youth students. It is acknowledged, however, that there may be extenuating circumstances that require a phone call, such as a Liberti Youth student running late for a Worship Team rehearsal in such instances where a phone call between Youth leaders and Youth students is required, please notify the Ministry Director or a Safe Spaces Team member.

We strongly encourage leaders to ensure all of their personal relationships are considered above reproach at all times.

Photography

No photos or videos are to be taken by leaders while serving in Ministries within Liberti Church. No personal information may be taken and uploaded on the internet (including social media), or be used in any other way. Liberti Church has a Photography Team that may take images/videos of a Ministry program taking place. These images/videos are taken on behalf of Liberti Church, and are taken and used according to Liberti Church's Privacy Policy.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Supervision/ Child-Adult Ratio

Ratios for child-adult supervision will vary according to the type of activity, length of activity, age of the children/young people and size of the group. Multiple leaders should always be present to ensure that supervision and accountability is maintained.

Ratios help ensure that children/young people and the volunteers have the best experience while being part of Liberti Church ministries. It is very important to adhere to the ratio guidelines for the safety of the children and young people. For accountability reasons, NEVER leave another leader

alone in a room when children and young people are present. If necessary, stand in the doorway and call for someone to assist you/stand in your place, or call the Ministry Director to come and assist you.

Suggested ratios (after the minimum requirements of 2 adults is met):

- 1 – 2 Year Olds: 1 leader to 4 children
- 3 – 4 Year Olds: 1 leader to 8 children
- Primary School Age: 1 leader to 12 children
- High School Age: 1 leader to 16 young people

First Aid

It is a requirement that there is a minimum of one (1) qualified First Aid Officer present during every Ministry program, who can assess any injuries and provide first aid treatment as necessary.

When an injury does occur, the leader/s aware of the incident are to contact the Ministry Director, who will assess the situation and have the designated First Aid Officer administer first aid as required. Leaders are required to complete an Incident/ Injury Report Form for any injuries that occur during the Ministry program. Leaders are to ensure the parents/carers are made aware of the injury and sign the Incident/ Injury Report Form.

First aid kits are to be available and fully stocked for all ministries. All leaders, Volunteers and First Aid Officers must be aware of the location of all first aid kits. If a leader/Volunteer notices that the first aid kits need to be reviewed or require additional resources, they should notify their Ministry Director or a Liberti Church staff member immediately.

Should a child be required to take medication, this must be taken under the oversight of a qualified First Aid Officer, ensuring written consent and instructions have been given by the parent/carer. Leaders are not permitted to give children or young people medication (including over-the-counter medication like Paracetamol), except under direction from an Emergency Services Operator, or other suitably qualified person. A suitably qualified person means someone trained in first aid and competent to administer first aid in the given situation.

Parental/Carer Consent

By checking their child into a Ministry program/event, a parent/carer gives consent for their child to participate in the event and all elements, including games, of that event.

When offsite events take place, permission forms are to be signed by parents/carers, outlining the start and finish times, event details and location of the event.

Transport - Liberti Youth

Liberti Church does not permit Liberti Kids or Liberti Youth leaders to transport children or young people in their cars, as part of an official Ministry program. The only exception is when transporting young people to our Youth Events, such as our annual Youth Camp, and only in the instance that the hired bus cannot transport all students. In this case, parents/carers would sign a transport waiver, giving permission for their child to be driven in a Youth leader's car. There must be two Youth leaders, both over the age of 18 and the same sex as the student/s. In all other instances, children and young people are to be transported at all times by their parents/carers to and from any Ministry program or event.

In an emergency where a child needs urgent transport, a leader may drive a child/young person with the following elements in place:

- Two leaders, both above the age of 18, are to be in the car at all times,
- Leaders must be the same sex as the student being transported (if possible),

- The Ministry Director and/or the leader driving the child is to communicate with the parent/carer of the child/young person. They will explain the reason they are transporting their child, and the destination they are heading to - for example, transporting to a hospital.

We acknowledge that some Liberti Kids or Liberti Youth leaders may have personal relationships with families from our church, outside of their involvement as a Liberti Kids/Liberti Youth leader. In such instances that you are personal friends with a family from our church, we recommend that you do not transport their child without at least one other adult in the car, and without the parent's/carer's written permission (email or text are acceptable).

Additionally, some students will be driven to our Youth Ministry by an older sibling/friend. In this instance, the parent/carer of the Youth student being transported would sign a transport waiver, giving permission for their child to be driven, checked-in, and checked-out by the nominated Youth student/Youth leader/Youth Junior leader.

Venue

Potential hazards are to be identified before the commencement of all activities involving children and young people. This includes the below:

- Being aware of fire safety and evacuation procedures,
- Ensuring emergency exits are clearly marked and access to these exits is not blocked,
- Ensuring areas where children and young people are playing are free from: trips, slips or fall hazards.

Risk assessments are completed for all Ministry programs and any additional events.

Food Handling

All leaders who handle food are required to adhere to the Liberti Church Food Safety Policy and Procedure. Parents/carers are required to list all allergies on Ministry registration forms at check-in.

Presence of Non-leaders

Parents

Parents/Carers are allowed in Ministry programs involving children and young people, for the purpose of attending to their own child's needs—for example, helping settle their child at the beginning of the Liberti Kids program. They are not to act as leaders or assist leaders in any capacity; they must focus solely on their own child. Parents/carers must not initiate physical contact with other children or young people. Any parent/carer present in this way must adhere to the guidelines in this document. If a parent/carer remains in a Ministry program for more than 10 minutes, they are required to complete the Visiting Parent/Carer Induction and Declaration form.

Support Workers

Children/young people with disabilities may need the assistance of a Support Worker during a Liberti Kids or Liberti Youth Ministry program. Support Workers are allowed to be present for the purpose of supporting that child/young person, and must provide a current, valid Blue Card to the Ministry Director. They are expected to follow all relevant policies, including the Guidelines outlined in this document, and completing the Visiting Parent/Carer Induction and Declaration form.

Observers

From time to time, a person thinking about becoming a leader in Liberti Kids/Liberti Youth, or a guest accompanied by the Ministry Director/another Liberti Church staff member, may be present in a Ministry program. These observers are required to present a valid and current Blue Card to the

Ministry Director, and must not initiate physical contact with children/young people. They must not act as a leader, or assist the leader in any capacity.

Liberti Kids Junior leaders

Liberti Kids Junior leaders are children or young people who express a desire to join the Liberti Kids team. In this instance, the Ministry Director will liaise with that child or young person and their Parents/Carers to explain the processes involved, and to have them both complete and sign the Liberti Kids Junior leader Application form and undertake our Safe Church Training (inclusive of our church's Code of Conduct). Junior leaders who are children (under the age of 18) will only be involved in a Liberti Kids program that is at least two year levels younger than the Liberti Kids program they attend.

Junior leaders in Liberti Youth

Year 12 students will be involved in the Liberti Youth leadership Development Cohort (Liberti Youth LDC). The students in the Liberti Youth LDC will explore leadership development principles and receive practical ministry training. At times, they may operate as a Liberti Youth Junior leader, assisting in the implementation of certain aspects of the program, including assisting Youth leaders to host a Gospel Community for younger students. These Liberti Youth Junior leaders will only be assigned to a Gospel Community that is of their same sex, and, ideally, only involving students in Year Six, Year Seven, or Year Eight, so that there is at least a four year age difference between the Liberti Youth Junior leaders and the students in the Gospel Community.

Liberti Youth Junior leaders will complete and sign the Liberti Youth Junior leader Application form (co-signed by their parents), and undertake our Safe Church Training, agreeing to abide by our church's Code of Conduct. Liberti Youth Junior leaders will not be counted as Youth leaders for the purposes of ratios. There will still be a minimum of two Liberti Youth leaders (over the age of 18), with Youth students at all times.

Check-In and Check-Out Procedures

Liberti Kids

When the parent/carer checks their child/ren into the Ministry program, they will receive a name tag for their child and also a parent/carer tag, which lists their children/s name/s and security code/s on it. Leaders must check that every child is wearing this name tag as they enter the Liberti Kids Room. No child will be allowed into any of the Liberti Kids rooms without being properly checked-in.

During the check-out process, confirm that the security code on the parent/carer tag matches the security code on the child's name tag. Do not release a child from Liberti Kids whose parent/carer does not have the correct tag. If a parent/carer loses their parent tag, they must show a valid Medicare Card that has their child's name on it. Alternatively, the leader can take them to the Liberti Kids Check-In Desk, where their information can be checked and a new parent tag can be printed for them.

If parents/carers become impatient and rude, be polite but firm as you remind them that we are required to follow the check-in/check-out procedures for the safety of all children in our care. Always be respectful, and if there is a problem, please get the Liberti Kids Director or a Liberti Church staff member.

Liberti Youth

Liberti Youth students are required to be checked-in and checked-out of the Liberti Youth program by their parent/carer. Upon a student's first time attending Liberti Youth, their parent/carer will complete a registration form, listing allergies, special needs, medical conditions, and providing consent for their child to attend the program and participate in all activities. After attending three times, they are entered into our database and recorded as a regularly attending student.

If a new student arrives with their friend who is a regular attender (so the new student's parent is not present), the Check-In leader will give the new student's parent a call and say:

"Hi, it's <name> from Liberti Church's Youth Ministry. We have <student name> here, who's come along with <friend's name>. Just thought I'd reach out to introduce myself and to make sure you're aware he/she is here with us".

That leader then explains that we have a registration form we'd usually have new parents fill out, and ask if that form can be sent to them digitally, to be filled out immediately, or to verbally complete the form over the phone with the Check-In leader (making explicit note of the privacy policy and declaration sections of the registration form). The Check-In leader then makes a note on the student's registration form that their parent/carer was contacted.

Our regular attending students are checked into Elvanto, and checked-out upon departure. Regular parent emails throughout the Term remind parents to check their students in and out of the program each time they attend. (leaders are also checked in and out of each program). The Check-In leader then counts the total number of checked-in students and leaders (including new students on the paper registration forms). They then perform a head count to make sure the number of students and leaders checked-in reflects the number of people on the premises.

Risk Management

Our ministries foster a risk-aware culture which means that we acknowledge that our work involves risk every day. We believe that risks should be proactively managed by all leaders and that risk management should be part of the culture. Everyone has a responsibility to manage risk and to support each other in managing risks.

It is the responsibility of all leaders to identify, analyse, evaluate, respond, monitor and communicate risks associated with any activity involving children or young people. You should identify and minimise all potential hazards before embarking on any activity with children or young people. This would include:

- Being aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures,
- Ensuring that emergency exits are clearly marked and never obstructed or internally locked,
- Not knowingly permit children/young people with serious contagious diseases to attend the activity,
- Not using any materials besides what the Ministry Director has provided. Anything else must be approved by the Ministry Director prior to use,
- Always remaining in eyesight of another approved Liberti Kids/Liberti Youth leader while interacting with children or young people.

You should ensure that:

- All activities have defined boundaries that are easily observed or patrolled,
- All aspects of children and young people's activities are open to observation,
- Children and young people are not permitted to leave church premises (unless for an approved Ministry event, where written consent has been received from parents/carers),
- Individual/small group ministry, if needed, occurs in the presence of adults, a public place or a location with high visibility.

Some of the games and activities played with children/young people can involve higher levels of risk. Please speak with the Ministry Director if you feel additional considerations, such as specific risk assessments, should be completed before allowing students to be involved. If you are ever doing an activity and you feel it is unsafe, or that there is a risk of harm, STOP the activity immediately. Never continue an activity if you feel there is a risk of danger or injury, whether physically or emotionally.