

Guidelines for Online Ministry with Children and Youth during COVID-19 crisis



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We understand that this is a hard time for anyone involved in Youth and Children's Ministry.

We all care about the wellbeing and safety of children and youth and want to protect them from harm. You will be wanting to do ministry online and that means following the same Child Safe principles as you would offline. While pastoral care is critical it is best done in safe open spaces.

Always engage in ministry with under 18's with **at least two recognized leaders present**. Please avoid DM's, PM's, IM's and other one to one messaging spaces.

Avoid putting yourself in compromised positions. Just as a youth/children's minister or leader shouldn't hang out in the bedroom of a child or youth one on one in normal life, you shouldn't do it online either.

Please use Zoom (preferable) or other group videos rather than one to one video. Be aware Skype and other platforms may share contact details with all users. The host should ensure that file sharing is turned off.

Create safe environments. Keep events either password protected or well-curated to stop unknown and unsafe people having access to young people, just as you would in a normal face to face activity.

Encourage the use of real names; while aliases and handles are a part of online culture, they are not helpful for ministry and may create the opportunity for dangerous interactions. We encourage the use of real names so you know exactly who is in the room.

Communicate with parents and church leadership to get permission before commencing any new activity. Keep records of who attends an online activity (including leaders). Use the parent permission form provided.

It is critical that we continue to actively care for the mental health of young people during this time of increased anxiety. Keep contact with youth and children, but please use phone calls (not video chat) for pastoral care; set up a regular, scheduled phone call and inform parents of the time and purpose of calls to their children. **Avoid making late-night calls.** For preschool and primary-age children, consider calling parents and talking with children with the parent having their phone on loudspeaker. **Keep a diary note of all interactions** (time, date and summary of conversation). Where a significant issue is raised please inform your supervisor/youth minister/children and families minister/vicar. In this instance permission from parents may be required.

Note: These guidelines are given to help you adhere to the Code of Conduct for Child Safety (<https://parishportal.melbourneanglican.org.au/governance/Child-safe-standards/Documents/Code-of-Conduct-for-Child-Safety.pdf>), and are not intended to replace or supersede it.

If you need further support, assistance or resources please do not hesitate to contact:

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