

Policy for Children & Youth Ministries at Cornerstone

Youth @ Cornerstone

1. Introduction

These policies for the running of youth ministries at Cornerstone come under the Cornerstone Church Trust Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Taken together, they outline our approach to safe ministry at Cornerstone. The goal is to protect young people and volunteers whilst running great ministries. Everyone involved in this ministry on a regular basis will be required to have signed that they have read the following information before commencing work.

2. Description of Ministry and Leaders

2.1 Description

Youth @ Cornerstone is the youth ministry at Cornerstone Church for young people aged 9 -18 years old.

One of the Leaders will be the Ministry Supervisor who has oversight of the group and to whom all the other Leaders are accountable.

2.2 Leaders

- Ministry Coordinator – responsible for all children and youth work policies and scheduling of volunteers
- Ministry Supervisor – responsible for individual sessions and has oversight over the young people, Leaders and Helpers.
- Leaders – Responsible for the control and safety of the youth placed in their care. Reports to and assists the ministry supervisor.

All Youth Workers must be approved before commencing work.

Other adults may visit the sessions to observe but must not be left alone with any young person without an approved Leader being present.

2.3 Ratios

One Youth Worker is needed for every 10 youths, with a minimum of 2 needed at all times.

In the case of using more than one room for the activities there will always be a minimum of two Youth Workers in each room or be within sight of another leader at all time (ie Cornerstone office lounge and dining room with visibility between the 2 rooms).

2.4 Use of Helpers

It is understood that for practical purposes it will be necessary from time to time to have help from other people, for example, to fill in for absentees at late notice, or provide extra assistance on a busy day.

These people will be working either in the presence of or under the direct supervision of the Ministry Supervisor so they will not be expected to have undergone Police Vetting.

Youth Work approval must be obtained if:

- they are rostered more than four times in a year OR
- their task involves being alone or unsupervised for more than just a very brief time.

3. General Guidelines

Apart from unforeseen emergencies, Leaders should not be alone with a youth. There should always be at least two adults present at all times. Careful planning needs to ensure this. If needed, Leaders are to text other Leaders for more help. This can make things difficult at times, but it is necessary for the safety of both youth and Leaders.

Leaders must keep their physical contact with the children to an appropriate level.

Any meetings involving both leaders and youth outside the regular programmed events must first be discussed with the Ministry Coordinator and the parents of the children involved.

4. Safe Environment

Incidents of abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, two Leaders will always be present when working with or supervising youth.

Leaders must not visit youths in their homes unless a parent/guardian is present or another Leader accompanies them.

When transporting youths Leaders should never be alone with them in a car. Where this is not practical, Leaders must take youth directly to and from arranged venues and must not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements.

Youth should not leave the function area alone or without permission. Leaders should keep a watchful eye at the end of functions and are signed out when applicable. At the end of functions, youth are under the supervision of their parents/guardians, however leaders should be mindful of where the students are headed.

All personal counselling is to be carried out within sight of another Leader.

Leaders will respect a member's feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact of any kind.

Leaders are to be watchful of youth spending time together one-to-one. If two youth of opposite gender are together, they must be visible to others.

Where there is only one toilet on the premise, leaders are to ensure that only one person is in the toilet area at any one time.

Adults and youth are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Leaders will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No Leader will be alone in a room with a youth while either is changing.

All aspects of every youth-related program will be open to observation by parents/guardians.

Leaders have a right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at youth-related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request.

5. Alcohol and Drugs

The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on church grounds or during a church-organised activity is not to be allowed or condoned by any Leader. Any youth found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counselled and the parents/guardians contacted so that the youth can be returned home immediately.

Any youth required to take prescription medication may be required to provide a letter from their parents/guardians to the Ministry Coordinator.

6. Communication

As part of this ministry, the parent/guardian will provide a contact cell phone number. Any communication needing to be made with the parent/guardian will either be by phone, text or email depending on necessary urgency/nature of message.

Information regarding events and/or logistics should generally be given directly to the parent/guardian, especially if it involves a phone call, text or email.

Leaders should not be involved in back-and-forth conversation with youth via social media (e.g. text messaging, Facebook). If a young person initiates a conversation with a leader electronically, the leader is to redirect the conversation to a more transparent forum (e.g. face-to-face) or include other people in the conversation.

The best practice when sending emails or text messages is to include multiple youth or another leader in the message. If you're using social media for ministry purposes, use closed groups where possible (e.g. Facebook) and direct young people to the group rather than your individual account.

7. Managing of Complaints

Any complaints received in relation to the programme or its Leaders are to be referred to the Ministry Coordinator as soon as possible. If it pertains to abuse, then the Internal Abuse Reporting Procedure must be followed.

8. Responding to Incidents

All incidents must be recorded on the Incident Register and the Ministry Coordinator will be informed. The Ministry Supervisor will ensure there is a first aid kit onsite. First aid will be administered by an adult with a current first aid certificate. At the direction of the Ministry Coordinator, parents/guardians will be informed of any incidents in a timely fashion appropriate to the severity of the incident.

9. Recognising and Reporting Health Concerns

If a Leader has any significant concerns about the health of a young person, including suspected abuse, this must be referred to the Ministry Coordinator as soon as possible.

10. Confidentiality

At all times, appropriate levels of privacy and confidentiality must be maintained in line with the Privacy Act 2020.

Revisions

Date	Status	Comment
17 May 2021	Approved	Minor changes and clarifications
21 August 2017	Approved	Minor changes and clarifications
1 August 2016	Approved	Changes approved as proposed below
27 June 2016	Proposed	Minor language-based changes proposed
23 May 2016	Approved	No changes made from latest draft stage.
24 March 2016	Accepted as Draft	Significant changes made in light of new junior youth group starting.
23 March 2015	Approved	Minor changes made
23 February 2015	Approved	New document

I, _____ agree to work within the policy framework outlined above. If I have any questions about this policy I will make contact with the Ministry Coordinator.

Signed _____ Date ____/____/_____