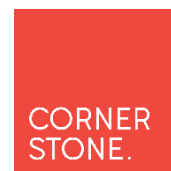


Child Wellbeing and Safety Policy



Section 1 - Introduction

Statement of Commitment

Every person has a value and dignity, which comes directly from the creation of people in God's image. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

We commit ourselves to nurture, protect and safeguard all our members, particularly children. We recognise that safeguarding is the responsibility of the whole church. We undertake to exercise proper care in the selection, appointment, training and support of those working with children.

We will respond without delay to concerns, disclosures or allegations that a child or adult at risk may have been harmed, cooperating fully in any investigation. We will challenge any abuse of power by anyone in a position of trust. We will seek to offer pastoral care to anyone who has suffered abuse.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Cornerstone Church operates in such a way as to protect children from harm.

This policy confirms the commitment of Cornerstone Church to the protection of children and is designed to assist staff and volunteers working with children with practical guidance for identifying and responding to child protection concerns.

This policy seeks to:

- outline the roles and responsibilities of leaders for child protection within our church
- outline a process for vetting and appointing leaders involved in children's work
- outline the standards and principles all those working with children must abide by
- outline safe working practices and the expected behaviour of all church workers
- outline the action to be taken where any form of child abuse or neglect is known or suspected
- establish what action is required when allegations are made against church workers

Objectives

The objectives listed below describe Cornerstone's commitment to children in its care and provide the basis for the protocols outlined in this document.

- To prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the children who encounter Cornerstone staff or volunteers and/or to whom Cornerstone provides a service.
- To always act in the best interests of the children engaged with Cornerstone activities.
- To ensure transparency and open communication in its dealings with children, and particularly with their parents/caregivers.
- To value the family's role in caring for children and earn the trust of parents/caregivers.
- To facilitate access to and procure appropriate support services for children should the need arise.
- To ensure all workers, whether employed staff or volunteers, undergo appropriate and effective training to support their interactions with children.
- To comply with all legislation relevant to Cornerstone's activities and undertakings.
- To ensure that, in the event of disclosure or awareness of any harm involving a child, all appropriate measures are taken to protect the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Principles

To support the Objectives listed above, the following principles will guide the activities that involve children:

- The safety and wellbeing of children remains at the centre of decision-making,
- Children have the right to express their views on matters that concern them, should be listened to respectfully, and have their views considered in a manner appropriate to their age and maturity,
- We always aim to operate according to best practice,
- We take seriously and respond quickly to any concerns about safety,
- We work cooperatively with family/whānau while recognising and respecting cultural needs and practices,
- We work towards continuous improvement.

Definitions

Child - for the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as under the age of 18.

While Cornerstone runs multiple groups for different ages and uses the term "youth" or "young person" for the older children, for the sake of readability here the words "child" or "children" pertains to all groups; see the *Definitions* section below for further information.

Allegation: A claim by a third party, whether child or adult, that another child is being abused or has suffered harm because of abuse.

Cornerstone: Refers to the collective identity of the Cornerstone Church Trust, Cornerstone Church, and any activities conducted under the auspices of Cornerstone.

Cornerstone Children's Work: Any regular formal ministry operated by Cornerstone to children. This comprises multiple groups that are age specific. See the role descriptions below for our current ministry areas. It excludes informal arrangements made between members for children, such as babysitting.

Disclosure: The process by which a child indicates they have experienced potential or actual abuse.

Harm: Harm is the result of abuse. Abuse is the act that causes harm. Typically, it is characterized by the exploitation of a power imbalance. As defined in the *Oranga Tamariki Act 1989*, also known as the *Children's and Young People's Well-being Act 1989*, 14AA (1), a child or young person is at risk of harm if

they are or likely to be physically, emotionally, or sexually abused. Harm can also be caused by deprivation, ill-treatment, or neglect. Section 14AA (2) includes the harm caused by being exposed to family violence.

Specific forms of abuse can be described in four categories:

- **Physical abuse:** any act that may result in physical harm to a child. It can be, but is not limited to: shaking, hitting, punching, kicking, biting, burning, cutting or causing abrasions, hair-pulling, strangling, suffocating, drowning, or dispensing alcohol, drugs, or other substances.
- **Emotional abuse:** any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual, or emotional functioning or development. This can include patterns of threats, constant criticism, negative comparison to others, isolating, degrading, ignoring, corrupting, exploiting, or terrorising. Exposure to family violence or the ill-treatment of others constitutes emotional abuse. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed.
- **Sexual abuse:** forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, with or without their awareness of what is happening. Sexual abuse includes non-contact acts such as looking at or commenting on sexual or suggestive images, activities, or behaviours. Sexual grooming is an indicator of abuse. Sexual abuse is commonly initiated through cyber connections.
- **Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet physical or emotional needs, with risk of harm to health or development. It can include neglectful supervision and neglect of medical or educational needs.

Ministry: Any organised activity that is authorised by Cornerstone

Perpetrator: A person who intentionally causes harm to a child.

Safety: The process of protecting children from risk or harm that reasonably could be predicted or prevented.

Wellbeing: The state of children who are engaged with Cornerstone activities. It encompasses security, safety, comfort, welfare, enjoyment, and healthy experiences. While it is not always possible to measure or achieve expectations in all these areas, wellbeing assumes a reasonable standard as the outcome of conscientious and attentive care for children.

Related Documents

Legislation

- Care of Children Act 2004
- Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989
- Children's Act 2014
- Crimes Amendment Act (No. 3) 2011
- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
- Privacy Act 2020

Cornerstone Policies

- Working with Children Code of Conduct
 - Working with Children Leader Appointment and Training Policy
 - Privacy Policy
 - Complaints Policy
-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment Policy ▪ Signs of Abuse
Ministry Specific Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kids Space at Cornerstone Policy ▪ Kids Space Under 5s at Cornerstone Policy ▪ Mainly Music Policy ▪ Youth at Cornerstone Policy
Supporting Documents: Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kids Space Leaders Manual ▪ Youth Group Leaders Manual
Supporting Documents: Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with Children Application Form ▪ Working with Children Application Processing Form (for SMS) ▪ Parent Consent ▪ Incident Record
Supporting Documents: Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ List of social service agencies/organisations ▪ Thursday Creche Supervisor Checklist ▪ Sunday Children's Ministry Supervisor Checklist ▪ Child Work Application Cover Letter

Review

This policy is due for review within one year of the date listed on the previous version.

The review is to be led by the Safe Ministry Supervisors assisted by the Operations Manager. The Executive Committee will review any recommendations and amend policies at their discretion.

- The review completion should be noted in the Executive Committee meeting minutes.
- The previous document version is to be removed from public access (i.e. the Cornerstone website) and filed in Cornerstone archives.
- The new version is to be uploaded to the Cornerstone website and distributed as required.

The next review date is to be entered on the *Policy Review Schedule*.

Section 2 - Roles and Responsibilities

Overview of Roles at Cornerstone

- **Safe Ministry Supervisors:** two people within Cornerstone who are overall responsible for the safeguarding of children. These people are required to undergo regular (at least annual) child protection training appropriate to their role and are responsible for ensuring child protection is a key focus within Cornerstone.
- **Ministry Coordinator:** A person appointed by Cornerstone to head a specific area of ministry. Examples would be the Youth Ministry Coordinator or Kids Space Coordinator.
- **Ministry Supervisor:** A leader who has responsibility for a specific activity and supervises leaders, helpers and children during the activity. The supervisor is accountable to the ministry's coordinator. An example would be a Kids Space Under 4s Supervisor who runs the ministry on a particular day, but is accountable to the Ministry Coordinator.
- **Leader:** A children's worker, whether employee or volunteer, who is approved to work regularly in the Children's Ministry. The term "leader" pertains to how the child understands the worker and not their position in the ministry team. The leader is accountable to the activity's supervisor.
 - A 'Provisional Leader' is a leader in the process of finalising external vetting and safe ministry training. They may be present in a ministry but will be treated differently in ministry guidelines.
- **Helper:** A volunteer assistant who helps in a ministry or activity, on a casual basis, where needed to fill a gap in the team. Is aged 16 or older. The helper is accountable to the activity's supervisor.
- **Worker, Children's Worker:** A generic term to cover any person, whether staff member or volunteer, who participates in the care of children at Cornerstone. This includes leaders, helpers, supervisors, coordinators, and in some cases parents present in an assistive role.
- **Executive Committee:** The committee that oversees the financial and legal obligations of Cornerstone, consisting of the Cornerstone Trustees, the Senior Pastor, and elected members.
- **Senior Pastor:** At Cornerstone, the Senior Pastor is responsible for spiritual oversight, leadership of pastoral ministries, appointing and overseeing staff, and overseeing volunteer leadership roles. The Senior Pastor appoints and leads Ministry Coordinators in each area of Children's Work, but all Child Protection matters (such as appointment, training and handling complaints) are overseen by the Safe Ministry Supervisors.

Safe Ministry Supervisors

These are the two people who are overall responsible for the safeguarding of children within Cornerstone. They have responsibility to ensure that child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures are adhered to by those who work with children.

They are required to undergo regular (at least annual) child protection training appropriate to their role and are responsible for ensuring child protection is a key focus within Cornerstone.

The chief responsibilities of Safe Ministry Supervisors are:

- To act as the main contacts for any child safety matters.
- To ensure that child protection is a key focus within Cornerstone and that appropriate protocols, procedures and training are in place.
- To be trained in child protection and undergo regular refresher training.
- To oversee the recruitment, appointment, training and supervision of children's workers. To ensure that all workers in Cornerstone Children's Ministry are recruited and delegated responsibilities in accordance with the guidelines identified in this policy. Specifically, they must approve any worker to work within Cornerstone's Children's Ministry and where lanyards are used to identify leaders, they are the sole authority to issue them.
- To ensure that all allegations are managed appropriately.
- To ensure, and safeguard, clear, confidential, detailed and dated records on all child protection matters.
- Ensure that when child protection concerns arise, no internal investigation occurs without a decision as to whether or not a response from Oranga Tamariki and/or the New Zealand Police is required. This decision is to be made following consultation with a secondary designated person for child protection and/or an Oranga Tamariki duty social worker.
- Consult with each other, or an Oranga Tamariki social worker, regarding any child protection concerns.
- To lead any investigation or disciplinary action resulting from a concern or complaint about a matter concerning a child.
- To liaise with NZ Police or Oranga Tamariki/Ministry for Children when necessary.
- To report to the Executive Committee where relevant.
- To ensure that all members are aware of, have access to, and understand, this Policy.
- To ensure policies and procedures are reviewed on schedule and modified as needed.
- To keep up to date with legislative requirements.

A Safe Ministry Supervisor must be:

- 21 years or older;
- have completed Safe Ministry training within the last three years or within three months after their appointment (and every three years after that),
- hold a current NZ Police Vetting Check result suitable for clearance.

Safe Ministry Supervisors are nominated by the Executive Committee and confirmed by a vote at the Annual General Meeting.

One will be designated the **Lead Safe Ministry Supervisor** and must not be a staff member. This person will have primary responsibility for overseeing safe ministry across church and responding to any child protection matters.

The other will be designated the **Secondary Safe Ministry Supervisor** and may be a staff member. They can be consulted on child protection matters in the event that the Lead Safe Ministry Supervisor is unavailable, or if the child protection concern relates to that designated person. Additionally, it may assist the Lead to delegate administration of vetting, training and record keeping to the Secondary Safe Ministry Supervisor.

As at the date of this policy the Lead Safe Ministry Supervisor is: Craig Marshall

As at the date of this policy the Secondary Safe Ministry Supervisor is: Katie Banuelos

Children's Workers (Paid and Voluntary)

Children's Worker is a generic term to cover any person, whether staff member or volunteer, who participates in the care of children at Cornerstone. This includes leaders, helpers, supervisors, coordinators, and in some cases parents present in an assistive role.

Cornerstone has a responsibility to ensure that all those entrusted with children are safe to do so. Whether a worker is paid or not is irrelevant to our requirements for child protection.

Cornerstone is committed to ensuring robust recruitment and appointment processes are in place, and are followed, which emphasises the importance of child protection, and which ensure that every Cornerstone worker responsible for children, either directly or indirectly, is safe and suitable to do so.

Beyond the higher levels of responsibility (Ministry Coordinators / Ministry Supervisors) most members of Children's Ministry Teams will be either regular Leaders or occasional Helpers.

Ministry Coordinators

A person appointed by Cornerstone to head a specific area of ministry. They will supervise a team of leaders and be accountable to the Safe Ministry Supervisors for ensuring that our policies are upheld in their ministry area.

The current structure of our children's ministry is as follows:

Ministry	Description	Ministry Coordinator
Kids Space Over 4's	City Church 10am Sundays, Field Church 3pm Sundays Programme run during Sunday services for children from aged 5 up to school year 8 (age approx. 13)	Dee Burnell
Kids' Space 4 and Under	City Church 10am Sundays at Riccarton High School. Fields Church 3pm Sundays at Rolleston Community Centre Programme run during Sunday services for children aged 0-4 years old.	Dee Burnell
Tuesday & Thursday Creche	Programme run during mid-week Bible Study Groups aimed at pre-school aged children (age 0-4).	Dee Burnell
Cornerstone Youth	Friday night programme aimed at school years 8-13 run at Waimairi Community Centre	Caleb Nelson
Mainly Music	Friday morning programme for ages 0-6 at Rolleston Community Centre. Parent or guardians are normally present.	Lydia Oliver

Note: University ministries may include young people aged 17 who have left school. We have chosen not to include university ministries under this policy, however all staff involved will be vetted according to the prescriptions of this policy and will undertake Safe Ministry Training.

The Ministry Coordinators are responsible to operate their ministry within the policies of Cornerstone Church. Each ministry area will have this Policy and a ministry specific set of guidelines (e.g. Kids Space, Cornerstone Youth etc)

The most important responsibilities of Ministry Coordinators are:

- Ensuring that their leaders are recruited and vetted through the processes overseen by the Safe Ministry Supervisors. Specifically, they must not appoint leaders independently and where lanyards are used to identify leaders, they must only be issued by the Safe Ministry Supervisors.
- Ensuring accurate records are kept of attendance – both of children and of leaders.
- Ensuring that all allegations, concerns or disclosures of abuse are managed appropriately – in consultation with the Safe Ministry Supervisors – and in line with the procedures in this document.
- Ensuring ongoing Safe Ministry Training is done for their teams (under the supervision of the Safe Ministry Supervisors) so as to ensure that teams know their responsibilities for child protection.
- Ensuring leader:child ratios are maintained.
- Keeping accurate records of all incidents and near misses.

It is recommended that every ministry maintains a Google Drive to store their records and it is archived every year through a process approved by the Safe Ministry Supervisors.

Ministry Supervisor

The Ministry Supervisor is responsible to run the ministry and lead the team on a particular day. The Ministry Supervisor is accountable to the Ministry Coordinator outlined above. An example would be a Kids Space Under 4s Supervisor who runs the ministry on a particular day, but is accountable to the Ministry Coordinator.

The most important responsibilities of Ministry Supervisor are:

- To know the child related policies of Cornerstone (and especially the ministry specific guidelines) well enough to ensure that they are being adhered to.
- Ensuring leader:child ratios are maintained on this occasion.
- Ensuring accurate records are kept of attendance – both of children and of leaders.
- Keeping accurate records of all incidents and near misses.
- Ensuring that leaders on the day are wearing lanyards if required for this ministry.
- Ensuring a safe operating environment for the ministry.
- Communicating with the Ministry Coordinator on any particular needs for the ministry.

Leaders

Leaders are the regular team who run a ministry. It is the primary responsibility of leaders to be vigilant, maintain professional boundaries and safe working practices, have knowledge and awareness of the indicators of neglect and abuse, whether actual or potential, and to report any concerns, disclosures, or allegations immediately.

Their recruitment, appointment and training is outlined in Section 3.

Their Safe Ministry practice is outlined in Section 5.

- The application form for a volunteer position includes a signed attestation that they have read, understood and agree to abide with the policies and procedures of this Policy.
- Leaders are to be 16 years or older.
- Leaders are required to familiarise themselves with this Policy, and procedures and/or documents specific to the group of children they are working with.
- Leaders should participate in the mandatory Safe Ministry Training (online) and team based ongoing training in child protection.

Helpers

Helpers are volunteers who assist in a ministry or activity on a casual basis. They generally fill a gap left by the absence of another team member, or any time a spare pair of hands is required. Typically, a helper may be a parent but any other person who is able to work under instruction may also assist.

Helpers:

- Are 16 years or older and demonstrably stable in mood and behaviour. May not be left alone with a child. They must work alongside other team members and always remain under supervision.
- They may take instructions from any team member but are accountable to the Ministry Supervisor / Ministry Coordinator.
- They do not make decisions about activities or processes.
- As casuals, they are not required to undergo formal training, although they may be invited to attend.
- If a helper is present within the ministry 5 or more times within a year, then they will undergo safe ministry requirements.

Junior Helpers

The use of Junior Helpers (aged below 16) is permissible in Kids Space / Kids Space Under 4s, but at the discretion of the Ministry Coordinator. They may not be used in Cornerstone Youth contexts.

- Given their age they must demonstrate prompt responsiveness to instructions and a level of maturity commensurate with the demands of the activity they are assisting.
- A junior helper, being under the age of 16, does not count as a leader for the purposes of supervision.
- The junior helper's date of birth should be verified from a reliable source of data such as a passport or birth certificate.

Staff

Staff members working with children are required to adhere to all policies relating to those ministries in addition to their individual employment agreements.

All staff must undergo Safe Ministry Training, a police vetting check under the Children's Act 2014 and a risk assessment appropriate to their role by a Safe Ministry Supervisor when they first start working for Cornerstone.

Staff members specifically working with children undergo the same processes as any volunteer in their appointment to any child related role.

All staff are required to refresh their Safe Ministry Training and NZ Police Vetting every 3 years.

Section 3 - Recruitment and Appointment

Appointment Requirements


Before making any appointment to be a leader working with children in our ministries, Cornerstone will complete a robust vetting process to ascertain the candidate's suitability and safety to work at Cornerstone. This is overseen by the Safe Ministry Supervisors with assistance by the Ministry Coordinator.

The elements required for appointment as a leader in Children's work are:

- **Working with Children's application form completed**
- **New Zealand Police Vetting** - a satisfactory result for the role
- **Confidential Disclosure on child safeguarding history**
- **Character References** - Two references on their safeguarding history and previous roles with children plus a recommendation from their Campus Pastor.
- **Completion of Safe Ministry Training** - within 3 months of commencing,
- **Signed Agreement to this policy and the ministry specific guidelines for their team**
- **Signed Agreement to Working with Children - Code of Conduct**

Safe Ministry Supervisors have a working document used in the process of confirming each element is completed that is stored confidentially, securely and indefinitely.

Application Form:  WWC Application Form.pdf

Code of Conduct:  Working with Children Code of Conduct.pdf

Appointment Process


The process begins with a Ministry Coordinator providing the application form. Once completed it is the responsibility of the Safe Ministry Supervisors to assess the application and make a decision on suitability.

Given the time taken to process NZ Police Vetting and complete Safe Ministry Training, we appoint leaders to a **Provisional Leader Role** (for up to 3 months) provided all other elements are satisfied and a NZ Police Vetting has been lodged and Safe Ministry Training assigned. Once vetting is confirmed and training is complete the appointment as a full **Leader Role** will be confirmed.

The Safe Ministry Supervisors will send a written confirmation at both stages of the leader's appointment. This will indicate the duration and role of appointment. It will also include a link to all relevant policies and procedures for the role. Where a lanyard is used in a ministry to indicate appointed leaders, this will be authorised only by the Safe Ministry Supervisors.

The Safe Ministry Supervisors must maintain a register of leaders that contains the vetting details of all workers that are covered under this Policy. Note that NZ Police Vetting and Safe Ministry Training will generally need to be refreshed every three years.

The details of this process are documented in the


 Guidelines for Appointing and Training Children's Workers.pdf

Section 4 - Recognising and responding to potential child abuse

Recognising Abuse

Abuse is "... the harming (whether physically, emotionally, sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person" - Section 2, Oranga Tamariki Act 1989

There are signs that might indicate grounds for concern in each of these areas.

Refer to the document  Indicators of Abuse & Neglect.pdf

Responding to Potential Abuse

Child abuse can come to light in a variety of different ways. These can include, but are not limited to:

- Direct or indirect disclosure by the child
- Direct witnessing of abuse.
- Reasonable suspicion of abuse by someone involved with the child;
- Allegations and/or direct observations or signs displayed in the child's physical or emotional behaviour;

When disclosures of abuse come directly from a child, it is important that you take what the child says seriously. This applies irrespective of the setting, or your own opinion on what is being said. When a child tells you what has been happening to them, or when you witness or suspect child abuse, it is important that you, as the adult, remain calm and confident.

The Safe Ministry Supervisors are formally trained in responding to Child Protection issues and can assist you with any questions you may have. We encourage you to contact them for advice.

Reporting Potential Abuse

- For the avoidance of confusion – **all allegations or suspicions held on reasonable grounds** of abuse at a Cornerstone ministry by a current or past church worker must be reported to the NZ Police and Oranga Tamariki.
- If an immediate response is required to ensure the child's safety, contact should be made in the first instance with the NZ Police and subsequently with Oranga Tamariki by church workers directly. Reporting to a Safe Ministry Supervisor is required as soon as is reasonably practicable after this.
- When there is no immediate danger to the safety of a child a Safe Ministry Supervisor will assist in what steps to take, including whether a notification to Oranga Tamariki is required.
- When reporting potential abuse, members of Cornerstone should record in writing all conversations and actions taken. Sign, date and keep these records securely.

More detailed information on each of these steps can be found here:

 Guidelines for recognising and responding to potential child abuse .pdf

RESPOND	Respond to the person (adult or child) - Believe what they tell you and/or what you see.
SAFETY	Ensure the safety of the child. Always take action in the short term to ensure the immediate safety of the child. This will mean contacting the Police (111) or Oranga Tamariki (0508 326 459) if you think there is an immediate risk to the child.
RECORD	Record immediately all initial statements, observations and concerns to avoid misinterpretations or confusion at a later date. Write it down and sign and date your notes.
CONSULT	Do not make decisions alone. Consult with your Child Wellbeing Policy and your Safe Ministry Supervisors. Oranga Tamariki is always available to give advice.
REPORT	Decide to act on your concerns. If you have told the person you believe is responsible for taking action and they do not act, you can contact Oranga Tamariki for advice.
SUPPORT	Seek support for yourself. Responding to a child protection issue can be stressful.

Section 5 - Safe Working Practices

General

Safe practice involves habitual actions and behaviours that work to anticipate problems before they arise. However, this framework should be approached positively in order to prevent a culture of negativity that always expects the worst.

Some responses to guidelines or regulations about care of children can have a counterproductive effect and negatively impact on the relationship with a child.

Some of the pitfalls are:

- Over-vigilance
- Unnecessarily extreme caution
- Motivations and actions driven by a climate of fear, anxiety, or legalism
- Failure to exercise discretionary options wisely

The most important rules for everyone's protection are:

- There must always be two leaders aged 18 years or over present for all Children's work events.
- Leaders must not be alone with a child during a church-run activity, and should make sure, as far as possible, that other leaders are not left alone with a child (exceptions would include an emergency setting where the emergency takes priority, however, if this occurs the incident should be noted in writing by the Ministry Supervisor).
- Leaders should be on the alert for people wandering around - a person unknown to the leaders or not part of the team should not be allowed access to children.

Some general guidelines that are expanded further below are:

- Require all staff and volunteers to remain conscientious and attentive in their care of children.
- Ensure activities are age-appropriate and suited to the development of the children.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with children except where it is relevant and appropriate to an activity.
- Maintain a culture of communication with parents/caregivers.
- Prohibit any staff member from romantic, sexual, or otherwise intimate (physical or emotional) involvement with any person under the age of 18 who is connected to Cornerstone and its activities.
- Ensure filming or photography is authorised (see below).
- Require parental consent before children are transported in a vehicle (see Trips and Transportation section below).
- Not supply or consume alcohol or drugs as part of a Children's ministry (details below).

Ministry Specific Guidelines

Each ministry type may develop specific guidelines that fit their specific context, but what follows is guidance of a general nature for all children's ministry at Cornerstone.

Appropriate contact and conversation

Sympathetic attention, humour, encouragement and age appropriate, child-led physical contact are needed by children and young people as part of their coming to understand human relationships. Children's Workers need to be above reproach in all that they do, and wisdom is often required to know what that looks like in different situations. Two good questions to ask in any situation are 'What is the worst that could happen?' and 'What is the worst way this could be perceived?' Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should help and support each other by pointing out anything that could be misconstrued. Concerns about abuse must always be reported.

Children's Workers should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Always avoid being alone in a room with a young person. Keep everything in public.
- Conversations should be appropriate for the age of the young person.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the young person rather than the caregiver.
- Avoid any physical activity that is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or the young person.

Discipline

All Children's Workers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behaviour and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behaviour.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behaviour include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating them from the group for a brief time (particularly if their behaviour is endangering or upsetting other children).

Children's Workers should never use any form of physical punishment. If behaviour is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the discipline measures above, the parents/guardians will be contacted. Children's Workers should never yell at a young person except in circumstances where the young person is in immediate danger or is at risk of causing danger to others.

Physical contact

Sympathetic attention, humour, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and adults. Some physical contact with children, particularly younger children, is wholly appropriate. The following guidelines regarding touching are suggested:

- Always ask permission.
- Be mindful of your body position.
- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to a child's needs and not related to the caregiver's needs. It should be age appropriate, welcome and generally initiated by the child, not the caregiver.
- Avoid any physical contact that is or could be construed as sexual and/or abusive/offensive.
- Allow the child to determine the degree of physical contact with others except in exceptional circumstances (eg when they need medical attention).

In addition:

- You can allow people you support to give you brief hugs if you feel comfortable with this.
- You can allow people you support to hold hands or link arms with you to help with travel and stability.
- You should discourage people you support from touching your face. You can offer your hand instead.
- You should discourage people you support from sitting on your lap. You can offer to sit side by side.
- You should avoid using touch if the person you support is very distressed and is unlikely to tolerate it.

Communication

- Use social media only for communicating information necessary for the operations of activities or events.

- Do not engage with a child in one-to-one casual communication via any media or communication system. It is entirely appropriate to communicate ministry logistics to Children's Workers aged under 18.
- Communicative processes of risk can include over-familiarity, gift-giving, or otherwise fostering unhealthy connections, for example, favouring one child over another. Such are not permissible behaviours for staff or volunteers.

Physical safety

- Prior to commencing activities, survey any physical location or environment for potential risks or hazards. Reduce or eliminate these before children arrive.
- Never leave children unsupervised.
- Stay alert for, and work to prevent, bullying, whether peer-to-peer or adult-to-child.
- If there is no valid reason for their presence, do not allow other persons to attend children's activities.

Safe Interactions

- Avoid private or unobserved interactions with a child.
- Should private or unobserved interactions be necessary, do not linger. Complete the task at hand as promptly as possible.
- Should one-to-one interactions with children be necessary, keep doors open, except where privacy is more appropriate, e.g. during toileting.
- Privacy must always be respected during dressing or undressing. Workers may not dress or undress in the presence of children and must allow children to dress or undress in privacy.
- Remain aware of where children are.
- Remain alert for children who are grouped out of sight without supervision. Take note of potential locations that are not immediately observable.
- Stay focussed on the children; avoid prolonged interactions with fellow workers that risk distraction.
- Should a difficult situation arise that requires counsel be provided to a child, ensure that another adult is within visual range of the interaction.
- Be careful not to overstep the limitations of personal competence and experience in providing counsel to a child.
- Be careful not to promise a child that you will keep something they share with you a secret from, at the very least, the Safe Ministry Supervisors.
- Notify the supervisor of any instance that has required deviation from normal processes of interaction.

Unacceptable behaviours

Cornerstone requires all staff and volunteers to desist from the following behaviours when they are interacting with children:

- Language that is coarse or sexual in nature.
- Jokes, gestures, or other body language that is suggestive or overtly sexual.
- Touching that is inappropriate to the situation.
- Use of or sharing of any media, including literature, that is not appropriate to the age of the child.
- Consuming or providing children alcohol, drugs, or other substances unsafe for children. Common sense exceptions are the Lord's Supper at church or non-church run events (for instance a wedding) that may have alcohol present. Cornerstone requires that alcohol served at any church run event be with the written permission of the Senior Pastor.

- Taking photos, movies or recordings of children outside the guidance of the Ministry Coordinator, and keeping or sharing these photos with anyone (other than the Ministry Coordinator).
- Any act of aggression, violence, or that places a child at physical risk.

Unforeseen incidents

From time to time, staff or volunteers working with children may encounter a situation where the usual guidelines do not apply, for example, in an emergency or if an unforeseen incident occurs. If such a circumstance arises, the problem must be dealt with quickly and in the best interests of the child.

- As soon as possible after dealing with the situation, the worker must report to a Safe Ministry Supervisor or their Ministry Coordinator / Supervisor to provide full information about what happened and how it happened.
- A Safe Ministry Supervisor or Ministry Coordinator / Supervisor will complete, with the participation of the worker, a written record, including dates, location, who was involved, what happened, who was notified, and what was the outcome.

Injury or illness

A case-by-case assessment of each Cornerstone ministry or event shall be undertaken by the Ministry Supervisor to determine the necessity of having present a First Aid trained worker.

- Cornerstone will provide training for leaders from a recognised external First Aid training provider.
- Cornerstone will encourage leaders to register their training in a register maintained by the church.
- Cornerstone will maintain a first aid kit, the contents of which have been checked by a medical professional at a frequency determined by the Safe Ministry Supervisors.

Emergency:

- In the event of severe injury or illness requiring professional medical intervention, any person present may call emergency services on 111, regardless of their role within the Cornerstone activity underway.
- In the event of a severe injury or illness requiring professional medical intervention, emergency medical services will be called first and the parents / caregivers will be located and informed immediately. If parents / caregivers are not able to be contacted, the advice of emergency medical professionals will be followed until parents / caregivers can be contacted.

Non-emergency:

- In a non-emergency that requires administering first aid or other basic medical care, and after the child has been made as comfortable as possible, attempts to contact the child's parent are to be made to obtain permission to proceed with intervention.
- It is not reasonable to seek parental permission if the medical issue can be dealt with in a non-intrusive manner, e.g. application of a Band Aid. Therefore, a worker may make a discretionary decision that parental consent is not required in a particular instance.
- Administering paracetamol or other medication is intrusive, therefore may only be administered where prior permission has been obtained and explicit parental permission is not possible. Exceptions to this would be on the judgement of the Ministry Supervisor of an emergency situation (such as administering an EpiPen)
- To forestall a non-response to an attempted parent contact, the parental consent form for a particular activity or event may contain a checkbox that indicates the parent/caregiver's willingness to give prior permission for medical care, provided the parameters of which they are agreeing to are clearly described on the form.
- Cornerstone will keep on record and be alert to any allergies or medical conditions notified by parents/caregivers.

- If an attempt to contact a parent is unsuccessful, the most senior leader of the activity is responsible to make a decision on care and how to proceed.
- Any injury or illness that has been dealt within the context of an activity must be notified to the parent/caregiver, providing information on what happened, how it was dealt with, and why it was dealt with in that way. A brief but comprehensive written record should be kept by Cornerstone with a copy issued to the parents/caregivers.

Trips and Transportation

From time to time, Cornerstone activities may involve the need to transport children in private vehicles to specific locations. The following guidelines set the minimum standards required for drivers.

- All drivers transporting children as part of Cornerstone activities must hold a full New Zealand driver's licence.
- Drivers must comply with the laws of the road and model exemplary driving behaviour when transporting children.
- Drivers may not transport children if they have consumed alcohol, illicit drugs, or opioid medication.
- Drivers must ensure that the vehicle they are using is road-worthy with a compliant Warrant of Fitness and current Registration
- Generally, written parental/caregiver consent must be obtained prior to transporting a child. Examples of exceptions to this would be a medical emergency or a failure of a parent to pick up their child (and attempts to contact the parent have failed).
- Information on time frames, locations (pick up and drop off) must be clearly communicated to parents/caregivers and where appropriate, to the children being transported.
- Drivers should avoid driving alone with a child unless approved by the Ministry Coordinator, in which case a record will be kept of the reason for doing so.
- All passengers and drivers must wear a legally compliant seat belt (preferably shoulder seat belts) while the car is in transit.
- The maximum number of persons in the vehicle must not exceed the number of available seat belts.
- Drivers should take the most reasonable direct route to a destination, without interrupting the journey or undertaking errands unrelated to the purpose of the journey.
- Should any problem or issue arise during transportation, the driver is to take appropriate action to ensure children are not left unattended or unsafe and communicate at the earliest possible opportunity with the senior supervisor of the activity.

Working with families

Effective communication in healthy relationships with parents/caregivers is of vital importance in providing appropriate care for children. Cornerstone will remain conscientious in its relationships with families, ensuring that the following requirements are enacted:

Cornerstone procedures

- Children's workers wear lanyards to enable easy identification and proof of role.
- First aid is not given without parental permission (in accordance with policy above).
- All incidents, mishaps, or accidents are reported to parents/caregivers at the first opportunity.

Communication

- Parental consent, written or verbal, is obtained whenever circumstances or activities require it.
- Parents are clearly informed about all upcoming activities, events, or changes to any location or circumstance that deviates from usual or expected routines.

- Any matter communicated by a parent/caregiver in relation to their child is confidential and restricted to the appropriate Cornerstone workers.
- To the extent that it is reasonable, parents are kept informed about who is looking after their children, who is in charge, and who to contact if they have an issue they wish to discuss. Exceptions may include an occasion when a scheduled worker is absent, and a last-minute replacement is provided. However, parents must know the name and contact details of the Ministry Coordinator should a need arise.

Parental involvement

- At no time are parents prevented from accessing their children, with or without notice.
- Assumptions about how supportive a family is should be avoided.
- Parents/caregivers remain informed about how to access this policy and the supplementary policy(s) that pertain to their children's care. Parents are welcomed to submit improvement or modification suggestions for consideration.

Legal considerations

- Referrals to other support services (with the exception of statutory bodies NZ Police or Oranga Tamariki/Ministry for Children) are made in consultation with parents.
- Where New Zealand law overrides the right of the parent to information, involvement, or notification, decisions about a child's care are made by a Safe Ministry Supervisor (or if not available the most senior leader available at Cornerstone), who may seek legal advice and/or advice from a professional who is an expert in the matter at hand.