



SAFE

Youth Ministry

A Guide for Youth Ministry Leaders



Uniting Church
SYNOD OF NSW & ACT



nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit

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Introduction

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people, are made in the image of God. As a community of faith, we are committed to providing safe environments so that all people may flourish. The Uniting Church takes seriously our commitment to ensure all children in our care have a safe place in which to explore faith.

This booklet sets out the guidelines for all people, both paid and volunteers who are involved in youth ministry in the Synod of NSW and the ACT.

For the purposes of this booklet, youth ministry refers to ministry to young people in years 7-12 at school who are under the age of 18. There is a separate booklet for leaders engaged in children's ministry (ages 0 - year 6)



As a community of faith,
we are committed to providing
safe environments so that all
people may flourish.

The role of Youth Ministry Leaders



Depending on how congregations organise their youth ministry, there will be a person or group who will have oversight of youth activities. This may be the Head/Co-ordinator of Youth ministry, a Youth ministry team, or a team who oversees both children and youth ministry or even the Church Council. Those in charge of Youth ministry will have specific responsibilities including but not limited to:

- Ensuring the right people are in the right role. Criteria for choosing who should be involved in youth ministry should be clearly outlined in church policies and procedures. This will include such things as not appointing people to work in youth ministry unless they have been in the congregation for at least 6 months, matching personality and attitude with role, and ensuring that the people who work in youth ministry have the appropriate physical, mental, emotional and spiritual capacity for the role.
 - Ensuring there are written descriptions for each role which clearly outline the expectations and detail the responsibilities of each role.
 - Ensuring that a risk assessment is carried out for all youth activities. This will include identifying and mitigating risks associated with the physical environment as well as safeguards against physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual abuse of young people.
- Further information about conducting a risk assessment using the Synod template and WHS (Work Health and Safety) (Work Health and Safety) considerations is available in the [UCA - Our Toolkit for Congregations](#) on the Synod website.
- Identifying who needs screening checks and Safe Church awareness training and ensuring that all people who work with children have current Working With Children's Check (NSW) or Working With Vulnerable People Card (ACT), have completed the Children's ministry screening questionnaire and are current with their Safe Church Awareness training obligations
 - Understanding of the legal and UCA requirements for child protection and reporting i.e. Mandatory Reporting and Reportable conduct.

Screening, appointment and training of Youth Ministry leaders

Legal requirements

There are specific screening requirements under both the legislation in NSW and in the ACT. Any person directly involved in youth ministry, or responsible for children's and youth activities, both paid or as a volunteer must have a valid Working With Children Check (WWCC) clearance) in NSW or a Working With Vulnerable People Check (WWVP check) in the ACT. It is an offence to allow a person to work with children without the appropriate clearance. A person cannot work with children and young people until the WWCC is verified by the Safe Church Contact Person, or the WWVP card is received and carried at all times while working with children in the ACT.

It is important that all youth ministry leaders liaise with the Safe Church Contact person or whoever is responsible for Safe Church compliance in their congregation, to ensure that all people they appoint to work in youth ministry have the appropriate screening check in place.

The screening matrix on the next page outlines the appropriate screening for certain roles who work with youth.



Appointment & On-Boarding

Some senior roles should require a written application outlining the suitability of the person for the role and experience. All people involved in youth ministry must complete and sign the Children's Ministry Questionnaire and the appropriate code of conduct. It is important when appointing youth leaders, to be aware that many younger youth leaders may be close in age to those they minister to, and this presents additional risk for the potential of inappropriate relationships developing. All appointed leaders and helpers should also be given an orientation of the site where the activity will take place and have a copy of their role description explained to them. All leaders and helpers should know exactly who they should speak to if they have questions or need support.

Training

All people who work with children and youth are required to complete Safe Church Awareness training as soon as possible and ideally before they start working in youth ministry. All people who work with children and young people are now Mandatory Reporters in NSW and/or Mandated Reporters in the ACT. They are also considered 'employees' under the Reportable Conduct legislation, regardless of whether they are paid or unpaid. Safe Church Awareness Training gives staff and volunteers the necessary information they require to ensure that the safety of children and young people is paramount in all they do.

Screening and Training for Church Volunteers

Pre-Employment Checks for Volunteers

Title/type	Description	WWCC/ WWVPC (includes a Police Check)	Background Check/ Specific requirements*	Safe Church Awareness Training	References/ Endorsement
High-trust volunteer roles					
Special Religious Education teachers	Volunteers who teach religious education in schools	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sunday School Teacher	Volunteer over the age of 18 who teaches Sunday School	✓	X	✓	✓
Church Council members	Elected lay leaders who serve on church council	✓	X	✓	✓
Safe Church Contact person	Appointed person to oversee Safe Church Administrative tasks in the congregation or presbytery	✓	X	✓	✓
Children's Ministry Leader/Playgroup leader	Person in charge of managing children's ministry (0-12 yrs) including appointing and overseeing helpers	✓	X	✓	✓
Youth Ministry Leader	Person in charge of managing youth activities (13-18 yrs) including appointing and supervising youth helpers. This person will be over the age of 18	✓	X	✓	✓
Music Team leader	Person who leads the music team in Sunday services and other times of worship and oversees the music team	✓	X	✓	✓
Other volunteer roles					
Children's Ministry Helper > 18 yrs (incl Playgroups)	Person over the age of 18 who assists in various children's ministry activities (children aged 0-12 yrs) who is supervised by the ministry leader. Includes helpers at playgroups where parents are present and people who prepare food in the kitchen	✓	X	✓	✓
Children's Ministry Helper < 18 yrs (incl Playgroups)	Person under the age of 18 who assists in various children's ministry activities (children aged 0-12 yrs) who is supervised by the ministry leader. Includes helpers at playgroups where parents are present	X	X	X	✓

Notes:

* Background check: includes verifying CV, licenses, qualifications, required training (eg SRE modules)

** Endorsement/references from a previous minister, a church leader or elder regarding skills and ability to of the person to fulfil the requirements of a particular role

Pre-Employment Checks for Volunteers

Title/type	Description	WWCC/ WWVPC (includes a Police Check)	Background Check/ Specific requirements *	Safe Church Awareness Training	References/ Endorsement
Youth Ministry Helper >18 yrs	Person over the age of 18 who assists in various youth ministry activities (children aged 13-18) who is supervised by the ministry leader.	✓	X	✓	✓
Youth Ministry Helper <18 yrs	Person under the age of 18 who assists in youth ministry activities (children aged 13-15) who is supervised by the ministry leader. Includes helpers at playgroups where parents are present	X	X	X	✓
Volunteer working with vulnerable people (eg aged. Special needs, food and support services)	Person who volunteers with vulnerable adults or children with disabilities (excluding a helper in an aged care facility)	✓	X	✓	✓
Bus driver transporting vulnerable people	Volunteer with appropriate experience who transports children or vulnerable adults	✓	✓	✓	✓
Music Team member	Person over the age of 18 who plays music or sings as part of a music team overseen by the music team leader	✓	X	✓	X
Church volunteer helping out at the local school with reading etc where this is a mission of the local church	Person from a congregation who volunteers in a school (e.g. reading support, ESL)	✓	X	✓	X
Participant/Helpers					
Parent or close relative of a child, volunteering in a childrens activity that the child participates in	A parent or close relative who helps out at a church activity or creche where their child is present. Includes people who are ministry helpers	X	X	X	X
Person assisting in an emergency	Person who assists in children's ministry on an emergency basis to reduce the risk for childrens activities for no more than 5 consecutive days	X	X	X	X

Safe Contact Practices

Current child safe contact practices are quite different now. Formerly adults were usually trusted, and it was common for adults to hug, ring, visit or provide transport for a child. The findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse revealed that children were not always safe with adult.

It is of paramount importance to embed child safe culture into all our contacts with children. Sexual abuse of a child or young person often starts with something relatively minor that gradually leads to more involved behaviours through a process of grooming. It is often characterized by secrecy.

The following practices must be observed at all times when working with children and young people as measures to prevent the grooming process.

- ✗ Never abuse young people or cultivate relationships to initiate or cloak abuse of children.
- ✗ Never become romantically involved with a person under the age of 18, participating in youth ministry
- ✗ Never be alone with a young person away from the presence of other adults.
- ✗ Never have young people to your home or visit young people in their home when no other adult is present, and never meet privately with a young person outside of church activities, unless another adult is present.
- ✗ Never touch a young person in a manner which is inappropriate given their age, gender, or cultural background.
- ✗ Never physically discipline a young person or speak to them using a raised voice or aggressive tone.
- ✗ Never make drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes available to young people.
- ✗ Never develop inappropriate special relationships with young people that could be seen as involving favouritism or any form of special treatment.
- ✗ Never engage in any contact with a young person that is secretive (whether physical or through electronic media or in any other way).
- ✗ Never take photographs or videos of young people without the permission of the young person and their parents and for an approved purpose. Another adult should always be present when photos or videos are being taken.



Safe Ministry Guidelines

The guidelines that follow cover issues for youth ministry activities which need to be considered when approving youth activities. The church should have procedures to ensure that parental approval is given annually for regular onsite youth activities and individually for activities that are higher risk e.g. overnight camps, abseiling, hikes etc.

Approve all youth activities

All youth activities must be approved by the Church Council. The appropriateness of the activity for each age group, and the results of the risk assessment of that activity should all be considered. Authorised leaders should review all material in full, including videos before it is shown to young people to ensure that any message or graphics is appropriate and relevant for the age group.

Physical safety

Providing a safe and appropriate environment for all youth related activities is the responsibility of the Congregation. It is important to consult with young people about whether there are any areas that make them feel unsafe.

Consider the suitability and safety of the space and safety measures necessary by asking the following questions. You should be able to tick all the following boxes 'yes' or mitigate any risks where the answer is 'no'

Suitability of the space

- ☐ Are toilet facilities available and safely accessible?
- ☐ Is the space secure and appropriate for activities such as games or craft?
- ☐ Is the equipment being used in good repair and appropriate for the ages using it?
- ☐ Is the floor non-slip and splinter-free?

Safety of the space

- ☐ Is the designated area a safe distance from roads or traffic?
- ☐ Is the area protected from places where people may engage in unsafe behaviour (such as smoking, intimate contact or drinking alcohol) and are all areas able to be adequately monitored?
- ☐ Is any glass installed at floor level? Is it safety glass?
- ☐ Is the heating safe to use?
- ☐ All electrical wiring, sockets and appliances are regularly maintained through the 'Test and Tag' process and/or in a safe condition?
- ☐ Has the designated area been checked for potential hazards and have such items safely removed (such as broken glass, unstable furniture or discarded needles)?

First aid and safety measures

- ☐ Is a fire extinguisher or fire blanket available on-site?
- ☐ Is a well-stocked first aid kit ready to hand for all child related activities?
- ☐ Is a specified person replenishing the first aid kit regularly?
- ☐ Is there a specific person on-site with a current first-aid certificate?
- ☐ Are all leaders aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures?

Safe Ministry Guidelines

Supervision of youth activities

An important part of providing a safe environment is ensuring there are sufficient leaders present to adequately supervise the program.

The number of leaders required will vary, however the MINIMUM number of leaders will always be two. Helpers under the age of 16 are not considered leaders for the purposes of supervision. In considering the number of leaders required, take into account:

- the age, number, ability, and gender mix of the children; and
- the venue, time, duration, and nature of the activity.

Model example	Routine/Predictable		Non-Routine/Irregular	
	Church site activities and meetings	Camping & Sleepover	Adventure-based Activities inc swimming	On water activities
0-24 Months	1:4	NA	NA	NA
24 – 36 Months	1:5	NA	NA	NA
5 – 9	1:10 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:5 Minimum 3 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:5 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:4 Minimum 3 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader
9 – 14	1:10 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:8 Minimum 3 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:8 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:6 Minimum 3 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader
14-17	1:10 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:8 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:8 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:6 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader
Forms that may be required	Parent Sign in and sign out sheets	Activity Parent consent form Activity Risk Assessment and Plan Details of Activity and identified leaders for Church Council approval	Activity Parent consent form Activity Risk Assessment and Plan Details of Activity and identified leaders for Church Council approval	Activity Parent consent form Activity Risk Assessment and Plan Details of Activity and identified leaders for Church Council approval
<i>All Leaders hold current WWCC, Emergency Contact details for each child, Child Special Needs /medical awareness Form, Incident and Accident reporting forms, Photography / image permission form</i>				

Safe Ministry Guidelines

Where the potential risks increase so should the supervision provided. For example, if young people were engaging in an activity which has a higher risk (e.g., ab-sailing or bushwalking), it would be appropriate to increase the number of supervisors. This is to account for the high-risk nature of the activity and the fact that it is off-site. All supervisors must be aware of any medical or access requirement of children in their care and know what to do in the case of an emergency.

Communication

Communication must be managed in a safe and effective way. Communication should be well considered, age appropriate, and respectful. It should contain no swearing, improper slang, gestures, or blasphemy by supervisors.

Leaders should not contact children by email, text, phone, mail, social media, video calls, using chatrooms or by any other form of electronic communication unless the communication is made in order to provide information about an activity. If a young person contacts the youth leader on their mobile phone for reasons other than to clarify details of an activity, the youth ministry leader or minister should be informed. Leaders should not meet with a young person

alone, either on the church premises or outside of church activities.

Communication with young people should always be above reproach, both in terms of the content, the way you communicate and whether the communication is in person or on a device. Ask yourself: if this communication were to be made known to all of church, would they consider it to be appropriate? Be sensitive to the impact of the words and images you use, to avoid offence or miscommunication. Never use flirtatious, sexually suggestive, explicit, or offensive language or images. Be conscious too of how things might be perceived by others. Be careful that the circumstances of your communication do not suggest that your relationship with a young person is inappropriate by, for example, communicating regularly or late at night. Even if your motives are pure, misunderstandings can arise.

Parents require detailed information about the proposed activity and provide written consent. Appropriate records of approvals and correspondence should be kept. This consent should also record specific requirements relating to the child. E.g., allergies, dietary requirements, emergency contacts and access support.

Type of contact	Years 7–9 Students	Years 10–12 Students
Phone calls	To be avoided. If a phone call is necessary, obtain permission of the parent/guardian beforehand.	To be avoided. If a phone call is necessary, obtain permission of the parent/guardian beforehand.
Text messages	For logistical purposes only	For logistical purposes only
Email	For logistical purposes and encouragement only.	For logistical purposes and encouragement only.
Social networking (Facebook, Instagram, etc)	Use your discretion and keep in mind the safe practices in this document, privacy policy and the code of conduct you have signed.	Use your discretion and keep in mind the safe practices in this document, privacy policy and the code of conduct you have signed.
Video calls/streaming & Chat rooms	Never	Never

Safe Ministry Guidelines

Safe Pastoral Care

Navigating the teenage years can be complicated. Youth leaders will be approached at times to provide young people with pastoral support. Both the safety of the youth leader and young person need to be considered. Youth leaders can quickly get themselves into conversations where they are out of their depth, so it is important that they understand how to approach a pastoral conversation safely, before it takes place.

Church Councils have a significant role to play in ensuring that youth leaders are endorsed, have completed safe church awareness training, are confident to have safe pastoral conversations and that they receive the appropriate level of support.

Advice for youth leaders

1. Know who you can go to for support when a young person requests a pastoral conversation
2. Use Safe church protocols when having a pastoral conversation.
 - a. You may not be the right person to undertake a particular conversation. Seek the advice of the Head of Youth ministry or Minister. They will select an appropriate person to provide pastoral care to the young person. They will consider such things as age, gender, experience.
 - b. Meet in an appropriate place, e.g., café or public place rather than alone in a closed office at the church or in your home. Consider the need for your interactions with young people to be transparent and above reproach.
 - c. Communicate/ organize meetings using a church email address. This protects the privacy of the youth leader and provides the appropriate level of transparency.
 - d. Ensure that the minister, Head of Youth ministry or the chair of church council is aware of the pastoral conversation and is appropriately briefed in summary, being mindful of confidentiality for the young person where this is appropriate.
- e. Let the young person know before the conversation begins that there are times you may not be able to keep their confidence (e.g. self-harm, when at risk of significant harm)
3. Listen to the young person carefully. Don't be tempted to answer a complicated pastoral care question straight away. The best way to help the young person is to provide a well-considered response. It is important to take time to think through the conversation and get advice from someone who has the appropriate knowledge.
 - a. Provide assurance to the young person by reinforcing that you are glad they feel comfortable speaking to you and that you will continue to support them.
 - b. If the concern of the young person is complex, let them know that you might have to seek the advice of a minister or senior person within the church to provide advice about the best way forward.
 - c. Don't make promises that you can't keep. Such as not telling anyone.
 - d. Seek assistance from a church leader as to how to best support the young person with their particular need, in a timely manner.

Safe Ministry Guidelines

- e. Respond to the young person quickly and keep in touch with them, mindful of the safe church protocols for meeting with young people. i.e. public place, café, place with line of sight to other people.
4. Understand the key aspects of pastoral care of a young person:

SAFETY

If there is a risk of significant harm to the young person, take immediate action. Refer to the Reporting Abuse section of this guide which outlines what to do if a young person tells you about any type of abuse

If the issue is related to the safety of a young person and does not meet the threshold of significant harm, then you have a duty of care to consult with the parents of the young person. Let the young person know you will need to do this, so you don't lose their trust.

EMPOWERMENT

The role of a pastoral carer is to guide and help the young person to work through their problems or concerns. A positive pastoral conversation may result in empowering the young person to seek further assistance from a parent, school counsellor or doctor themselves or it may empower them to undertake personal growth to change their situation.

SUPPORT

Not all young people feel confident enough to approach an adult by themselves. There will be times when you may need to support them through this process or speak on their behalf.

Mentoring

The church may appoint mentors to guide and support young people for a particular purpose over a specified timeframe. Mentoring must take place with permission of the church council and parents.

For example, mentors might...

1. Have a role in walking beside a young person on their discipleship journey
2. Help prepare a young person for Confirmation
3. Mentor a young person as they consider a particular call on their life from God
4. Mentor a young person who is new to the Christian faith or considering becoming a Christian

Mentors should consider the same safe church protocols that apply to general pastoral conversations but should pay particular attention to the potential for inappropriate relationships to grow over the time of mentorship.

Mentors should ensure they undertake formal supervision on a regular basis, to help them navigate the mentoring role and relationship. Supervision is an excellent way to improve mentoring and pastoral conversation skills. Mentors should ensure that the minister, Head of Youth ministry or church council chair are briefed about the mentorship on a regular basis.



Safe Ministry Guidelines

Photography and Video material

Privacy protects children from having their personal information displayed on a social networking site or Church website.

Churches may only use photos in accordance with the purposes for which parental/carers consent was given. It is important that any photograph or video used be approved by the minister or authorised person prior to use and records of written consents should be retained. The following points should be observed.

- Young people have rights to privacy. Do not photograph any young person without their consent
- Parental/carers permission must be obtained before taking photographs or videos and before posting any approved photographs or videos of children online.
- Photos of young people should focus on groups rather than individuals
- Young people must not be identified in any way in the photograph when posting online, e.g. tagging on Facebook.
- All young people must be appropriately dressed when photographed (e.g. not in swimsuits or pyjamas).
- Embarrassing or offensive photos or videos must not be either taken or shared.
- Images of young people taken with parental consent, should not be altered or photo-shopped before being used for approved purposes.
- Generally, videos should only be used to promote ministry-related events and activities.
- When videos are distributed or streamed on broadcast media platforms, signs and/or notifications should be posted that indicate the service is being or will be broadcast.



Safe Ministry Guidelines

E-Safety

The rule of thumb for online safety, is that leaders need to be as conscious about the safety of online activities as they are for activities that are conducted in person. Young people may not always understand the risks of interacting online, so it is important that safeguarding measures be put in place for any online youth activity (e.g. Zoom church services, Zoom Sunday school). Churches will also need to consider the appropriateness of publishing zoom services to social media pages and website, which showcase young people. The following points should be considered for youth activities which are held online. The Synod E-Safety Guideline may be consulted.



Online Platform System Safeguards	Supervision of online activities	Online Code of Conduct
- Only use social media and collaboration platforms authorised by your congregation and use the congregation's account for that platform. Do not use a personal account. - Restrict any links to online activities to invitees and ensure parents are aware of the activity and that they remain nearby during the activity. - Use system level controls to disable platform functions which are not required (e.g., video, audio recording, chat functionality). Recording any children's online activity should be carefully considered. Should an activity need to be recorded, parental/carers permission should be sought. The subsequent use of recordings on social media sites is discouraged - Ensure all leaders know how to apply platform security and privacy settings to online activities. Leaders should know how to prevent uninvited attendees accessing online sessions, how to block video, audio, or chat functions, and how to avoid exposing personal information. - Ensure appropriate privacy settings are in place.	- Ensure at least two adult supervisors are online. - All adult supervisors require current and validated working with children checks. This includes any IT specialists involved in the online ministry. - Churches should set up church email addresses and social media accounts for youth leaders to use. Use of personal emails and social media accounts creates a risk for both youth leaders and youth. Personal phones should be used only when necessary and in a responsible and transparent manner. - Communicate any variations in the schedule to the participants and parents. - Ensure all content and language is age appropriate. - Ensure privacy is maintained.	- Establish, communicate, and consistently apply clear rules for how adults and young people will interact online. For example, is live video and/or audio conferencing permitted? In what circumstances? Ensure that children are reminded of the online code of conduct you have established before each activity begins. - Ensure adult-to-adult and adult-to-young person interactions via all media always remains professional. It is a good idea to avoid using emojis due to the risk of misinterpretation. - Parents and church leaders should review the material on the e-safety commissioner's website. It includes detailed information on the various online platforms.

The Synod E-Safety Guideline is available in the Resources section of Safe Church for Church Council web page:

<https://nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit/safe-church-leadership-for-church-councils>

Safe Ministry Guidelines

Offsite and overnight activities

When considering offsite and/or overnight activities, safety factors should be considered.

- A risk assessment of the activity is to be completed to mitigate risk and determine the appropriate level of adult supervision and expertise required,
- Parental permission must be obtained for any offsite church activity, and for the transport of a young person by someone other than the parent or carer
- Where transport arrangements are required, reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that:
 - All drivers or operators are fully licensed and well experienced. No driver may drive children after consuming alcohol or any other mind-altering or addictive substance;
 - All motor vehicles and other forms of transport used are registered, insured, safe and fitted with age-appropriate child restraints or safety devices (e.g., seat belts, life jackets).
 - Cars or buses carry the appropriate number of children. No standing for any young person or adult
 - Leaders do not travel alone with a young person in a motor vehicle even with parental/carers permission.
- When youth events involve sleepovers, you should ensure that the sleeping accommodation (where possible) is:
 - segregated between males and females.
 - supervised by more than one supervisor, preferably including a parent or guardian.
 - ensure that those supervising the sleeping accommodation:
 - are of the same gender as the young people being supervised; and
 - do not sleep in close personal proximity to a young person, unless they are a parent or guardian of that young person.
- Leaders should never share accommodation with only one young person, unless they are a parent or guardian of that young person.
- Venues should allow for the privacy of all parties to be respected, particularly when changing clothes, washing and toileting.
- Young people should understand what behaviour is expected from them on an excursion. It is a good idea to outline expectations before the event (e.g. respectful behaviour, valuing their privacy and that of others, kindness). Young people should know who they can go to should they feel uncomfortable or upset for any reason.

Meeting outside of organised activities

Years 7-9

It is never appropriate for a youth leader to meet socially with young people in Years 7-9 without parental permission and without discussing it first with the Head of Youth Ministry. This type of meeting is to be done in groups rather than one-to-one with another leader present. Any meetings should be in a public place.

Years 10-12

Leaders may choose to meet casually with mixed groups of youth in Years 10-12. Any meetings should be in a public place and parents and the supervisor of the ministry should be aware of this contact outside of programmed events, including the location, duration, and reason for the meeting.

Reporting Complaints and Concerns

It is important that appropriate person within the church is informed of any concerns or complaints that parents, caregivers, staff and volunteers have regarding any aspect of a children's program. All complaints or concerns raised are taken seriously.

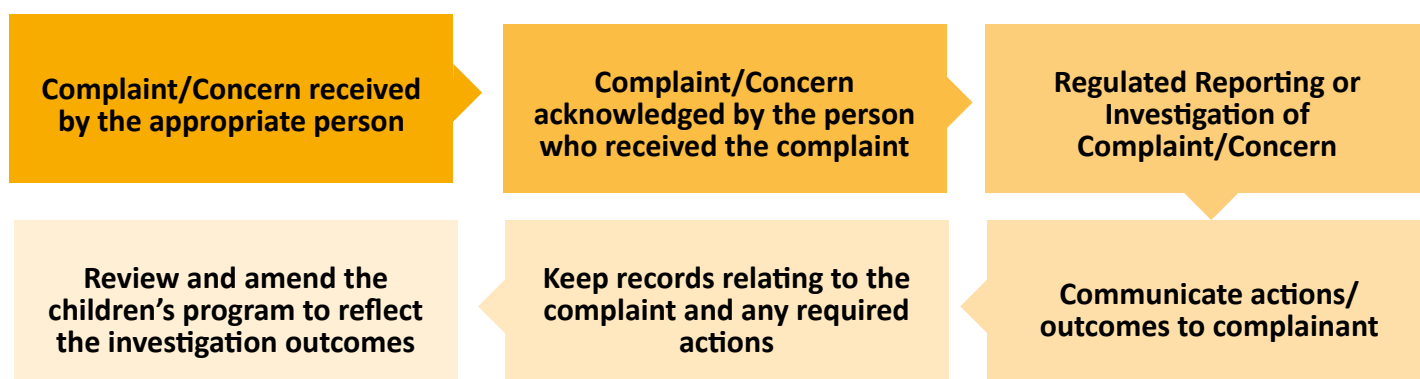
How do I make a complaint or report a concern?

Complaints and Concerns are managed in various ways depending on the nature of that complaint or concern. The following table indicates the initial contact for a variety of types of complaints. If in any doubt, please speak with your minister or contact the Safe Church Unit.

Concern or complaint	Who to contact	Way to contact
Complaint about the way a leader/volunteer has treated another adult	Minister or Church Council Chairperson	Call or email local church
Complaint about the way a leader/volunteer has treated my child	Synod Safe Church Unit	Potential Allegation Reportable Conduct or Mandatory Reporting Matter. Email : safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au or call (02) 8267 4351
Complaint about the minister or pastor	Synod Associate Secretary	Email: associatesecretary@nswact.uca.org.au
Complaint by a staff member or volunteer about any aspect of the children's ministry not relating to the minister	Minister or Church Council Chairperson	Call or email local church
Concern relating to the physical safety of the children's program	Minister or Church Council Chairperson	Call or email local church
Concern relating to the information received or not received about my child's program	Minister or Church Council Chairperson	Call or email local church
Making an anonymous concern/complaint	Speak Out	Make a complaint online: speakout.uca.org.au Call the Independent and Confidential Speak Out hotline 1800 951 145.

What happens when I make a complaint or report a concern?

The flowchart indicates the process that is followed when a complaint or concern is raised.



Reporting Abuse

It is important to be able to recognise the signs of child abuse or neglect and to recognise reportable conduct in adults working in youth ministry. At times, the abuse of children and reportable conduct may be linked.

Types of Abuse

Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, or spiritual in nature. Neglect of a child's needs is also classed as abuse. Children may disclose abuse, or a person may become aware of behaviours which indicate abuse or neglect.

Mandatory Reporting

A person working in Youth ministry is a Mandatory Reporter in NSW and a Mandated Reporter in the ACT, and is legally obligated to report any concerns for the safety of a child or young person. Refer to the Mandatory Reporting policy and Guidelines for NSW and the Act for further information on child abuse and Mandatory Reporting obligations under the resources section at this link: <https://nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit/mandatory-reporting/>

If a young person tells you about any abuse, you should:

- listen to their story.
- comfort them if they are distressed.
- let them know you are glad they told you and that they did the right thing.
- let them know you are going to get help about what to do next and that you will get back to them.

As soon as possible after the disclosure you must:

- ▶ write down the details of what was said including dates and times, and
- ▶ report the information to the appropriate authorities as indicated in the table on page 19.

Reportable Conduct

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure the safety of children and young people. The Synod is required to report allegations of Reportable Conduct of its 'employees' to the relevant statutory body in NSW or the ACT.

For the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme 'employees' in NSW are those who are required to hold a WWCC, while in the ACT all ministers of religion, religious leaders, officers of a religious body, a person engaged under a contract of employment, or a person engaged to provide services other than under a contract of employment are considered employees whether paid or volunteers.

Any breach of the Safe Contact Practices or inappropriate contact or a breach of the listed in this document or a breach of the applicable Code of Conduct must be addressed. In most cases minor breaches may be addressed with counselling and training to increase awareness of safe practices (e.g. a person hugs a child or young person closely to comfort or greet them).

Where a breach is serious and relates to a sexual offence, sexual misconduct, ill treatment, psychological or emotional abuse or assault or neglect of a child or a failure to protect a child, the UCA will make a report to the relevant statutory body and an investigation will take place. Refer to the UCA Policy and Guidelines for Reportable Conduct in NSW or the ACT for further details.

Reporting Abuse

Issue or concern	Report to
General Suspensions	Minister or Safe Church Unit
Child or young person currently at risk of significant harm	• DCJ (Department Communities & Justice) (NSW) or CYPS (ACT) If possible discuss with your minister or the Safe Church Unit first and use the Mandatory Reporters Guide (if in NSW) • Police 000 (if a child is in immediate danger) • General Secretary or Safe Church Unit Contact the General Secretary or Safe Church Unit where the alleged perpetrator is a church worker or if support is needed to make a report
Knowledge of relevant criminal offences	• Police 000 • Safe Church Unit Email: safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au (regarding a church worker or volunteer)
Knowledge of relevant criminal offences	• General Secretary Email: generalsecretary@nswact.uca.org.au • Safe Church Unit Email: safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au • Speak Out With Confidence • Police 000 (if a child is in immediate danger)

Support for Reporters

The Synod EAP (Employee Assistance Program) is available to all reporters who require support. Contact your local minister or the Safe Church Unit for further information. Information is available on the Synod website:

<https://nswact.uca.org.au/shared-resources/human-resources/employee-assistance-program>

Contacts

For further information or advice on anything related to Safe Children's ministry please contact the Synod of NSW and the ACT Safe church Unit.

Safe Church Unit

E: safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au

Ph: (02) 8267 4351

General Secretary

E: generalsecretary@nswact.uca.org.au

Mail: Marked 'Confidential' addressed to General Secretary,
Uniting Church Synod of NSW & ACT,
PO Box A2178, Sydney South NSW 1235.

SAFE Youth Ministry

A Guide for Youth
Ministry Leaders

