

## **June 2020 – Version 3**

### **CrossLife – a baptist church**

#### **Policy document**

#### **Safe ministry for Children’s Ministry leaders**

Ministry to children is exciting and vibrant work, which is significant to the life of our church. Teaching children about Jesus is kingdom work. It is a service to the children (under 18s), the church family, and to God. Ministry to children offers great opportunities and also carries significant responsibilities for the well-being of those in our care. As church leaders we take the teaching and leadership of children seriously, and thus must provide an environment which is safe from any form of harm. Our policies procedures and recordkeeping all form the basis of how we do this.

This policy sets out the guidelines and code of conduct for leaders involved in children’s ministry, whether paid or unpaid. This includes crèche leaders, playgroup leaders, Sunday kids church leaders, kids club leaders, and any other ministry of the church aimed at children. For this purpose children’s ministry refers to Ministry to children up to and including the end of the Australian school year 6.

Defining children’s Ministry:

Children’s ministry occurs where an event is organised and advertised by CrossLife as an event for children, where the care of the child passes from the child’s parent to CrossLife under the leadership of the First Quarter team Pastor’s team members.

For clarification there are certain events organised by CrossLife where the care of the child does not pass from the parent to CrossLife, as the parents remains in the event with the child for the full duration of time the event is in process. Two examples of such are:

- playgroups,
- babies cry room facilities provided on a Sunday for parents of babies and toddlers during the Sermon.

#### **1. General principles for ministry with children**

**Children have rights:**

Children have the right to be safe and well looked after when they are in our care. They have the right to be protected, listened to and their particular needs addressed in all church activities, whether mixed age or child specific.

**Leaders are responsible:**

All those exercising a pastoral ministry involving children in the church have responsibility for the safety and welfare of the children in the care.

**Abuse is power misused:**

Leaders have authority over children because of the positional power and because of the greater age, maturity, physical size and life experience. Abuse arises from the misuse of authority or power. Any form of abuse is always wrong.

**2. The role of the Children's Ministry leader and assistants**

As a children's ministry leader, it is your role to take responsible steps to ensure the safety and welfare of the children in your care. This will involve:

- ensuring that you satisfy the screening and training requirements
- complying with the code of conduct and guidelines contained in this booklet

**3. Screening and training of leaders**

Sadly, it has been evidenced that many children have been abused physically, sexually and emotionally by trusted members of communities, including people in churches. As a result, there are requirements for people involved in any kind of work with children that we as leaders must comply with.

**Legal requirements**

Any person involved in a child related work, including volunteers, must obtain a blue card, and keep this current by renewing the blue card prior to its expiry.

- Queensland government's Blue card screening determines a person's eligibility to work with children and young people based on their known past behaviour
- Ongoing monitoring of all blue card holders and applicants which enables action to be taken to protect children and young people if the person is charged with a concerning offence, and
- Mitigating future risk through the requirement for organisations providing child related services to develop and implement child and youth risk management strategies.

CrossLife must verify the blue card number to determine whether the person has been cleared or barred, and if a person holds a blue card in more than 1 capacity, these must be linked.

## **CrossLife requirements**

A person who wishes to volunteer or work in a children's ministry position must:

- Obtain a blue card working with children clearance, (and keep this current by renewing prior to expiry dates). The blue card and future renewals must be verified by **CrossLife leaders**.
- Make a formal application for the children's ministry position including producing proof of identity documents and providing references ([www.safeministry.org.au](http://www.safeministry.org.au))
- undertake safe ministry training within 3 months of starting the children's ministry position, followed by a refresher course at least every 3 years

Any parent who attends a children's event on more than three occasions, for any purpose, including settling their own child, must be in possession of a valid blue card and undertake the necessary training, if they want to continue attending events in the future.

It is recommended that all volunteers over the age of 18 are either members or regular attendees of CrossLife, before entering into a children's ministry position. To this end all CrossLife leaders should encourage volunteers to pursue membership with CrossLife. However, attendees who have been attending CrossLife and are known to a Campus Pastor and the First Quarter Team Pastor, may be considered for children's ministry positions.

A children's ministry position means any paid or unpaid position to which a person is appointed by or on behalf of a CrossLife pastor that involves activities primarily related to a physical or face-to-face contact with, children, and includes leader's, assistants and other helpers.

At CrossLife the First Quarter Team Pastor generally has ultimate responsibility for appointing to children's ministry positions even though in practice that responsibility is often delegated to other leaders.

### **Providing information for records:**

You must provide your full name date of birth blue card number and details of the safe ministry training you have undertaken to the designated CrossLife leadership, as they are required to keep these records.

## **4. Children's ministry code of conduct - See Appendix 1**

The code of conduct is written to protect both the children and our campuses, and you as a leader, from situations where either your actions or your integrity might be questioned.

There are good reasons for this code of conduct. Those who seek to abuse children may use group based activities in order to gain the trust of a child. Having gained the trust

they may then engage in one-on-one activities that offer an opportunity for abuse to occur. Abuse often starts with something relatively minor but can gradually build up to more involve behaviours through a process of grooming. It is often characterised by secrecy.

This is why there must always be more than one leader present, and that no opportunities present themselves for a leader, assistant or helper to engage in one-on-one activity with a child away from the presence of other adults.

A breach of this code of conduct will raise issues concerning your fitness to continue as a leader, assistant or helper.

You are all required to inform either the First Quarter Team Pastor, the Campus Pastor, the Lead Pastor or the Executive Pastor if you observe another leader acting in a way that may be contrary to this code of conduct.

## **5. Guidelines for children's ministry activities**

The guidelines that follow cover a wide array of issues for children's ministry activities, such as a supervision of activities and their appropriateness, the physical safety of those involved the importance of parental consent, transportation, forms of communication with children, as well as the issue of meeting up with children outside of programmed events.

However there are 3 golden rules that are relevant to all the guidelines:

- 2 or more: there must always be 2 leaders present for all children's ministry events, including 1 leader over the age of 18
- Never alone: leaders must not be alone with the child during an activity, and should make sure as far as possible, that other leaders are not left alone with the child.
- Stranger danger: leaders should be on the alert for people including themselves in ministry activities who are not part of the children's ministry. (Such a person may not have had the blue card screening and training. If a parent wishes to sit in on the activity, leaders must ensure that the relevant adult has been signed into the activity and that we hold relevant personal details, and that such person does not interact with any children other than their own. Also note the CrossLife requirement that any parent who attends a children's event on more than 3 occasions, for any purpose, including settling their own child, must be in possession of a valid blue card and undertake the necessary training, if they want to continue attending events in the future

### **5a. Physical safety of children**

One of the ways we can protect children in our churches to make sure they are meeting in a physical environment with that is appropriate and safe for them.

Consider particularly the suitability of the space, the safety of the space and the safety measures in place. If in doubt please contact the kids and youth pastor. Some guidelines to consider are as follows:

Suitability of the space:

- availability of toilet facilities
- is the space appropriate for activities such as games or craft
- all is the equipment being used suitable and appropriate for the ages using it (particularly pertinent for climbing equipment)
- is the floor nonslip and splinter free

In regard to areas used by toddlers and pre-schoolers:

- is the area fenced off or contained in a room
- is there a designated area for strollers that are not in use

**Suitability of the space:**

- is the area to be used a safe distance from roads or traffic?
- Is the area far removed from places where people engage in unsafe behaviour for example smoking or drinking alcohol
- is any glass installed at floor level safety glass?
- Are all child height cupboards fitted with childproof locks?
- Are all electrical wiring sockets and appliances regularly maintained and unsafe condition?
- Are all sockets childproof?
- Regarding areas that may be used for games and outside play for any potential hazards and such items safely removed e.g. broken glass
- is all furniture in a safe condition, and without risk of toppling onto a child?

**1<sup>st</sup> aid safety measures**

- is there a fire extinguisher or fire blanket available on-site?
- is there a well-stocked 1<sup>st</sup> aid kit available at the activity site?
- is there a specific person who is responsible for checking the 1<sup>st</sup> aid kit regularly and replenishing it?
- Is there a specific person on site who is trained in 1<sup>st</sup> aid?
- All leaders aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures?

### **5b. Supervision of activities**

An important part in providing a safe environment is making sure you have enough leaders present to adequately supervise the activities taking place.

The degree of supervision required will vary according to the nature and environment of the activity, age and maturity of the children and the size of the group. These factors must be kept in mind in considering the number of leaders and assistance required.

After the minimum requirement of 1 adult leaders is met the following suggested supervision ratios for low-risk on-site events are:

Supervised Creche 1:8; Pre – schoolers and Primary school age 1:12

Where the risks in the activity increase, the supervision should also increase e.g. off-site rock climbing it would be appropriate to reduce the ratio to account for the higher risk nature of the activity and the fact that the event is off-site.

### **5c. Appropriateness of activities**

You should thoughtfully consider what message children may learn from the way events are organised and conducted. Games and activities that could in any way emphasise gender, physical, intellectual or ethnic differences need to be assessed for their appropriateness and if inappropriate removed from the program.

You should review in their **entirety** any DVDs, U-tube clips, computer games, graphics, photographs, and lyrics that you intend to show children. In assessing whether something is appropriate you should be governed by the age of the youngest child present. Censorship ratings should be kept to a G or PG, unless specific permission is granted by the First Quarter Team Pastor or the Campus Pastor. If in doubt seek the advice of these individuals.

### **5d. Parental consent**

You must have the written consent of a parent or guardian before taking children away from church premises, and you must keep them informed of the place and timing of the event. If possible include parents or guardians in the supervision team for the event.

Parents or guardians must be requested to complete information about any physical needs including allergies, mental health needs or safety needs of the children before they hand them over into the care of the CrossLife leaders. Parents or guardians should be advised that this information is stored on our UCare data base for the future use by leaders, if the child attends more than 1 event,

Never administer medications to a child without the written consent of the parent or guardian.

### 5e. **Transportation**

It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to arrange transportation to and from children's ministry events for their child, unless another specific arrangement is in place.

You must have written permission from a parent or guardian before a child can be driven anywhere by someone other than the parent for the purposes of a church activity.

When making transport arrangements please ensure that:

- all drivers are licensed as green peas or above, responsible, experienced and not impaired by alcohol or any other substance, and
- all motor vehicles and other forms of transport used a registered, insured, safe and fitted with age-appropriate child restraints

Leaders should avoid being alone with a child in a motor vehicle or driving a child home unaccompanied, even with parental permission. If such a situation is unavoidable, inform another leader of the trip and the reason for that trip, and ensure that this is documented and communicated to the First Quarter Team Pastor.

### 5f. **Communication**

You should take care that your communication with a child or children is appropriate and above reproach. Be aware that those who wish to abuse children may use electronic communications to try to cultivate exclusive or secret relationships.

Leaders should not contact children by email, mail, social media, video calls, using chat rooms or by any other form of electronic communication. Leaders should not call or text a child on the child's mobile phone.

Calls may be made to a home phone or via a parent's mobile, after speaking to the parents, if the parent gives permission, and only for ministry purposes.

### 5g. **Photographs/videos**

Leaders should not take photos of children without parental consent and should only use photos in accordance with the purpose for which that consent was given. Do not photograph any child was asked not to be photographed. Photos of children should focus on small groups rather than individuals:

- do not identify in writing the person in the photograph e.g. tagging on social media
- all children must be appropriately dressed when photographed e.g. not in swimwear or pyjamas.

Embarrassing or offensive photos or videos must not be either taken or shared.

Parental permission must be sought before posting photographs or videos of children online. Privacy is of utmost importance and care should be taken to protect children from having their personal information displayed on social media / the church website.

Generally videos should only be used to showcase or advertise ministry related events and activities.

When videos of services or activities will be distributed or streamed on the web or other broadcast media, signs and notifications should be posted that indicates that such service or activity is being all will be broadcast.

#### **5h. Meeting outside programmed events**

It is not appropriate for leaders to meet up with children socially, unless it is in the context of socialising with the child's family.

### **6. Age-specific guidelines**

#### **6a. Creche (0-2 years)**

##### **Health and safety:**

Children should never leave the creche area unless accompanied by the adult responsible for them. Be aware of issues of hygiene. If a child vomits or soils an area of the crèche, that area should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible. Toys and equipment should be cleaned regularly.

Ensure no furniture or other items could topple or drop onto a child.

At the commencement of the event children are to be signed in to the events into the UCare system, either by way of the fob, or marked into the event by the leader. At the conclusion of the event parents are to collect the children, and sign them out by using the UCare fob or if the parent does not have a fob, then the leader may sign the child out into the care of the parent.

##### **Parents:**

Where parents are readily accessible they should be asked to change nappies and undertake toileting. If parents are not available, experienced leaders should carry out these tasks, but always with another child or leader present.

##### **Physical contact:**

Very young children are highly dependent on touch for the proper development. This means that in dealing with them we must be very aware of the needs particular ages and stages. Physical content is primarily for the purpose of assisting or comforting a child for a short period of time. Leaders should not continue physical contact for longer than

necessary. All physical contact should be in the open and be able to be seen by others for example, sitting in a leader's left to be comforted should occur in view of others.

Inappropriate physical contact for this age includes hitting, shaking, forceful grabbing or picking up, extended hugging or unnecessary touching.

#### **6b. Pre-schoolers (3-5)**

##### **Health and safety:**

Children should never leave the preschool area unless accompanied by a leader responsible for them. Children of this age are generally toilet trained. A leader should accompany a child to the toilet with another leader or child and only assist when necessary.

At the commencement of the event children are to be signed in to the events into the UCare system, either by way of the fob, or marked into the event by the leader. At the conclusion of the event parents are to collect the children, and sign them out by using the UCare fob or if the parent does not have a fob, then the leader may sign the child out into the care of the parent.

##### **Physical contact:**

Except in circumstances of physical danger or medical emergency, children have the right to refuse touch. Physical contact should be initiated by the child or occur with their permission. Appropriate physical contact would include, with the child's permission, arm around the shoulder, a gentle squeeze from the side, back patting, and holding for reassurance or guidance, sitting next to a leader to read or holding firmly across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury. Inappropriate physical contact for this age includes hitting, shaking, forceful grabbing or picking up, extended hugging or unnecessary touching.

#### **6c. Primary age children (6 – 12)**

##### **Health and safety**

At the commencement of the event children are to be signed in to the events into the UCare system, either by way of the fob, or marked into the event by the leader. At the conclusion of the event parents are to collect the children, and sign them out by using the UCare fob or if the parent does not have a fob, then the leader may sign the child out into the care of the parent.

##### **Parents**

Parent should be kept informed of details of the ministry including the names of the leaders, current and future curriculum, an upcoming special events et cetera.

## **Physical contact**

Appropriate physical contact for this age group includes, with the child's permission, an arm around the shoulder, high-fives, holding firmly across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury. Inappropriate physical contact for this age includes hitting, shaking, forceful grabbing or picking up, sitting the child on your lap, extended hugging, kissing or unnecessary touching.

## **7. Reporting abuse**

It is your responsibility to ensure that any child abuse or suspected abuse that you become aware of is reported to the relevant authorities. You may become aware of abuse because you have observed indicators of abuse, another person has informed you of their concerns for a child or a child has told you they are being abused.

If a child tells you about any abuse you should listen to the story, comfort them if 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, report the information to either the First Quarter Team Pastor, the Campus Pastor, the Lead Pastor or the Executive Pastor, to ensure that they can take the appropriate action and report to the authorities.

### **a. WRITE DOWN the details including:**

- who you spoke to
- date, time and place
- what the child said
- what you said
- any grounds for forming the belief that abuse has occurred.
- Sign and date the document

Keep to the facts about what was said and don't express your opinion. Be aware that this document could be utilised in court proceedings.

### **b. REPORT**

Contact **000** for police and emergency services if the situation requires emergency assistance.

In all instances report to the First Quarter Team Pastor, Campus Pastor, Lead Pastor or Executive Pastor. Even general suspicions must be reported.

These individuals will contact the Police, Queensland government Regional intake services for South-east Queensland, Monday to Friday 9-5, Phone: **1300 679 849**, the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on **1800 177 135** or (07) 3235 9999 (24 hours a day) if outside business hours.

If for any reason none of the above mentioned CrossLife leadership can be contacted, contact your direct ministry superior or one of the elders of CrossLife.

If the suspected / alleged abuse is regarding any 1 of the pastors above, ensure you do not report to this person, but ensure you report to 1 of the other named leadership members as above.

Do not undertake an investigation and do not disclose the allegations to the alleged offender.

### **Confidentiality**

You must treat any suspicion, knowledge or disclosure of abuse with the utmost confidentiality. Apart from reporting to the relevant authorities and your ministry leader or ministers named above you must not ordinarily share the information with anyone else.

### **Pastoral care**

A victim of abuse may require immediate specialist counselling or other support. When a report is made to **Queensland government Regional intake services for South-east Queensland**, or the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre, professionals will be available to provide advice on care for victims and their families. Victims generally require ongoing contact and support and CrossLife pastors and leadership should ensure that an appropriate person is appointed to follow up with them.

If you have had someone disclose abuse to you, you will also need to be appropriately cared for and supported. You may need to debrief about how the experience has affected you.