



Guidelines for Safe Online Ministry

31 March 2020

This communication is aimed to assist with the increased use of digital media to remain connected, provide pastoral care, and discipleship during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parental permission

As with all Safe Ministry with Children activities, **ensure that parents' and guardians' permissions are obtained before children participate in online or digital groups.** Operating within the wishes and permissions given by parents is a demonstration of respect. Please obtain an email from a parent or guardian providing their consent.

Age restrictions

If you're using Social Media, be aware of and comply with the terms of use, age restrictions, privacy options and controls for each site prior to using it in your ministry. Most of these age restrictions for young people to have accounts on the various networks allow for accounts from the age of 13. A group meeting such as one facilitated by the online platform Zoom may be favoured as it allows a closed meeting to be set up for a specified group of people, who are invited to participate by the host by email.

Changes permitted during the current pandemic

Currently, the Digital Media Guidelines specify no engagement in video calls, streaming calls and chat rooms for young people in Grades 9 and below, but do allow for engagement for Grades 10-12 and post school<18 but 'limited to group setting with at least two adults in the group; Parental permission required.'

However, in these circumstances [during COVID-19 pandemic] the following options would be permitted for:

- Grades 9-12 and post school<18 - limited to a group setting with 2 leaders present, parental permission required; with ground rules and purpose of the session communicated to parents beforehand. Group chat to be held in public space in family home.
- Grades 6-9 - limited to a group setting with 2 leaders present, parental permission required; with ground rules and purpose of the session communicated to parents beforehand. Group chat to be held in public space in family home.
- Primary aged children and under school-aged (eg playgroup) with 2 leaders and parents present as well



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Safe Online Ministry

Communicate in groups

Wherever possible, communicate electronically with **groups** rather than individuals. A group chat is ideal. If you're using social media for group ministry purposes, consider using closed groups or community pages with known security limits where possible (for example, Facebook) and direct people to the group rather than your individual account. If using the closed group model, ensure a number of leaders/ministry agents are administrators of that group to provide transparency and safety for all. Best practice is to provide a schedule of the proposed meeting times to parents.

Leadership ratios

Be aware of the leadership ratios that apply to Safe Ministry with Children, and that they also apply in digital settings. At **least two adult leaders** must have administrator access to any digital Church platform. Interactions are best to be 'in full view'.

Risk assessment

Complete a risk assessment for the program or activity, which identifies that the activity or program will be delivered wholly online due to the risks posed by COVID-19. Identify in the risk assessment that online engagement poses a safety risk, however this is mitigated by: the online engagement will be via groups; will have at least two administrators within the group; parental permission will be obtained for each participant prior to them entering the group; and the times, etc will be clearly communicated to enable parents to be aware of the activities.

On the risk assessment, also identify that the digital platform may pose security risks, and how this is mitigated eg use of a well-known lower risk option such as Zoom, and any additional security measures that you may have put in place.

Please contact:

safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au if you have any questions.