

## Module - Child Safety



### Introduction

Hillsong is committed to providing physical, emotional, and spiritual environments that are safe and secure for all Hillsong-Related People.

As a church we want to do all that we can to reduce the risk of harm occurring to Hillsong-Related People and provide a caring and appropriate response, should any suspicion, allegation, disclosure, or complaint of misconduct or abuse occur.

This Child Safety training module will:

- Equip you with an understanding of Child Safe Standards and our child safe practices
- Educate you on your responsibility and conduct when working with children and young people
- Inform you of Hillsong Child Safe Policy and procedures on appropriate responses to concerns of child harm or abuse and how to report
- Identify and understand the nature, indicators and impacts of child abuse

If you are participating in this course you have, or are planning to have, some active involvement in the operations of Hillsong Church in a role that is Child-Related. This includes Pastors, Staff, Hillsong Kids and Youth teams, City Care Teams or Pastoral Care teams.

Sections covered in this module include:

- Section 1 - Safe Environments for Children and Young People
- Section 2 - Keeping Children Safe in Our Community
- Section 3 - Child Safe Behaviours
- Section 4 - Responding and Reporting

### Course requirements

Prior to completing this module, you should have already completed the Hillsong Safe Church Safety Fundamentals and Protecting People modules. To complete this Child Safety module you will need to review the content provided and answer a series of short questionnaires. Each question must be answered correctly before proceeding.

This module should take **35 - 40 minutes** to complete. During this time, you may require a short break. You can resume training at any point. The system will remember the slide you have last completed. It is recommended that

you plan to complete the course in an environment that is free from distraction and provides reliable internet access.

## Before you begin

The topics covered in this training module can be confronting and may be upsetting or bring up personal issues for some individuals.

Before you begin, make sure you're in a good headspace and not in an isolated or vulnerable state.

If you find this content distressing please seek support from your oversight, Pastoral Care, Safe Church, or any other suggested support services, using the contact numbers listed below:

- 1300 53 53 53 - Hillsong Pastoral Care
- 1800 557 264 - Hillsong Safe Church
- 13 11 14 - Lifeline Crisis support and suicide prevention (chat online [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au))
- 1300 22 4636 - Beyond Blue (chat online [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au))
- 1800 Respect – National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling service
- 1800 272 831 – Bravehearts information or support relating to child sexual assault

**Note:** If you are under 18 years of age, please do not proceed with this module of the training.



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## **Section 1 - Safe Environments for Children and Young People**

### **The topics covered in this section include:**

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Hillsong Church Statement of Commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People
- Rights of the Child
- Safe Culture, Operations, Physical and Online Environments
- Risk Factors for Children and Young People

## National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

As of February 2019, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations have been endorsed by members of the Council of Australian Governments, including the Prime Minister and state and territory First Ministers. The principles aim to provide a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing.

The National Principles reflect ten child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and are the vehicle for giving effect to recommendations relating to the standards. The National Principles have a broader scope that goes beyond child sexual abuse to cover other forms of potential harm to children and young people.

State Governments have further introduced their own Child Safe Standards or requirements which are mandatory while other states and territories have not adopted a legislative approach to Child Safe Standards at this stage. We recognise that the intent of the principles/standards is to create a child safe culture and environment and not to simply meet compliance requirements, so we are committed to implementing these across all locations within Hillsong Australia.

In addition to the principles and standards, states and territories have further requirements including mandatory reporting and laws that outline penalties for those who fail to report known child sexual abuse or fail to protect children and young people from known risks.

### The National Principles are:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.



Hillsong policy, procedures and practices are based on the National Principles.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information on the National Principles.

**The Victorian Child Safe Standards** include an additional standard for organisations to establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

More information on the Hillsong Church Child Safe Framework will be provided in the coming sections and can be found on [hillsong.com/australia/safechurch/](https://hillsong.com/australia/safechurch/)

## Hillsong Church Statement of Commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People

Child safety and wellbeing is fundamental to the fulfilment of our church's mission and vision. Hillsong Church is committed to providing child safe environments, through the adoption and implementation of strategies that promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people.

### Our commitment to children and young people

We intend to:

- provide a safe and supportive environment ensure that the experiences of children and young people are free from any form of harmful conduct, including child abuse, neglect or grooming
- empower children and young people so they feel able to respond to any behaviour that is not acceptable
- ensure children and young people know who to approach if they feel unsafe or have any child safety concerns, including abuse, neglect and grooming
- provide age- and ability-appropriate codes of conduct to everyone who interacts with our church
- establish a reporting framework so reports are:
  - easy to make for anyone in the church
  - responded to in a timely and fair manner
  - recorded appropriately
  - forwarded to relevant authorities where necessary
- provide support for any children and young people who report or are suspected of being exposed to concerning conduct, including abuse, neglect or grooming.



### Our commitment to parents, carers, families and their communities

Hillsong Church is committed to supporting all the adults involved in our church, to keep children and young people safe from harm and abuse.

We intend to:

- communicate with adults involved in our church our expectations around creating, maintaining and improving a safe environment for children and young people
- share information with adults about keeping children and young people safe, including:
  - where they can find further information and advice
  - how to make a report if they suspect or know a child is being harmed, or if they observe a breach of our codes of conduct.

### Our commitment to being a child safe organisation

We intend to:

- ensure that Hillsong Church staff and volunteers engaged in child-related roles follow our working with children and young people codes of conduct by:
  - making them publicly available

- educating all our stakeholders about the importance of following them
- use child safe recruitment processes that include a Working with Children Check (WWCC) and other screening checks as appropriate for adults who require them
- induct all our staff and volunteers so they recognise their role in keeping children and young people safe, and ensure there are ongoing learning and development opportunities related to child safety
- take steps to ensure Hillsong Church staff and volunteers do not engage in concerning conduct with children and young people
- ensure that all Hillsong Church congregation know how and when to report any concerns, complaints or allegations of concerning conduct, including abuse, neglect or grooming
- ensure that all Hillsong Church congregation are provided with appropriate support if they are exposed to, or report, abuse, neglect or grooming.



## Safe Culture, Operations, Physical and Online Environments

To provide safe physical, emotional, and spiritual environments for children and young people in Hillsong Church cultural, operational and environmental factors that contribute to a safe environment must be considered.

### Safe Culture

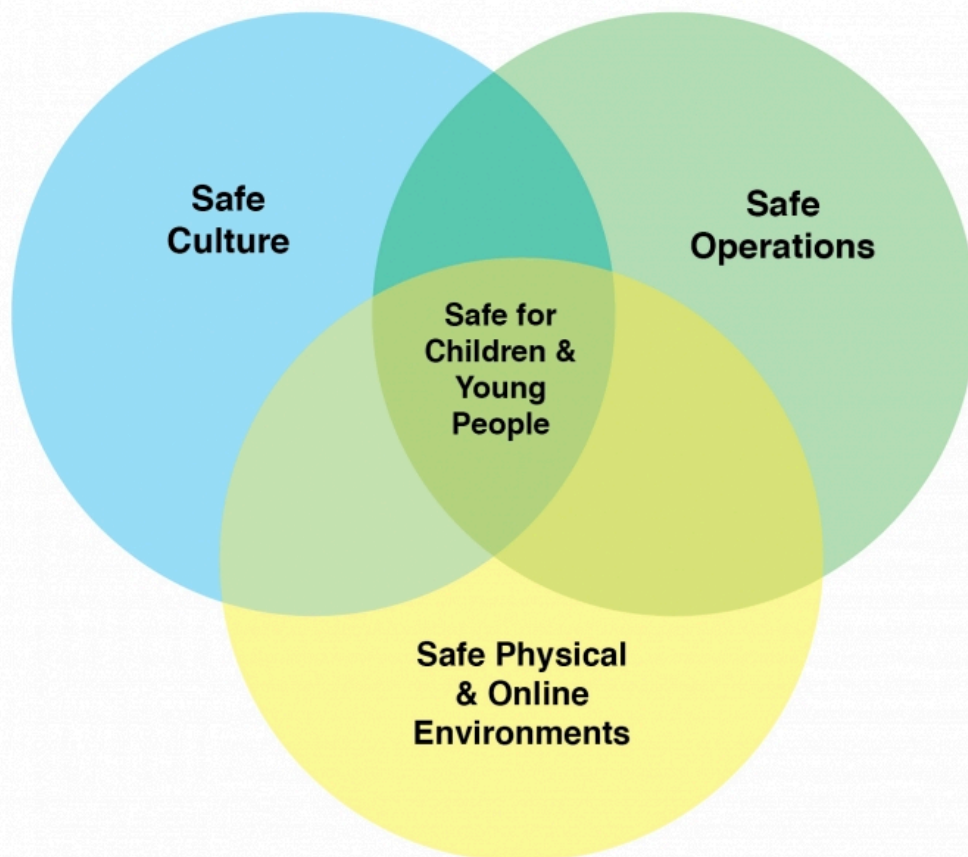
A safe culture has leadership that understand and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Where positive and safe conduct of those interacting with children and young people is encouraged and there is an understanding of what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. A safe culture is one that listens to children and young people and supports their involvement in decisions that affect them.

### Safe Operations

Safe operations in an organisation include governance and leadership structures that understand, support and champions safety. Safe operations include good day-to-day practices that implement Safe Church Policy and Procedures, follow recruitment and screening protocols, provide training for staff and volunteers and respond appropriately to concerns or disclosures of harm.

### Safe Physical and Online Environments

Physical and online spaces for children and young people should be designed and utilised with safety as a priority (e.g. windows, lighting, no isolated areas, transparency with online communication). Physical and online environments should minimise the opportunity for harm or abuse to occur by limiting access to potential perpetrators and preventing incidents through security and check-in measures, building design and providing adequate supervision.

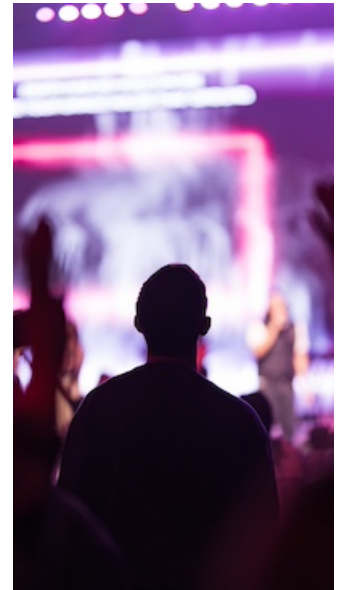


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## Risk Factors for Children and Young People

Some children and young people are more vulnerable to harm and abuse than others due to their individual circumstances or because they are exposed to risk more than others. Factors that influence how vulnerable a child or young person is to abuse include:

- The gender of the child
- The age and developmental stage of the child
- Whether the child has experienced maltreatment previously
- Whether the child has disability, and the nature of that disability
- The family characteristics and circumstances of the child
- The nature of the child's involvement within an organisation
- Other factors, including the child's physical characteristics, social isolation, level of understanding of sexual behaviour (including sexual abuse), personal safety, sexual orientation, high achievement and level of self-esteem.



## Protective Factors for Children and Young People

Just as there are risk factors that may increase a child or young person's vulnerability, protective factors may reduce their vulnerability. Although the presence of protective factors in an individual's life does not guarantee that they will be protected against harm or abuse, they may help to moderate the risk, and act as safeguards.

Protective factors include:

- Supportive and trustworthy adults
- Supportive peers
- A child's adequate understanding of appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour, including sexual abuse, and personal safety
- Children and young people knowing their rights, their right to feel safe and be safe
- Children and young people having a voice and participating in decisions that affect them
- Children and young people being able to raise concerns or complaints in child friendly ways
- A child's ability to assert themselves verbally or physically to reject harm or abuse
- Strong community or cultural connections
- Cultural safety for children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

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## Empowerment and Participation



As a church we can champion the safety of children and young people by acknowledging and teaching them about their right to be heard, listened to, and taken seriously. We can allow children and young people to express their views and participate in decisions that affect them by involving them in the development of programs and services and listening to their feedback.

It's important that children and young people feel safe within our organisation and are able to understand, identify and raise their safety concerns with a trusted adult.

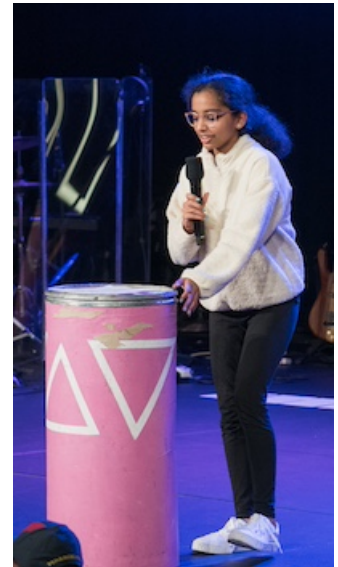
**Empowerment** recognises the strengths of children and young people and builds on those strengths. Empowering children and young people allow them to become stronger and more confident.

By empowering children and young people we can help them to:

- become more resilient
- identify risks and know what to do if they are unsafe
- develop confidence to seek support if they need it.

**Participation** gives children and young people opportunities to have their say and to inform decision-making.

This means we need to listen, to hear, and to respond by making appropriate changes based on what children and young people share. Participation contributes to empowerment when it builds people's confidence, not just in themselves but in the programs and services they are connected with. It strengthens relationships and helps them feel valued.



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## **Section 2 - Keeping Children Safe in Our Community**

### **The topics covered in this section include:**

- Our Role in Keeping Children Safe in Our Community
- Impact of Trauma and Abuse on Children, Young People and the Community
- Types of Child Abuse
- Child to Child Harm
- Recognising Child Abuse
- Case Study and Reflection

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## **Impact of Trauma and Abuse on Children, Young People and the Community**

The Australian community values the safety of children. Government and community organisations have made significant commitments to providing safe places for children to flourish.

Despite this, many children are still at risk of maltreatment in familial, institutional and community settings. All children and young people can be susceptible to harm, regardless of their age, cultural context, class, education, income, ethnic origin and disability.

Trauma and abuse have long term effects on individuals and these effects extend to parents, siblings, partners, carers, children and the community. Effects may be seen in mental health, difficulties with interpersonal relationships and impacts on education, employment and economic security. Impacts are felt on physical health, social wellbeing, culture, spirituality, sexual behaviour, sexuality and gender identity.

It's important that those who work with children and young people, and those in leadership within the church, have an awareness of child abuse and the indicators that a child or young person may be at risk of harm so that we can help to protect them and prevent them from experiencing further harm.

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## **Types of Child Abuse**

Our concerns about a child or young person may be relating to issues of neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse.

### **Neglect**

When a child or young person's basic needs for growth and development are not met. This may include failure by a parent or caregiver to provide adequate food, water, clothing, housing, healthcare, personal hygiene or supervision.

### **Sexual Abuse**

When a child or young person is involved in sexual activity, whether that be by a person using their power over them or taking advantage of their trust, or sexual activity perpetrated by another child or young person. Sexual abuse is a crime and can involve a wide range of sexual activity, including physical, verbal or emotional. For example, encouraging a child or young person to do, watch, or hear something sexually explicit, sexual intercourse, inappropriate touching, exposure to pornographic material, conversations of a sexual nature.

### **Physical Abuse**

When a child or young person is subject to or is at risk of ill-treatment, non-accidental injury or physical trauma. This may include excessive discipline, hitting, beating, shaking, burns, bites or inappropriate administration of alcohol and drugs. Physical abuse does not always leave visible marks or injuries, it is the act itself that causes injury or trauma to the child.

### **Emotional or Psychological Abuse**

When a child or young person experiences emotional disturbance or psychological harm resulting in impaired social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual development due to the behaviour or attitude of a parent or caregiver. Emotional or psychological abuse damages a child or young person's confidence and self-esteem and may include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, bullying, withholding affection, exposure to domestic family violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour.

### **Domestic and Family Violence**

Includes any behaviour in a domestic relationship, including intimate partner relationships and family relationships, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear for their own or someone else's safety. It is usually manifested as part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour. A child can be the victim of any of these behaviours or they may hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of any of these behaviours.

### **Other Concerns**

Other concerns may cause harm or put a child at risk of harm, such as the mental health of parents or carers, a concern for the welfare of unborn child, or a child or young person who is a danger to themselves or others.

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## Recognising Child Abuse

You may have concern for a child or young person if they or another person discloses (i.e. tells you), or you observe physical, behavioural or emotional indicators. You may observe these indicators in the child or young person or in the behaviour or attitudes of the parent or caregiver.

Individual indicators you observe may be more serious in nature while others may be of less concern if isolated. You may observe a number of less serious indicators which combined together give you cause for concern given and the child or young person's circumstances.

### Physical indicators

Possible signs in children or young people:

- Low weight for age and failure to thrive and develop
- Untreated physical problems
- Poor standards of hygiene, for example child or young person consistently unwashed
- Unexplained physical injuries
- Bruising to face, head or neck, other bruising and marks on the body which may show the shape of the object that caused it, e.g. belt buckle, hand print
- Drowsiness, vomiting, fits or pooling of blood in the eyes, which may suggest head injury
- Swallowing of poisonous substances, alcohol or other harmful drugs
- Indicators that are relevant particularly to sexual abuse such as bruising or bleeding in the genital area, sexually transmitted diseases, bruising to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs, recurrent urinary tract infections, adolescent pregnancy

Possible signs in parents or caregivers:

- Unable or unwilling to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, safe home conditions
- Abandonment of child

### Behavioural indicators

Possible signs in children or young people:

- Child not adequately supervised for their age
- Scavenging or stealing food and focus on basic survival
- Extended stays at school, public places, other homes or poor school attendance
- Persistent running away from home
- Explanation of injury offered by the child or young person is not consistent with their injury
- Child, young person or their friend telling you about it, directly or indirectly
- Regressive behaviour, such as sudden return to bed-wetting or soiling
- Self-destructive behaviour, such as drug dependency, suicide attempts, self-mutilation
- Indicators that are relevant particularly to sexual abuse such as; describing sexual acts, sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for the child's age, unexplained accumulation of money and gifts, going to bed fully clothed or the child being in contact with a known or suspected paedophile

Possible signs in parents or caregivers:

- Leaving the child without appropriate supervision or abandons the child or young person
- Withholding physical contact or stimulation for prolonged periods
- Unable or unwilling to provide psychological nurturing
- Has limited understanding of the child or young person's needs
- Frequent visits with the child or young person in their care to health or other services with unexplained or suspicious injuries, swallowing of non-food substances or with internal complaints

- Explanation of injury offered by the parent is not consistent with the injury
- Family history of violence or history of their own maltreatment as a child
- Fears injuring the child or young person in their care
- Uses excessive discipline.
- Indicators that are relevant particularly to sexual abuse such as; exposing a child or young person to prostitution or pornography or using a child for pornographic purposes, intentional exposure of a child to sexual behaviour of others, previous conviction or suspicion of child sexual abuse, coercing a child or young person to engage in sexual behaviour with other children or verbal threats of sexual abuse

### **Emotional indicators**

Possible signs in children or young people:

- Longs for or indiscriminately seeks adult affection
- Risk taking behaviours, such as self-harm, suicide attempts
- Anorexia or overeating
- Difficulty relating to others, flat or superficial interaction
- Sudden changes in mood, withdrawn or angry
- Fears of certain people, the dark, small spaces, being alone etc.

Possible signs in parents or caregivers:

- Has unrealistic expectations of the child or young person
- Denial of adolescent's pregnancy by family



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## Child to Child Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Workers should also be aware of other types of harm that children and young people may experience, and how to respond.

Most children and young people display **developmentally appropriate sexual behaviour** that is typical for their age, they observe boundaries and respond to gentle re-direction.

Some children and young people may display **concerning sexual behaviour** that is not appropriate for their age or stage of development, may be frequent or consistent, poses a risk to themselves or others.

A very small number of children and young people may display **harmful sexual behaviour** that is not appropriate for their age or stage of development, is between children and young people with a significant difference in age, developmental ability or power, may be excessive, compulsive, coercive, forceful, degrading or threatening, abusive or aggressive.

To provide a safe environment in Hillsong programs and services, workers should:

- Provide proper supervision
- Follow toileting procedures
- Calmly re-direct children towards appropriate behaviour and remind them of what is appropriate when part of the program
- Encourage children and young people to speak up if they don't feel safe
- Ensure programs are operated in a safe physical environments
- Not allow children or young people to access storerooms or closed off areas
- If a child shows concerning or harmful behaviour or does not respond to re-direction inform your oversight or report direct to Safe Church so that the child, family and anyone else affected can be supported.
- If a child, young person or anyone else discloses or raises a concern of child to child harm or abuse workers should report to Safe Church.

## Case Study & Reflection

### Consider the following scenario:

Sally is 6 years old and infrequently attends Hillsong Kids during the Sunday night service. You haven't seen her attend for 3 weeks and she is here this week. Sally is generally quite happy and loves to play with the other children but this week she stays to the side of the room and isn't talking with any of the other children. When you approach her, she runs and hides under a table. You and another leader eventually coax her out from under the table and you notice her hair is quite matted and unwashed.

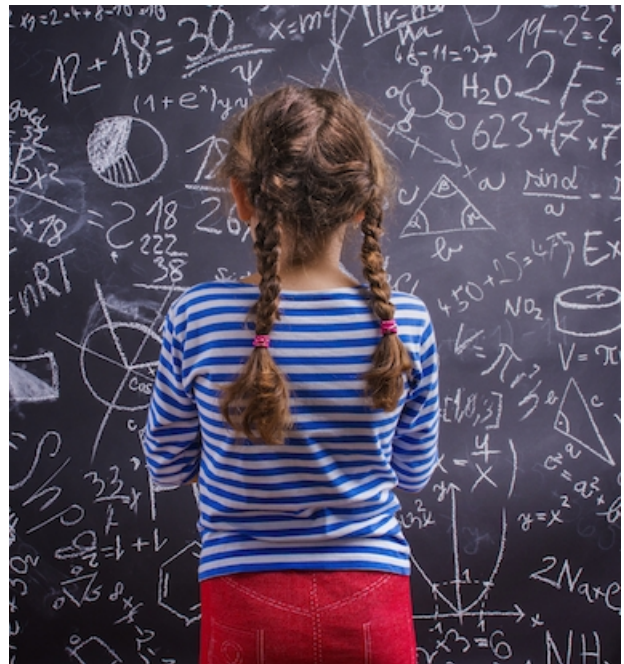
She joins the group for praise and worship but says she is too tired to stand up and her stomach hurts. During the program Sally takes her jumper off and you notice she has significant bruising around her arm.

So you ask her, "Sally how did your arm get hurt?"

Sally responds, "Oh that's nothing, it doesn't matter. It's just from my school bag."

When Sally's mum comes to pick her up you greet her and mention, "I noticed Sally has a sore arm?"

Sally's mum responds, "It's nothing, it was from the dog."



### Reflection:

- What physical indicators of harm do you notice about Sally?
- What behavioural or emotional indicators of harm do you notice about Sally?
- What indicators do you notice from Sally's mum?
- How should you respond?

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## **Section 3 - Child Safe Behaviours**

**The topics covered in this section include:**

- Grooming
- Professional Boundaries
- Guidelines for Working With Children and Young People
- Electronic Communications with Children and Young People
- Personal Accountability
- Child Safe Behaviours
- Case Study

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## Grooming

The majority of abuse experienced by children and young people is perpetrated by someone they know. In the case of sexual abuse a person may seek to gain access to the child through grooming them as a precursor to sexual abuse.

Grooming is defined as behaviours that manipulate and control a child, their family and other support networks, or institutions with the intent of gaining access to the child, obtaining the child's compliance, maintaining the child's silence, and avoiding discovery of the sexual abuse.

The behaviours involved may not be explicitly sexual, directly abusive or criminal in themselves but they target a child or young person and/or the people who would otherwise protect or support a child e.g. showing favouritism towards the child, creating a secretive relationship, giving gifts, allowing the child to overstep rules or boundaries, testing boundaries with the child (e.g. undressing in front of the child, or allowing a child to sit on their lap), spending time alone with the child, discussing things of a sexual nature.

Some perpetrators use the internet and social networking sites to contact, groom and exploit children. Perpetrators may use online interactions with children to build relationships that would enable the sexual abuse of the child in person.

Grooming is a criminal activity and behaviours that cross professional boundaries in working with children and young people may be considered as grooming or sexual misconduct which is reportable to relevant authorities.

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## Professional Boundaries

Those who work with children and young people, and those in leadership within the church need to remember they are in a position of power and have a duty of care to ensure their interactions with children and young people are acceptable at all times.

In some Australian states misconduct by individuals is reportable to relevant authorities and may be subject to investigation.

Hillsong Volunteers and Leaders Codes of Conduct outline expected behaviour of those that serve within Hillsong Church. These codes explain the lifestyle expectations of a person who is in leadership and how they conduct themselves both in their personal lives and in their role as a leader of others.

The Guidelines for Working With Children and Young set out expected behaviours and boundaries when interacting with children and young people.



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## Electronic Communications with Children and Young People



Everyone in Hillsong Church is responsible for the online safety of children and young people. It's important to be aware of issues children and young people may face in online environments such as:

- The potential for inappropriate relationships between adults in a position of trust, and the children and young people they work with
- Online abuse, including bullying
- Non-consensual sharing of intimate images
- Image-based abuse
- Online grooming
- Online exploitation and abuse
- Unwanted online contact

The following guidelines for online interaction with children and young people are provided in this training for Hillsong Church workers to minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur when interacting with children and young people in online environments.

Misconduct or breaches of these guidelines by church workers can lead to a criminal charge of grooming and be considered sexual misconduct, which is required to be reported to relevant authorities.

### **Guidelines for Electronic Communication with Children Primary School Aged (and younger)**

- Personal electronic communication should not take place with a child or young person who is primary school aged or younger. All communication with children of this age should take place via the parent or carer.
- Workers should not 'friend' or 'follow' children on any form of social media.
- Photos of children may be taken during Hillsong Programs by approved photographers for the purpose of promotions and marketing with the permission of their parent or guardian (through registering for the program or event). Photos or video of children and young people must not be taken, reproduced and/or distributed for any other purpose.
- Photos and/or captions should not include the child's personal details such as address, phone number, full name or the name of the school they attend as this may pose a risk to their personal safety.
- Children's online access while participating in Hillsong programs should be managed to prevent them accessing inappropriate content. Children are not permitted to bring devices into Hillsong Kids programs or events and workers should not allow children to use their personal devices.

### **Guidelines for Electronic Communication with High School aged students**

- Online and electronic communication should where possible be centralised using campus and age group based social media, websites and email should be utilised to communicate broadly to young people, parents and carers regarding programs and upcoming events. This eliminates the need for individual leaders to engage with individual program participants and individual students.
- Use of electronic communication to smaller groups or individuals should maintain transparency and accountability by communicating electronically in a group where all individuals can see the messages rather than one on one. This may be achieved by group messaging apps, group emails, the use of Facebook groups or group texts. If communicating to a smaller group or an individual is required, including the team leader or oversight can help to maintain transparency.
- Parent or Carers permission should be obtained to communicate directly with young people.
- Workers should not arrange personal contact, including online contact, with Young People they are working with for a purpose unrelated to Hillsong Church activities.
- It is recommended that only Applications or communication forums that maintain history be used i.e. Communication is not deleted instantly. If a worker is contacted directly in a private message by a young person, where possible add your oversight and be transparent with leadership, so if concerns are raised you can be above reproach.
- Be aware not to cross professional boundaries in your communication with young people. Conversation and images should remain appropriate. Think about what the communication may look like out of context or to a parent or carer. Be mindful to use language is not overly personal e.g. "I love you" which could be misinterpreted or viewed as romantic affection. Rather, use phrases that represent the team or group as a whole e.g. "We think you're a champion", "Your RDG love you". Focus on encouragement that is not centred on appearance e.g. "You are a great encourager" rather than "You're so beautiful".

**Important:** Leaders should report to Campus Pastoral Care and Safe Church any incidents of inappropriate contact between adults and children or young people, online abuse, bullying, sharing of intimate images, Image-based abuse, online grooming, online exploitation and abuse or unwanted online contact.

Further online safety resources for leaders, parents, carers, children and young people can be accessed at [hil.so/onlinesafety](http://hil.so/onlinesafety).

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## Personal Accountability



Our interactions with children and young people should not cross professional or legal boundaries. The Guidelines for Working With Children and Young People outline the expected behaviour when working with children and young people.

When considering if your conduct or that of another person crosses professional, legal or code of conduct boundaries these questions can be helpful:

- Is the child/young person being treated in a different way to others in the group?
- Is it possible that the way a child or young person is being treated could impact them in a negative way?
- Would I change how I am treating the child or young person if their parent/carer or another leader were present?
- How would I respond if I saw someone else treating a child or young person in this way?

Team ministry ensures a safe environment for those who serve as well as those whom they are serving. A healthy team environment ensures accountability, support for workers, feedback and opportunities to learn from one another. Concerns about the conduct of those working with children and young people should be raised with Safe Church.



## Child Safe Behaviours

Behaviour that is within the guidelines for working with children and young people would be described as 'Child Safe', while behaviour outside of this could be considered 'inappropriate' or 'unacceptable', keeping in mind that the context of behaviour is important to consider. For example, giving a child a Hillsong Kids birthday gift within the program during group birthday celebrations is appropriate, but giving the child a personal birthday gift from yourself outside of the program would be unacceptable behaviour.

**Child Safe Behaviours** respect the rights of children and young people, place a priority on their welfare and promote a safe environment. Child safe behaviours act in the best interests of children and young people are within our organisations policies, codes of conduct and guidelines. For example, appropriately following the Safe Church Policy, guidelines and codes of conduct.

**Inappropriate behaviours** may cross boundaries with children or young people and disregard their right to personal safety. Inappropriate behaviour may be the result of poor judgement in a specific situation or fall short of expected behaviour, as outlined in the codes of conduct and guidelines. If inappropriate behaviours are allowed to continue and are repetitive they may escalate into unacceptable behaviour or abuse, and potentially criminal behaviour. An example of inappropriate behaviour is yelling at and berating a child for running around while they should be sitting with the group.

**Unacceptable behaviours** are in breach of the Hillsong Safe Church Policy and Codes of Conduct. These behaviours may fall short of criminal behaviour or the legal definitions of abuse yet are unacceptable, and if allowed to continue may escalate into abuse or criminal behaviour. An example of unacceptable behaviour is forming a close bond with a particular child and showing favouritism and testing boundaries toward them.

**Abusive/illegal behaviours** include physical, emotional and sexual abuse. These behaviours can have significant and long term adverse impacts for children and young people. Abusive and illegal behaviours not only breach Hillsong Safe Church Policy and Codes of Conduct, they are illegal and will result in criminal prosecution. For example, perpetrating abuse, crossing boundaries that should never be crossed, breaching code of conduct and the law.



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## Scenario



John is 19 years old and has been leading in youth since he finished high school. John runs an RDG and drives some of the young people home with another leader after their RDG. Around the middle of the year his co-leader went on holidays and John continued to drive the students home without another leader.

Sam, who is 13 year old, was always the last to be dropped home. John would buy him food from McDonald's using the drive-through facilities. They would then sit in the car in the carpark and chat for a few hours before John eventually dropped Sam home.

Sam and John would often talk about girls they liked and how to get girls attention. Soon they began texting throughout the week and late into the night to continue their chats about the girls they thought were 'hot'. After a few months of hanging out and texting, John and Sam arranged to spend a whole Saturday together at the beach. John had bought new board shorts and a towel, which were intended as a gift for Sam. Sam told his parents that a group of people would be there, even though he knew it would just be him and John.

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## **Section 4- Responding and Reporting**

**The topics covered in this section include:**

- Receiving a Concern or Disclosure of Harm
- When and How to Report
- Failure to Protect and Failure to Report Laws
- Privacy, Information and Record Keeping
- Advice and Support

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## Receiving a Concern or Disclosure of Harm

You may have a concern for a child or young person if you observe any of the physical, behavioural or emotional indicators discussed earlier in this module. A child or young person may also disclose to someone that they are experiencing harm or abuse.

A disclosure is a process by which a child or young person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused. Or, an adult may convey or attempt to convey that they were abused as a child.

A disclosure might be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal disclosures using painting or drawing, gesticulating, or through behavioural changes, are more common among young children and children with cognitive or communication impairments. Children, in particular, may also seek to disclose abuse through emotional or behavioural cues, such as heightened anxiety, withdrawal or aggression. Disclosures can be intentional or accidental, and they might be prompted by questions from another person, or triggered by a memory of the abuse.

Disclosures are often a process rather than a one-off event, some survivors disclose in different ways to different people throughout their lives. Many survivors of child harm or abuse take years or even decades to disclose that they have been abused, and some may never tell anyone. It is important that when a child or young person discloses to you that you take it seriously and know how to respond.

When an individual discloses to you:

### LISTEN

- Remain as calm as possible, listen to the person and pay attention to what they're saying.
- Show you're listening with your body language and by avoiding distractions.
- Let the person tell you in their own words.
- Gather enough information/details by asking open ended questions. Think about what, who, when, and where. For example, 'what happened', 'who was it', 'when did it happen', and 'where did it happen'?
- Reassure the person of your support. Think about your responses, such as, "it's good that you told me about this", "it's not your fault", "I believe you", and "I am going to help you".
- Inform them that they can always come back and tell you more if they would like to.
- Explain that you will need to tell the right people so they can be helped.

### ASSESS SAFETY

- Check the current safety of the person. Are they safe to go home? Is urgent medical attention required? When will the child next see the alleged perpetrator?
- Assess if the person is in immediate risk of serious harm, if so call 000.

### RECORD INFORMATION

- Record key information, writing down as best you can what the person has said in their own words.
- Describe any physical injuries (size, colour, location on body).
- Include any other indicators of harm you may have observed or circumstances you're aware of.

### REPORT

- Report to the Hillsong Safe Church Office by calling the Safe Church hotline number 1800 557 264
- If a report to child protection services or the police is required, Safe Church will support you to make this report as it is best that the person with the most knowledge of the situation makes the report.
- The Safe Church Office will arrange follow up support to you or counselling services if required.
- Respect the privacy of the person who disclosed to you and don't share the information with others, including other team members.

- Don't attempt to contact the alleged perpetrator or attempt to investigate the matter yourself. Simply report to Safe Church and follow any instructions given.

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## Reporting



To create a safe environment, it is important that those who work with children and young people, and those in leadership within the church understand indicators of harm, grooming and behaviour that crosses professional boundaries.

Any concerns for the safety of children or young people should be reported to Safe Church.

Reports should be made via Safe Church to maintain transparency, accountability, churches responsibility to respond and keep records and so that care can be provided to all involved.

## Mandatory Reporting

In some states, those who are in religious ministry and those who work with children and young people are mandatory reporters. This means that there is a legislative requirement for them to make a report to government authorities in the area of child protection.

A mandatory reporter must make a report when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm and those grounds arise in the course of, or from their work or role. A mandatory reporter has a duty to report, as soon as practicable, the name, or a description, of the child and the grounds for suspecting that the child is at risk of significant harm.

Hillsong Church has always operated as mandatory reporters even without this legislative requirement, and will continue to do so across all Australian States.

In the **Northern Territory (NT)**, you must report your concerns if you believe a child is being, or has been, harmed or abused. Everyone in the NT community must report suspicion or knowledge that a child is being sexually abused and certain cases of under-age sexual behaviour must also be reported. In the NT the same obligations apply to all members of the community, not just those working with children and young people.

To maintain accountability, transparency and to enable support for those who make a report, Hillsong Church staff and volunteers should report to the Safe Church office, who will assist you in making child protection reports and maintain records of reports made.

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## Failure to Report

In most states and territories where Hillsong Church operates, all adults are required to report information to police if they know, believe or reasonably ought to know that a child has been abused. This means all adults have the responsibility to report sexual offences against children to police—unless they have a reasonable excuse not to. Failing to report information to police without a reasonable excuse is an offence punishable by imprisonment.

You need to report to police when you have seen or heard something that has led you to form a ‘reasonable belief’ that an adult has sexually abused a child. For example, you might form a reasonable belief that a child has been sexually abused if:

- A person tells you they have sexually abused a child
- the child tells you they have been sexually abused
- the child tells you they know someone who has been sexually abused (which may be a way of talking about themselves)
- someone who knows the child tells you the child has been sexually abused
- you observe signs of sexual abuse in the child
- you are a qualified professional who observes the child’s behaviour or development, which leads you to believe the child has been sexually abused.

In some circumstances there are reasonable excuses for not reporting information to Police, contact Safe Church for additional guidance.

A child sexual offence is an offence of a sexual nature committed against a child and includes indecent treatment of a child, rape, sexual abuse, sexual touching, the production of child abuse material, voyeurism and grooming offences or attempts to commit those offences.

## Failure to Protect

In most states and territories where Hillsong Church operates, it is an offence to fail to protect a child from a sexual offence in an institutional setting. This means a person who has power or responsibility to do so, must reduce or remove the risk that a child will become the victim of a sexual offence by an adult associated with an institution.

This offence means that action must be taken:

- by any staff, leader, volunteer or contractor who has the power or responsibility to do so
- to protect students aged under 16, or students under 18 years of age with impairment of the mind
- from a known significant risk of sexual abuse that is posed by an adult staff member, leader volunteer, or contractor at Hillsong Church.

Failure to take action means you could be charged and face imprisonment.

These laws highlight the responsibility you have and importance of promptly reporting concerns to Safe Church so these risks can be responded to and managed appropriately.

**What you need to do:** Ensure all policies, procedures, guidelines and training is followed in relation to ensuring a safe environment for children and young people and report concerns directly to Safe Church who will assist you in making a report to Police.

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## Reporting

### When to report:

- If you have observed indicators of harm or have a concern that child or young person is at risk of harm
- If a child or young person discloses that they have been harmed or fear for their safety
- If another person discloses that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm
- If you observe breaches to the Guidelines for Working with Children and Young People, the Leader's or Volunteer Code of Conduct
- If you are aware of grooming behaviour or inappropriate behaviour towards children or young people

### How to report:

- If a person is in imminent or life threatening danger call emergency, 000
- If it is an urgent concern or you need immediate assistance call Hillsong Safe Church 1800 557 264 this number is available out of office hours for urgent situations.
- If a report to child protection services or the police is required, Safe Church will support you to make this report as it is best that the person with the most knowledge of the situation makes the report.
- If you are reporting a non-urgent concern, report to Hillsong Safe Church as soon as possible.
- If there has been an incident during a Hillsong service, program, event or on Hillsong Church property please report to Hillsong Safe Church immediately.
- If you have a general concern, question or are unsure how to proceed with a situation contact the Hillsong Safe Church office.

### Safe Church Contact details:

Email: [safechurch@hillsong.com](mailto:safechurch@hillsong.com)

Ph: 02 8853 5352

Hotline: 1800 557 264



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## Key Take Homes

### Safe Environments for Children and Young People

- To provide safe physical, emotional, and spiritual environments for children and young people in Hillsong Church we need to:
  - have a safe culture that understands and prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
  - have safe operations including good day-to-day practices that implement Safe Church Policy and Procedures, follow recruitment and screening protocols, provide training for staff and volunteers and respond appropriately to concerns or disclosures of harm.
  - have safe physical and online environments that minimise the opportunity for harm and abuse to occur.

### Keeping Children Safe in Our Community

- Our concerns about a child or young person may be relating to issues of neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse.
- Understand the indicators of harm and respond appropriately by reporting to Safe Church.

### Child Safe Behaviours

- Our interactions with children and young people should not cross professional and/or legal boundaries. The Hillsong Working With Children and Young people code of conduct/Guidelines outline the expected behaviour when working with children and young people.
- Concerns about the conduct of those working with children and young people should be raised with Safe Church.

### Responding and Reporting

- When an individual discloses to you remember:
  - Listen
  - Assess Safety
  - Record Information
  - Report
- Report all concerns and disclosures of harm to Safe Church [safechurch@hillsong.com](mailto:safechurch@hillsong.com).
- For urgent reports contact 1800 557 264

### Advice and Support

If you have any questions please contact the Hillsong Safe Church office

Email: [safechurch@hillsong.com](mailto:safechurch@hillsong.com)

Ph: 02 8853 5352

If anything covered in this training module caused you distress please seek support from your oversight, pastoral care, Safe Church or one of the following support services:

- 1300 53 53 53 - Hillsong Pastoral Care
- 1800 557 264 - Hillsong Safe Church
- 13 11 14 - Lifeline crisis support and suicide prevention (chat online [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au))
- 1300 22 4636 - Beyond Blue (chat online [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au))

- 1800 Respect – National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling service
- 1800 272 831 – Bravehearts information or support relating to child sexual assault

## **Resource**

Volunteer safety information and resources including domestic family violence and risk of suicide response charts are available at <https://hil.so/vhub>

Safe Church Contact details:

- Email: [safechurch@hillsong.com](mailto:safechurch@hillsong.com)
- Ph: (02) 8853 5352

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Don't forget to save your completion certificate. Or, alternatively record the receipt number if you are unable.

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