



ONLINE MEETINGS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Many church groups may face circumstances in which alternate arrangements need to be made for normal church activities to continue. The use of technology and online communication platforms can be a really good way to do this if meeting in person is not possible.

However, in the midst of organising the logistics of such arrangements, it is important that safe ministry practices and protocols are not forgotten. Any form of interaction with a child, young person or vulnerable person comes with a level of opportunity to abuse power. We must always be doing what we can to ensure the safety of all who partake in our ministry activities.

The advice below will be particularly relevant to youth groups who use video conferencing software to facilitate virtual gatherings.

KEY GUIDELINES:

- Keep Session informed about any alternate arrangements for gatherings.
- Contact parents/carers in advance to let them know the plans for virtual meetings.
- Ask for the parents' preferred way of contacting the child/young person (parent's account or child's personal account) and request consent to include the child/young person in the meetings.
- Have a clear start and end time so that parents know the limits of the online interaction.
- Ensure that there are always at least 2 leaders included in chats/video conferences. Aim to have all communication with children/young people via group communication.
- Where possible, leaders should avoid video streaming from a closed off area (such as a private bedroom) to maintain transparency and establish clear personal boundaries.
- Practice the same safe ministry practices you would in real life. Be accountable, transparent and wise.

PLEASE NOTE: This is a companion document and should be used alongside Breaking the Silence (2015 ed.). It is provided as general information and does not form part of the policy or process for dealing with or preventing abuse within the church.

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