



EASTWOOD COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

OVERVIEW

When meeting a child/young person privately, a church worker (paid or volunteer) should:

- Have parental or guardian consent, where practical
- Ensure where appropriate that a parent, guardian or suitable adult is present
- Inform a member of the pastoral team, another church worker or adult of the time, location and duration of the meeting
- not invite or have children/young people to your home when no other adult is present
- Make a record of then time, location, duration and circumstances of any meeting where it is impracticable to follow these guidelines.

Pastoral care and general communication is an integral part of youth and children's ministry and something that is to be encouraged. It should primarily be through face-to-face contact. However, this is not always possible and church workers may have to 'meet' with children and young people through electronic communication.

POLICY

1. GENERAL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

- Interaction with children/young people in these forms should be kept to a minimum
- Parental consent on the appropriate consent form must be sought before a church worker communicates to a child/young people with electronic communication
- Church workers must not knowingly transmit, retrieve or store any communication that is:
 1. discriminatory or harassing
 2. derogatory to any individual or group
 3. obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic
 4. defamatory or threatening
 5. in violation of any licence governing the use of software
 6. for any purpose that is illegal or in contravention of guidelines for workers with children issued by the Baptist Union of New South Wales
 7. Send any electronic communication that attempts to hide the identity of the sender or represents the sender as someone else.

2. TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION

- Always, when contacting the child/young person by phone, call on the home phone, if possible.
- Ensure, whenever possible, that the parents/guardians are aware of the phone call
- Mobile phone calls should be kept to a minimum and should never be used for long calls, especially of a pastoral nature
- If a child/young person initiates a mobile phone call which will require a long conversation then, at an appropriate time, transfer the call to the home phone line.

3. EMAIL COMMUNICATION

- Be aware that sending an email is similar to sending a postcard through the mail. Anyone may read it. Even once deleted they are still recoverable.
- Emails should generally be restricted to purpose only, e.g. "meet at this time, this time" or general conversations, e.g. "how was the excursion today?" Deeper conversations regarding more personal issues should be face to face.
- As far as possible save emails to and from children/young people in a separate folder. This is designed to provide verification, if necessary.

4. SMS COMMUNICATION

- SMS communications should generally be restricted to purpose only communication e.g. "meet at this time, at this place"
- If a longer sms conversation begins ring the child/young person preferably on the home phone.

5. SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES (e.g. Facebook., Myspace, etc)

- Internet mail should be restricted to purpose only messages.
- Writing on 'walls' should be kept to a minimum and only of a broad nature, e.g. "hope you're having a good week., cya Sunday" or other light conversations.
- Do not give out any details of children/young people, e.g. name of school, email address, home address, phone numbers, etc.

6. INTERNET CHAT ROOMS/PROGRAMS

- Church workers should not enter into a closed one on one conversation with a child/young person. If a child/young person invites you into a conversation you should bring in a third party.
- Church workers should use wisdom and discernment when having a multi-person conversation. Your conversation should be above reproach.

7. PHOTOGRAPHS

- Any photos of youth/children's ministry activities should be taken by someone appointed by the church and with parental consent.

- Never photograph any child/.young person who has asked not to be photographed.
- Photography should focus on the activity not on a particular individual
- Photos should focus on small groups rather than a person
- Do not identify in writing the person/s in the photograph
- All young people/children should be appropriately dressed when photographed (not in swim wear or similar)
- Never post photos of children/young people on the internet
- If you find a photo of a youth/children's activity posted on the internet by a young person, gently ask them if they have permission from everyone in the photo to post it. If they do not have permission, then advise them to either seek permission or remove it from the internet.
- Avoid taking photos of children/young people with your mobile phone and allowing children/young people to take photos of church workers with their mobile phone.

8. VIDEO PHONING (Facetime/ Internet/ Skype)

- Church workers should not enter into conversations of this nature with children/young people.