

Caring
for
Kids

A Code Of Practice

The care of kids begins with the attitude of leaders to a variety of issues that affect the kids in our care. It is not only what we do but the way we do it that demonstrates our care.

The following code of practice touches on many issues that are significant within our society today. It assumes that people within teams appreciate the issues and the consequences of neglecting them.

The code is to be used in team training to introduce the sort of issues that are of concern to those who care for children and young people.

1. Behaviour and Language

Children and young people learn as much from what leaders do as from what they say. So behaviour, attitudes and language are often as important as what is taught during any activity.

The way leaders communicate with children needs to reflect the conviction that Jesus welcomed children (Mark 10:13-16). That means language and ways of relating that affirm worth, dignity and significance.

There needs to be no behaviour which gives the impression of favouritism or encourages "special" relationships with individual children or young people. It is too easy to "love the lovable". The kids who are not

easy to love often need more love from us.

It is also important to remember that the way leaders communicate with one another is observed. Nick names, "put downs", and sexist language only reinforce attitudes that kids may already see all too often.

Where parents or members of the wider community observe leaders at work they need to see a caring style that demonstrates the credibility of Christianity.

2. Qualifications and Experience

All team members must be over 16 years of age. Only experienced people are given the responsibility of team leadership.

All team members need to complete an application form. (See the section on screening leaders on page 21.)

Where activities are coeducational, female and male group leaders need to be present.

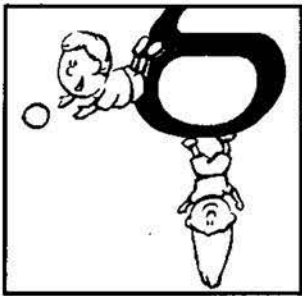
3. Emergency Procedures

Every team needs to consider safety issues as a part of preparation of the programme.

(See the section on Safety on page 8.)

4. First Aid

Teams should try to include someone trained in first aid.



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Such training is readily available from a number of authorised and accredited bodies.

5. Activities and Games

The site of activities and the nature of what happens need to be carefully considered to minimise the risks.

Activities or games which require kids to act alone or in pairs, independent of leaders, need to be very carefully considered. If in doubt, cancel the activity.

Any activity needs to have defined boundaries that are easily observed or patrolled. Leaders need to avoid situations where it is possible to become physically isolated.

Games or activities which may exploit gender, physical or intellectual differences must be assessed as to whether or not they are appropriate.

Consideration needs to be given to the "message" given to kids by activities and events that are organised. That is, the way things are done "speaks" loudly.

These requirements are not meant to be restrictive or prescriptive, but descriptive and protective of the kids and young people in our care.

It is essential that in providing fun and enjoyment for kids and young people we do not create situations which, in hindsight,

will be deemed as negligent or irresponsible.

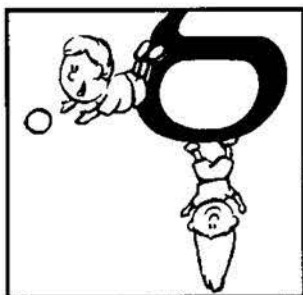
6. Physical Contact

Many kids enjoy physical contact with adults and will actively seek opportunities for this through simple expression of affection and confidence and in play.

However, some kids do not seek or enjoy physical contact. Children are entitled to determine the degree of physical contact they have with others. It is therefore inappropriate in the normal course of events to initiate close physical contact...this should come from the child. As a general rule, open displays of affection initiated by kids in the presence of others are acceptable, and there will be occasions where open spontaneous displays of affection are natural.

Physical contact between adult and kids may be misconstrued. Any physical activity which is or may be construed as sexually stimulating to the adult or child is **illegal** and must be avoided. Children may or may not be aware of creating such situations, but it is the duty of the adult to be alert to such circumstances and to act accordingly.

Leaders need to be aware that consistent contact with the same person may give the impression of favouritism and may result in others competing for their attention or feeling left out.



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Situations offering privacy or secrecy must not happen. Where private conversations are necessary, the leader and kid(s) should remain visible to other leaders.

On no account must any form of corporal punishment (for example smacking) be administered, even in fun. The only form of physical restraint appropriate is to protect kids from harm, eg., reasonable restraint to stop a fight; to stop bullying; to avoid an accident.

7. **Concluding an Activity**

Activities need to finish promptly at the advertised time.

Care must be exercised in dismissing or handing over children. It is not recommended that kids, especially very young children be passed to adults who are not known to the leaders or the child.

There may be occasions when leaders need to personally return children to their accommodation.

8. **Indemnity and Permission forms**

Some activities need parental indemnity and permission forms. Leaders need to decide if their activity requires parental consent and acknowledgment of the risks involved. Leaders should receive signed permission forms from the child's care giver for any activity away from the main venue.

(Sample forms are included in Appendix A.)

9. **Involvement Of Adults From The Local Community**

Help from parents and other adults known to leaders in running activities is normally welcomed. However parents and other adults who help casually must not be put in a position of having sole responsibility for kids other than their own.

10. **Multiculturalism**

Leaders need to be sensitive to cultures and family traditions different from their own. These cultures and traditions may affect the degree of participation of kids in activities and games.

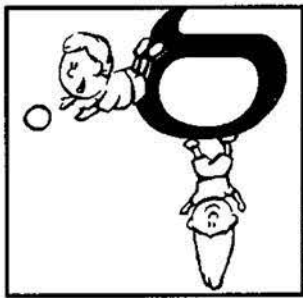
Kids ought not to hear statements about other religions and cultures which reflect ignorance, bias or ridicule.

11. **Types Of Families And Care Givers**

Leaders need to be sensitive to words they use which make assumptions about any kid's background, family status and principal care givers. The family has many forms in today's society and leaders must respect the support structures of the kids who come to their activities.

12. **Recreational Drugs**

Alcohol consumption is an endemic problem in many families and amongst kid's peers. No drug and alcohol



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consumption will apply to our activities.

13. "Medi Alert" Bracelets and Team Medications

Kids wearing "Medi-alert" bracelets need to be treated with care in any activity, particularly a strenuous one.

Team member's prescription medications need to be kept in a safe place.

More resources on discipline are available from The Salvation Army Family Services.

TIME  UT

Handout 2 in the back of this manual should be referred to at this stage.

TIME  UT

Handout 3 in the back of this manual should be referred to at this stage. The exercise in Handout 3 may be attempted as part of team training.