

Southern Youth

Leadership Policy & Guidelines

Document Revision

<i>Revision</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1.0	10-Dec-2018	Initial Revision
1.1	30-Mar-2019	Appendix 2 and 3 updated
1.2	14-Oct-2020	Aligned with new policies, removed appendices 2-5, and changed privacy status to “public”.



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1. Overview

This document serves to outline the important operational and oversight activities expected of all Southern Youth Leaders or other people assisting with youth events. As this ministry serves people under the age of 18, therefore “minors”, additional care needs to be taken when running events and interaction with the youth.

1.1. OUR VALUES

Under the authority of Christ, Southern Illawarra Church of Christ is:

- Christ centred
- Biblically based
- Prayer focused
- Loving, compassionate, hospitable and generous
- Committed to connecting with and serving our community
- Deliberately involved in local, national and global mission, so all can know Christ
- Served by dedicated people

1.2. OUR PURPOSE

Our purpose is to be a Christ centred community, offering love and compassion that encourages and enables us to be growing closer to God, so that we can reveal Christ to all.

2. Use of Permission Slips

Permission Slips serve a number of purposes in addition to being required in order to ensure adequate coverage under the Southern Church insurance policy. It needs to be pointed out these are *legal documents* which introduces additional care requirements when preparing them for distribution and requirements for retention.

Under no circumstances will a youth member be allowed to participate in any off-site activity unless they have a completed permission slip. These cannot be back-dated and must be submitted prior to the planned activity (*see 2.2.1*).

2.1. PURPOSE OF PERMISSION SLIPS

In simple terms:

- Provides a written record of permission given by a youth member's parent/guardian to attend a specific function.
- As a result of having parental/guardian approval, our insurer should cover the youth member, leaders and church members in the event of a claim being made.
- Provides parents/guardians and the youth information regarding the activity to be undertaken (*see 2.2 for details*).

2.2. FORMAT OF PERMISSION SLIPS

All permission slips distributed by Southern Youth must use the provided template (*see Appendix 1*) which ensures all required information is available to parents/guardians and youth. This form needs to be completed in its entirety and verified for correctness before being distributed.

2.2.1. Top Section – Consent

The top section needs to be checked when forms are returned to ensure:

- Parent/Guardian is legible.
- The Southern Youth Member name is legible.
- The Parent/Guardian has signed the form.
- The date next to the signature is not in the future and does not pre-date the form's distribution. It cannot be back-dated after the event has been run either.

2.2.2. Middle Section – Activity and Transport

The middle section outlines the activity that is planned. It is important to include as much information as possible as well as any special arrangements or equipment the youth members may require (towels, sunblock, rain coats, etc). It should also cover any additional cost(s) the youth member or their parent/guardian will need to provide.

Of particular importance is to include transport arrangements including if parents/guardians will need to drop off or pick up and at what times and locations. For instance, an event may require dropping off youth at SLC at 7:00pm with Youth Leaders returning youth members directly home. Other times, parents/guardians may need to collect youth from a different

location (other than SLC). Do not assume parents/guardians will infer the correct information; *state it explicitly*.

If a parent/guardian does not circle “YES” to allow the use of their child’s photograph, it is assumed their child should NOT be photographed or have their child’s photo published on social media etc.

2.2.3. Bottom Section – Emergency Contact

Ensure all forms have a contact number for a parent/guardian. This is a legal requirement.

Also, if a form is returned with any allergies or special instructions, it is best to confirm any details with the youth member or their parent/guardian before the planned activity. Some conditions may preclude youth from participating either in part or completely.

2.3. PERMISSION SLIP DISTRIBUTION

As these forms contain the information required for parents/guardians and youth to plan, all off-site events must have a physical/printed permission note distributed at least two weeks prior to the planned event taking place. Ideally, this form will also be made available online at the same time. This allows for:

- Parents/guardians to budget for additional expenses.
- Youth to plan and prepare as required (*eg, costumes*).
- Youth with special needs to be accommodated appropriately where possible.

As notes will be distributed at least two weeks in advance, the week prior to a planned activity all youth and parents/guardians should be reminded of the upcoming event and the need for permission notes. Any completed notes should be collected prior to the event and any special considerations addressed (*see 2.2.3*).

2.4. PERMISSION SLIP COLLECTION

When permission notes are returned, they need to be collated for each separate activity and carried with the youth leaders when the event is being conducted. This avoids notes for different events being mixed together and also allows Youth Leaders to reference emergency contact information when/if required.

2.5. PERMISSION NOTE RETENTION

All permission notes must be retained until the youth member is 25 years old. Consequently, when an event has been completed, the original permission notes will be submitted to the Southern Church Leadership Board (*or their Southern Youth Liaison*) for long term archival.

2.6. SOCIAL MEDIA AND PHYSICAL COPIES

As many of the youth members and their parents/guardians receive updates via the Southern Youth social media pages, the following process will be used when advertising an off-site event with the associated permission note:

- Activity owner notifies Southern Youth Admin and Support. Any of the following tasks can be delegated to them.
 - Arrange for publishing note on Facebook (via Google Drive or OneDrive etc.) – approved youth leaders can assist if required.
 - If a Facebook/Instagram update needs to be SMSed out, send a copy of the post to the Southern Youth Admin and Support person who can send the SMS. Alternatively, the activity owner can send out the SMS themselves.
 - Advise SLC Office Admin of note via email and request sufficient copies to be printed.
 - If printed notes require delivery somewhere other than SLC, take this into account and get assistance from Southern Youth Liaison/Admin and Support, if required.

3. Unappointed Leaders

All leaders in Southern Youth are appointed by the Southern Church Leadership Board. These appointments are reviewed at various points throughout the year.

A register of appointed Southern Youth Leaders is maintained by the Southern Church Leadership Board. These are the individuals who have been given the role of leading the youth activities for Southern Church encompassing the organisational, spiritual and personal elements that task involves. This is an important role and carries a high level of responsibility, both to the youth members but also Southern Church.

3.1. USE OF UNAPPOINTED LEADERS

Occasionally, an event or gathering may require the use of volunteers from outside the appointed leadership team. In these cases, the youth leaders must Notify the Southern Church Leadership Board (*or their liaison*) in advance:

- the need, or potential need for additional assistance on the specific activity.
- if possible, advise the person or people they might wish to use.

The Southern Church Leadership Board (*or their liaison*) will then:

- screen/vet or approve the people suggested, to ensure compliance with working with children checks, biblical character, theological background, appropriateness etc.
or,
- ensure suitable assistance is provided.
- Any use of unappointed leaders will be captured and reported to the Southern Church Leadership Board at the next meeting.

3.2. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

Under no circumstances will the appointed Southern Youth Leaders delegate their exclusive authority to any unappointed leaders. This precludes allowing themselves to:

- to modify pre-planned activities to deviate from what has been communicated to youth and parents/guardians (*this could invalidate any permission given and leave the youth, leaders and church exposed in the event of any potential insurance claim*).
- to behave in any way that brings Southern Youth or Southern Church into disrepute.

4. The Use of Social Media

The use of Social Media is governed by the Southern Church Social Media Policy and Guidelines. This section aims to summarise the key points in that policy as it relates to Southern Youth.

4.1. SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS (PRESENCES)

- Social Media presences (Facebook Pages, Instagram etc) will use the approved Southern Youth logo.
- If any website is published for contact etc, it must be the Southern Church website:
<https://southernchurch.com.au>
- If a contact number is published, it can be a Southern Youth Leader's personal phone provided that person has approved their number to be used for this purpose **and** that person is willing to respond to contact in a timely manner.
- At least one Southern Church Leadership Board member must be an administrator on any social media accounts/presences.

4.2. POSTING AND PUBLISHING CONTENT

- Text and images must be age-appropriate to the intended youth audience.
- Inflammatory, derogatory, sexist, insulting, expletive etc. content should never be published or shared.
- Care needs to be taken when publishing photographs of minors. Permission from a parent/guardian is always required. There are sometimes legal reasons photographs of minors shouldn't be published (*family/child protection etc*).
- Published content will be scrutinised and may be taken down (*or requested to be taken down*) by any Southern Church Leadership Board member.

4.3. FREQUENCY OF POSTING AND PUBLISHING

During school terms it is recommended to post at least weekly to make sure youth members and parents/guardians are kept apprised of activities. It is important to understand that publishing something to a social media presence won't automatically ensure every follower of that presence will see the published material. However, if content can be posted that generates interaction, it is more likely that future content will be shown to the followers who interact. Consequently, try to publish additional content to drive interaction, not just consumption.

For example, the following post will not generally lead to a high level of engagement but is still useful for keeping people informed:

"Hi Everyone! Don't forget this Friday we're having a fancy-dress night 😊 Bring out your favourite costumes and let's have fun!!"

However, the following example is more likely to spawn interaction and comments (*being mindful of parental photo consent*):

“How good was FUSE?! Did you get any photos or have a favourite moment you want to share? Put them in the comments and the one with the most likes will get a prize!”

4.4. DEALING WITH COMMENTS/MESSAGES

As most social media platforms allow other users to post comments or messages, it is important to deal with them in a positive way. Some general guidelines:

- Respond to questions, comments and messages as soon as possible.
- Don't get drawn into arguments.
- Any comment that would not comply with the general content publishing standards (*see 4.2*) should be deleted.
- Abusive messages/comments should be reported to both the social media platform and the Southern Church Leadership Board (*screen capture etc*), then deleted.

Appendix 1 – Permission Slip Template

Off-site Permission Form

I , as Legal Guardian of

Parent/Legal Guardian Name *Southern Youth Member Name*

Provide my permission for them attend the following function being facilitated by the “Southern Youth” leadership team.

Signed: Date:

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature *day / month / year*

Event:

Date:

Start Time: *(When Southern Youthers need to be there)*

End Time: *(When Southern Youthers can be collected)*

Location:

.....

 Photos of Southern Youth members may be used on Social Media. Please circle “YES” here if you consent to your child’s photo being used: **YES / NO**

Transport arrangements are as follows:

.....

.....

Legal Guardian Contact Details etc.

In case of emergency, I can be reached on the following phone number:

..... *(Legal Guardian’s contact number)*

Allergies and Special Considerations:

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