

Standards for Children's and Youth Ministry

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Go Church Belgium

Applicable to all current and future locations of Go Church Belgium

Version: January 2026

1. Purpose and Relationship to the Safeguarding Policy

This document is an appendix to the Safeguarding Policy of Go Church Belgium ("Against Boundary Violations, Abuse of Power and Sexual Misconduct"). It does not repeat the policy's statement of principles, legal basis, reporting pathway, incident management procedure, consequences, or documentation and review process. These remain fully applicable and are referenced below.

This appendix defines matters that are specific to work with minors: the core values that every child's and youth ministry leader shares, as well as practical, everyday standards for situations that frequently arise in youth ministry. These situations are too specific to belong in the general safeguarding policy, yet too important to be left to individual judgement.

2. Scope

This appendix applies to all persons who encounter minors (under 18 years of age) through Go Church Belgium, including permanent youth leaders and staff, occasional helpers and substitutes, interns and volunteers, external guest speakers or musicians, and leaders at all current and future locations. It applies across all ministry settings, including youth groups, worship services involving young people, camps, overnight events, and one-to-one conversations

3. Core Principles for Everyone Working with Minors

Power and Responsibility:

I recognize that the young people entrusted to us are vulnerable. As a leader, I am responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries. This responsibility belongs to me, not to them, and I will never delegate it to a child or teenager.

Openness and Transparency:

I am always willing to explain my decisions and actions in any risk situation to colleagues or leadership. I raise uncertainties, concerns, or questions regarding risk situations openly, even where there is no criminal relevance, whether on my own initiative or when asked.

Role Clarity:

I keep my role within the church separate from my private life. My role and responsibilities determine the appropriate level of emotional and physical closeness with the young people entrusted to me.

Physical Contact:

I adapt physical contact to the developmental stage of the young person and to my role, always keeping their wellbeing and personal dignity in view.

Duty to Report:

Where there is a reasonable suspicion of abuse or misconduct, I will immediately inform the Central Safeguarding Officer in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and transfer responsibility for case management and coordination. Confronting the accused person is never my responsibility.

4. Code of Conduct for Working with Minors

- No one-to-one meetings with minors in closed, non-visible rooms.
- The four-eyes principle applies to transport arrangements, overnight events, and camps.
- Physical contact must always be appropriate to the situation and must never be forced in the absence of others.
- Private communication must remain transparent and must never involve encouraging secrecy from parents.
- No consumption of alcohol or other intoxicating substances in the presence of minors during church activities.

This Code of Conduct must be signed by all relevant individuals before their first ministry assignment, in addition to the Declaration of Commitment contained in the general Safeguarding Policy.

5. Specific Standards for Common Risk Situations

General principles alone are not enough. Leaders need practical guidance for situations that arise every week. The following standards apply to all children's and youth ministry activities.

5.1 Digital Communication

- Group chats should be the standard communication channel wherever possible.□
- Leaders may communicate directly with members of their own small group or team. Every group chat should have at least one leader of a small group chat present inside the chat for oversight purposes.□
- If a young person initiates a personal conversation unrelated to a church activity, the conversation should not continue privately. The matter should be discussed with the young person and another leader at the next suitable opportunity.□
- Friendships between teenagers and leaders on social media are permitted.□
- Taking and posting group photographs is acceptable.□
- Personal stories or direct messages to a minor should be avoided unless the young person is a member of the leader's own small group.□

5.2 Physical Affection

- Expressions of closeness should feel appropriate and comfortable for both the young person and the leader and should never be assumed by one party alone. To clarify, in most cases (unless in rare cases) male to male, or female to female.□
- The standard form of greeting or comfort is a side hug or a hand on the shoulder. Tight, prolonged, or frontal hugs are not part of normal ministry practice□
- Pet names for individual young people should not be used.□

5.3 One-on-One Situations

- At least two leaders should be present in the room with a minor, or the door should remain open. □
- Private meetings between a leader and a teenager outside the official program are prohibited. Coaching conversations and check-ins should take place in a public setting. □
- Leaders and minors must never travel alone together in a vehicle. A second leader or another young person must always be present. Emergency exceptions must be reported to another leader before or immediately after the event. The default option is males with males, females with females. □

5.4 Camps and Overnight Events

- A second leader must always be present at overnight events. The lead organizer and parents must be informed beforehand, and at least one adult leader must be present at every event. □
 - Leaders leave the room while teenagers are changing and knock before entering.
 - In mixed-gender groups, boys and girls sleep in separate rooms, with both male and female leaders present.
 - Teenagers and leaders must shower and change separately, either by location or by schedule. Changing facilities and shower areas must always be separated by sex. Mobile phones and photography are prohibited in changing areas.
 - Following small-group time, leaders and teenagers should not remain alone together in sleeping areas. Personal conversations should be moved to communal areas or outdoors.
 - Only authorized people may be present in kitchen areas. Teenagers may enter only during their assigned duty period accompanied by their small-group leader.
 - A minor in a medical room may only be attended by the designated responsible person. The door remains open unless a third person is present. In cases involving intimate injuries, the door may only be closed with the approval of the lead organizer.

6. Additional Minimum Requirements for Youth Ministry

These requirements apply in addition to those contained in the general Safeguarding Policy:

- A written ministry application completed by every leader aged 16 and over. If any question cannot be answered in writing, it must be discussed directly and documented in writing
- The Code of Conduct briefing (15-20 minutes) must be refreshed before every camp or major event, not only at the start of service.

7. Responding to Breaches in Youth Ministry

Any deviation from or difficulty in implementing these standards, or any gap identified for a new situation, must be addressed promptly in accordance with the graduated procedure set out in the general Safeguarding Policy:

Discussion and correction → suspension where appropriate → removal from role.

Specific to youth ministry: If a person's involvement in children's or youth ministry ends as a result of a safeguarding breach, this information will be disclosed in good faith in response to reference requests from another organization or ministry, ensuring that safeguarding concerns are not silently transferred to another community.

8. Reporting Pathway, Incidents and Documentation

Reporting procedures, incident management, consequences, and documentation relating to concerns involving minors are governed entirely by the general Safeguarding Policy (Sections 9-14), using the

same central and local contact persons. There is no separate reporting channel for youth ministry. This is intentional so that every concern reaches the same trained and independent point of contact, regardless of context.

Nominated Child Protection Lead

Name: Georges Mills-Odoi

Phone: +32 474 02 55 08

Deputy Child Protection Lead

Name: Jemima Mills-Odoi

Phone: +32 474 24 34 20

Relevant Contacts

Name: Violence, abuse and child abuse helpline

Number: 1712

Name: Child Focus

Number: 116 000

Name: Tele-Onthaal

Number: 106

This appendix is to be read together with the Safeguarding Policy of Go Church Belgium. Legal and professional framework: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) · Belgian Civil Code and relevant child protection provisions · Belgian Criminal Code provisions concerning the protection of minors and sexual integrity · Belgian Victim Support legislation and recognized victim assistance services · Child Focus Belgium and ECPAT international safeguarding standards.

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