CARLINGFORD
BAPTIST CHURCH

Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People

Adopted by Carlingford Baptist Church on 07.09.2020

Principles

1.1. Be Aware

Although procedures are in place, it is important for everyone involved in ministry with children or young people to maintain an awareness of potential risks and issues. Ministry with children and young people involves building relationships of trust, but staff and volunteers should also be aware of the potential for healthy relationships to be misunderstood as an inappropriate grooming relationship. Similarly, staff and volunteers should remain alert to potentially dangerous grooming behaviour by any other staff or volunteer.

1.2. Manage Risk

It is not possible to eliminate all risk from activities. However, we have a responsibility to be aware of possible risks and to take appropriate action in response. This is why we write risk assessments for all of our activities.

1.3. Never Be "Alone"

As a general rule, Church staff and volunteers should never be alone in private (outside of line of sight of another person) with any child or young person unless they are family members. This protects the child or young person from risk of harm, and it also protects the leader. This rule is applicable for Church programs and social contact outside of Church programs. Exception may be made for family or domestic arrangements which are distinct from any role at the Church, such as babysitting, if this is authorised by the parent or guardian responsible.

1.4. Be Accountable and Transparent

All staff and volunteers must seek to always maintain accountability and transparency. This means clearly communicating intentions, being open about all interactions and church-related activities and agreeing to uphold these principles and all Church Policy and Procedures. There is mutual accountability within our ministry groups, as well as to relevant ministry leaders and Church leadership bodies.

1.5. Keep Records

To ensure that those who might need help get it, as well as to protect our team, appropriate record keeping is vital. This includes, never deleting messages or other interactions, reporting any concerns you have for others, and reporting any potential incidents or atypical interactions you have. Reports and documentation should be made as soon as possible, and the Safe Ministry Team is there to support and guide you through that process, while providing accountability and centralised record keeping.

1.6. Gain Parental Permission

Parents are the primary disciplers and responsible persons for all children and young people. For these reasons we seek to work with parents, deferring to them in the care of their children. Where appropriate, parental permission must be sought. This includes annual written permission slips for regular activities and one-off permission slips for formal events/activities not covered by the regular permission form.

Attendance, Permission and Duty of Care

Children's Ministries

Gaining Permission

- Each year a new program registration and permission is required for each family. Families must list each individual child who attends on the registration form.
- Irregular activities, such as those with greater than normal risk or those not held at the usual site, even if part of a regular program (e.g. rock climbing), require special one-off permission.

Recording Attendance and Hand Over of Duty of Care

Creche & Explorers (K-2) Kids Church

- Parents/carers will be asked to sign their children in and out each week. Leaders present will be recorded on this document. A leader will oversee this process.

Oasis (3-6) Kids Church

- A leader will record attendance of children and leaders each week. Children will be supervised by two leaders when moving to their meeting area. After the conclusion of the church services, the children will be returned to the playground and will be the responsibility of their parent/carer.

Playtime

- Children will attend with their parent/carer. Attenders – including children, parents/carers and leaders will be recorded each week by a leader. Children attending remain the responsibility of their parent/carer whilst attending Playtime.

Girls Brigade

- Parents/carers will be asked to sign their children in and out each week. Leaders present will be recorded on this document. A leader will oversee this process.

Record Keeping

Records of registration, attendance and incidents may be recorded on paper or electronic forms. Electronic forms will be keep in the church's online database. Paper forms must be submitted to the office so that an electronic record can be made. These records will be kept for a minimum of 45 years.

Youth Ministries

Gaining Permission

- Each year a new general program permission slip is required for each individual young person.
- Irregular activities, such as those with greater than normal risk or those not held at the usual site, even if part of a regular program (e.g. rock climbing for youth), require special one-off permission.
- Where it is not possible to receive written permission, as a last resort a leader may:
    - Call the parent, asking them to send a text message that provides permission. If the parent is not able, then alternatively;
    - A pair of leaders can receive verbal permission, (e.g by passing a phone). The two leaders must then write down the date, time and medium of receiving permission, both signing the document.

Recording Attendance & Permission

- Youth Ministry attendance will be recorded each week by the ministry leader using the church's online database, including the leaders and any extras present (e.g. a parent or a one-time helper).
- The attendance lists, along with permission/registration forms will be held for at least 45 years.

Hand Over of Duty of Care

- Arrival and departure arrangements for those attending youth programs will be the responsibility of parents/caregivers.
- Youth programs do not require a sign in or out process, and once a program has finished the young people will be released to be collected by parents or to make their own way home.
- The relevant ministry team for youth ministries are responsible for youth during programmed times. Outside of these times, duty of care reverts to the parents/caregivers. A youth will not be allowed to leave a program before programmed hours are finished without express permission from a parent/caregiver.
- Youth cannot be released into the care of someone other than a parent or guardian without parental permission.

Leader/Participant Ratios

- A minimum of two fully screened and trained leaders are required for all programs concerning children and young people.
- A minimum ratio of 1 fully screened and trained leader must be maintained for every 8 participants. A ratio of roughly 1:5 is preferred.
- Discussion/small groups do not need to maintain these minimums, as long as the minimums are maintained by the number of fully screened and trained leaders that are within line of sight and hearing distance of each other.
- Junior leaders (any leader under 18 years old), and trainee leaders (those not formally inducted and screened as a leader) do not count towards leader-participant ratios. However, within Children's Ministries, those aged 16 or 17 years old may be deemed as having sufficient maturity to be fully screened and trained as an adult (category 2a of the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers,* rather than category 3). This is at the discretion of the ministry leader. Such a volunteer can be considered a standard leader that contributes to leader-participant ratios. **However, note that there should always be at least one adult leader on-site and participating in the program.**

Toileting

Guidelines for Children's Ministry

Creche

- If a child needs a nappy change or to use the toilet, their parent/carer will be contacted via SMS to assist them. Leaders will not take children to the toilet/nappy change unless there is an emergency.

Explorers K-2

- Children will go to the bathroom in pairs. A leader will supervise from the top of the stairs – in sight of leaders in the Explorers room.

Oasis 3-6 & Girls Brigade

- Children may access the toilet facilities on their own.

Playtime

- Parents/carers will be responsible for taking their children to the toilet or for a nappy change.

Driving

Licences and Drivers

- Only drivers holding their full license, who have provided relevant license and driving history information, and who have been approved may drive children or young people in connection with a Church Ministry/activity. Those on their P's may driver in an emergency or if special permission has been given by the parents/guardians of the children or young people to be transported (and the relevant P Plate restrictions are followed).

Time Alone in Cars

- No staff member or volunteer should be in a car with a child or young person without another adult present (unless they are family members). Exception may be made for family or domestic arrangements which are distinct from any role at the Church, such as babysitting, if this is authorised by the parent or guardian responsible.
- If there are extraordinary circumstances where no one else is available, and the child or young person may be at greater risk of harm if they were not transported in the car, exceptions to these rules are permitted. Where possible, permission should be gained in advance from parents and the Safe Church Team. A full record of such an occurrence must be made and given to the relevant Ministry Leader/Safe Church Team. In such a situation, the time spent alone in the car should be minimised as far as possible and some additional measures must be taken, if possible. Examples of these additional measures include:
    - Gaining express permission from the child's parent or guardian for the specific occasion.
    - Driving in a convoy with other leaders/volunteers in cars in front/behind.
    - Maintaining a hands-free phone call with another leader for the duration of the journey (where legal to do so).

Overnight Activities

Where there are activities involving overnight accommodation, consideration should be given to the additional risk factors involved, including:

- Sleeping arrangements
    - All leaders and volunteers, including anyone over the age of 18 must have separate sleeping quarters from those under 18. Exceptions can be made for family members.
    - All involved (leaders and participants) should be given sleeping quarters separate from the opposite gender. Exceptions can be made for family members.
    - The sleeping quarters of participants should be close enough to those of leaders for the ability to monitor behavior and be present in an emergency.
    - Leaders should not enter the sleeping quarters or bathrooms of the opposite gender.
- Bathroom configuration
    - Arrangements should be made for those of opposite gender to have separate bathrooms. The same applies for those who are leaders over 18 and participants under 18.
    - Where not enough bathrooms are provided, time allocations for the different groups is an alternative.
    - This does not apply for single bathrooms where only one person may enter at a time.
- Safety information and appropriate instruction on activities should be provided.

- Consideration should be given to third parties involved – both those that will be necessary for running activities, as well as those who may be randomly in the vicinity.
- The safety of an external site should be considered.
- A risk assessment must be conducted and recorded. The list of activities, leaders and sleeping arrangements should also be recorded. These records should be stored, along with permission and attendance records for the event, for a minimum of 45 years.

Communication

In Person Communication Outside Church Programs

Fruitful Christian ministry with children and young people involves healthy, appropriate relationships. This can at times involve contacting them outside of Church programs and can include meeting in person. However, it is important that relationships between staff/volunteers and children/young people are transparent, and that parents, families and program leaders are appropriately informed and have given permission for this contact.

Staff and volunteers, when meeting with a child or young person, should:

- Have parental or guardian consent.
- Meet with them in a public place (for example, a café) in line of sight of other people.
- Not have children or young people alone in their home, nor should they visit children or young people alone in their home when no other adult is present.
- Make a record of the time, location, duration and circumstances of any face to face meetings with any child or young person. Surprise greetings in a public space may be an exception to this (e.g. saying hi when running into each other at the shops).

Telephone and Online Communication

For many Church programs, telephone and online communication are a useful tool for building community and pastoral care and support. However, telephone and online communication may be used by those seeking to harm children, young people and vulnerable people. Telephone and online communication may be used to test or step over relational boundaries. We need to be mindful of the positional power dynamic that exists between staff and volunteers and the children and young people under their care.

Contact with all children and young people

- Where possible and practical, parents will be informed of any possible telephone or online communication with children and young people.
- Staff and volunteer leaders must not engage in any telephone or online communication that:
    - Constitutes unlawful discrimination
    - Is harassing, threatening or derogatory
    - Is obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic
    - Is inappropriately personal or intimate
    - Attempts to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else
    - Is defamatory
- A record of all contact must be able to be maintained – interactions that can be deleted or will disappear after a certain amount of time are not appropriate.

Contact with primary-aged children

- *Voice-Call (Phone or otherwise):* staff and volunteers should first contact parents and then, if appropriate, speak with the child. If the child answers the phone the staff member or volunteer should ask to speak to the parent first and explain to the parent why they are calling. Staff and volunteers should never call a primary-aged child on their mobile phone (unless there is a serious emergency relating to the safety and wellbeing of the child).
- *Messaging (text message or otherwise)*: must be strictly limited to conveying information about Church programs.
- *Email:* must be strictly limited to conveying information about Church programs.
- *Online contact:* must be strictly limited to conveying information about Church programs. Staff and volunteers should never communicate directly (privately or one-or-one) with primary-aged children on a social networking site.
- *Video Conferencing:* Either the parent/carer must remain present for the duration of the meeting (recommended for preschoolers e.g. Playtime & social gatherings e.g. Morning Tea), or a parent/carer must connect the call and 'check in' so that leaders know that children have permission to access the video conference. If parents are not present for duration of meeting - two leaders must be present in the meeting. If break-out rooms are used, two leaders must be present for each 'room'.

Contact with high school-aged children

- *Voice-Call (Phone or otherwise):* where possible, staff and volunteers should first contact the parents or carer of the child and then, if appropriate, speak with the child. If the child answers the phone the staff member or volunteer should ask to speak to the parent first and explain to the parent why they are calling. Phone calls are to be used for surface level communication (information about Church programs and basic encouragement), or as a means to close off a messaging conversation that has gone beyond surface level. Long conversations must be avoided, instead held face to face in an appropriate setting.
- *Messaging (text message or otherwise)*: direct messages (one-on-one) must be limited to conveying information about Church programs and basic encouragement (surface level communication only).
- *Group Messaging/group chats:* may be used if there are at least two fully screened and trained leaders in the group and parents of group members are made aware of the group.
- *Email:* should be limited to conveying information about Church programs and basic encouragement.
- *Private video calls/picture messaging*: are not appropriate forms of communication.
- *Online Gaming:* requires both parental permission and at least two fully screened and trained leaders to be present. Parental permission is required for each game/platform.
- *Social Media*: Caution must be used when participating with children on social networking sites. You must maintain transparency and be accountable for what you say. You must also take care with the message you intend to communicate through both the words and images you use as it may be perceived differently by those who view it. If social media contact is made:
    - Limit contact to group discussions or "public spaces" that can be read by others.
    - Consider privacy settings which prevent personal contacts from seeing or interacting with child contacts connected to your ministry.
    - Ensure any text is beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.
    - Ensure all photos are beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.

Photographs & Video

During programs for children and young people it may be appropriate to capture photographs/videos to be used during youth events, for church displays and leaflets, and on the website, etc. These should only be taken by one appointed leader and not used for any other purpose. Leaders are not permitted to take photos of youth on their personal phones. Parents/guardians will be given the opportunity to opt-out of having photos or videos taken of their child.

Talking About Sexual Issues with High School Students

Youth leaders/volunteers aren't sexual educators and it is the role of the parents to educate on sex. Legislation (2012) makes it clear that repeated discussions about intimate topics with individual children may be seen as a pattern of sexual grooming. Instead, it is the role of the youth leader to explain what the Bible says about sex.

Before speaking on the topic of sex:

- Parental permission is required, providing information on what will be said.
- A minimum of two fully screen and trained leaders are required for the conversation.
- If a conversation about sex arises unplanned or there is a disclosure, the conversation should be kept short and the Ministry Leader must be informed. The Ministry Leader should inform the parents of what was said - a verbatim can be undertaken if seen as necessary.

The following are suggestions for the shape of these conversations:

- Our identity as the adopted children of God.
- Jesus' command for us to love others, viewing them as those loved by God.
- The Biblical call towards being counter-cultural, not being shaped by peers, our 'drives', or our culture, but to be shaped by being 'other-centred'.
- Sex is part of life, and the Biblical framework for sex is marriage.
- Consent not coercion – this is part of Australian law.
- God has given all a moral radar and conscience plays a role in all sexual relationships.
- Only God is judge – we are not called to judge or condemn but to love.

Physical Contact

Guidance for young children and children with additional needs

Babies require physical affection for healthy development, and many young children appreciate physical contact with familiar and trusted adults in their life. Children with additional needs may require additional physical support. This must be balanced with the need to ensure a safe environment for children and that we are transparent in our actions.

- ***Babies & toddlers*** may be held for comfort and reassurance. Make sure that you are visible for other leaders. Try to limit the contact and to interest them in activities and independent exploration. Babies & toddlers also often find singing reassuring.
- **Preschoolers, K-2 & children with additional needs** – encourage the children to sit beside you, rather than in your lap. Comfort and assist children by sitting beside them or with a side hug.
- Children may sometimes initiate contact such as hugs, climbing, or sitting in laps. End the contact as soon as reasonably possible. Provide an alternative such as high-5s, or sitting beside you. Use a

positive tone of voice, and give a short explanation if appropriate. E.g. “I might need to get up to help someone else.”

- Redirect children with positive statements i.e. what you want the child to do. “Sit beside me”; “Feet still”. Direct children with a gentle hand on the shoulder if necessary.
- Children with additional needs may appreciate a “fidget toy” to assist them in staying calm or concentrating during group times. Talk with parent/carers about the best way to support the child’s inclusion in the program.
- If a child remains distressed for more than 5-10 minutes and is not calming down, then contact their parent/carer. The parent/carer is welcome to stay with the child to help them settle in.

General Guidelines

- Where?
    - All contact must be in appropriate areas – the sides of the upper body (e.g. shoulder or arm)
    - All hugs should be side hugs, not frontal
- How and why?
    - All contact must be for appropriate duration (no prolonged contact)
    - Physical contact must be for appropriate reasons, such as in greeting, as encouragement and to reassure. “Rumbling” should never be initiated by a leader
- Our response when youth-initiated?
    - To prevent inappropriate, youth-initiated contact before it happens if possible
    - If caught unawares, end the contact as soon as reasonably possible
    - If fitting, explain withdrawal in reference to this physical contact policy
    - Leaders should respond to “rumbling” in a way that de-escalates the situation.
- Our response when contact is needed to ensure safety?
    - De-escalation strategies are always preferable to physical contact to maintain order or restrain students.
    - Restraint should only be used in an emergency – when it is necessary to prevent the individual or those around them from being harmed or injured (e.g. holding someone back from running onto pennant hills road)
    - The level of intervention must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident or behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent.
    - Any physical intervention must be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.
    - Physical contact or restraint must not be used to provoke, punish or humiliate a student or inflict pain.
- How do we handle first aid?
    - Ask permission first – if permission is denied, call parents and/or the ambulance depending on the seriousness
    - Refer to the list of first aid trained youth leaders next to the first aid kit, whenever possible, only someone with a current first aid certificate is to administer aid

- If treatment required is beyond your level of competency, call an ambulance (call parents first if the situation allows).

Discipline (Youth Guidelines Under Review)

- Why?
  - All disciplinary actions must be with the intent of helping the person in question grow, and ensuring their safety and the safety of others.
- How?
  - **If,** property or the health of others are at risk of harm, then immediate disciplinary action of an appropriate level should be taken to remove the risk
  - **Otherwise**, all disciplinary steps should be taken in private, with two leaders present.
- What?
  - Any disciplinary steps must be within legal parameters – any form of discipline that could be considered abuse is inappropriate. No physical discipline is allowed.
- What about suspensions and/or bans?
  - Before a participant is told not to return on subsequent weeks the Ministry Leader must be notified. For this to be appropriate, the participant in question must be continually putting property or others at risk of harm. They must have been spoken to and given the chance to stop.
  - The length of suspension and what is required before being allowed back will be decided by the Ministry Leader and explained to the participant. Parents must also be notified. This process is to be done out of love for both the participant and those around them, to grow and develop them wherever possible, but with safety as a first priority.