

DUTY OF CARE POLICY

Preamble

This document has been written with many aspects of Christian ministry and mission in mind, particularly around working with children, young people and other groups of vulnerable people within our society.

The document is primarily to ensure that our activities are provided in a safe, loving and ethical environment but it will, when followed, provide support for the program in the event of allegations against its leaders.

Biblical Concern for People

The Christian Faith strongly upholds the virtues of love, mercy and justice. From Luke's Gospel, we know that Jesus came to give freedom to the captives, sight to the blind and liberty to those who were oppressed. Jesus came for people. He came to give all of humankind the gift of Salvation but was interested in the practicalities of people's lives as well.

At Church By the Bay, we aim to follow the example of Jesus; to free, heal and liberate those who are captives, sick or oppressed. The example of Jesus is one on which all leaders should model their leadership and their lives. As a community of God's people, we should also be committed to ensuring that our ministries and missions are places that are safe in every respect for those who join with us.

A safe and respectful environment

The children's ministries we run will always seek to empower children to learn, to grow, and to have fun. Leaders need to understand that they can have a significant influence on a child by what they say and do, and by how they act or react to a child. Because of this potential to influence, the following are important, as they will help the leader to be a positive influence on the children they are leading. It is important for leaders of children to:

- Respect their personhood, by giving them time and attention, and showing respect for the opinions they express
- Recognize and affirm their competencies
- Allow, encourage and maximize participation by each child in any group activity
- Recognize that much of what we ask children to attempt as we seek to train or teach them is being tried by them for the first time. They must therefore be permitted the right to make mistakes without fear of criticism or rejection
- Acknowledge and encourage children, according to age and ability, to be progressively involved in decision-making relating to programs being mounted for them
- Model equality of treatment of all children regardless of race, colour, creed or social status
- Model in the leaders' lives the behaviour and beliefs which they attempt to encourage or instil in the children under their care

DUTY OF CARE

Where it exists the Duty of Care is the moral, spiritual and often legal responsibility that we have, both as individuals and corporately, towards all those that we come in contact with in the various activities of Church By the Bay.

Our Duty of Care is – to act in a manner that will protect people with whom we come in contact, from injury or distress. Our aim is to minimize any injury or distress due to:

- Our intentional acts
- Our negligence
- Naivety
- Culture of Complacency
- Poor Leader Screening
- Having no policy or guidelines

A Duty of Care may arise:

- In our ownership and occupation of land and buildings
- In our use of electrical and other equipment in the course of our activities
- In our employment of paid employees and voluntary workers
- In our activities involving people of all ages, but especially in activities involving children and young people, and the elderly
- In our handling of program finances

The following key points need to be addressed:

As a leader, you should know that

- Taking on a role of leadership means you automatically take on a responsibility
- You need to ensure you are informed

As a leader, you should reasonably foresee

- What are the things that are likely to cause harm or distress in your given mission area?
- What precautions do other people in my position generally take, in like circumstances? If you don't know, ask people who do!
- What other precautions would a wise person take?

As a leader, ask what steps can I put in place to fulfil my Duty of Care

- What are the things that can be done in the immediate future?
- Not everything can be done at once, but it must begin somewhere
- Who will be accountable for the steps required to make your ministry activity a safe place?

As a leader, what is 'safe and respectful'

- It is not just physical safety that must be considered
- It is also emotional, spiritual and developmental safety

CARE AND SUPERVISION OF UNDER 18'S

The concept of under 18's being an important part of the Christian community began with Jesus himself. When he said to his disciples, "Let the Children come to me" and "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me" (Matt 18:5), he related to us all the place of children at the very centre of the church community. For this document, children are understood to be those under the age of eighteen years.

The Bible teaches us that each church community must take responsibility, along with the family, in nurturing children in life and faith. God's ongoing care and concern is demonstrated in the Bible and we are called to follow its leading and teaching.

Physical Health and Safety

The physical environment should always be such that the safety of children is paramount, e.g. any electrical equipment used is in safe working order, floors are kept free of slippery surfaces and food is handled with the utmost care to avoid contamination.

Any faulty equipment/plant which constitutes a hazard to the safety of the child should be immediately removed, where possible and its condition should be reported to the Administristries Pastor, without delay.

Playground equipment should be checked to ensure that the equipment itself is sound and in safe working order.

Physical Contact

It is inappropriate to initiate physical contact with children, as some children may not be comfortable with the contact. Another reason is that the contact can be misunderstood, either by the child or by others around. It is important to not give constant contact to one child over others. There are however, some occasions where physical contact may be necessary, in the case of an emergency for example. The only time that physical restraint is appropriate is when protecting them from harm.

Medical Conditions and their Management

It is the Ministry Team Leader's responsibility to ensure that any medication or health maintenance regime is provided and clearly understood by the Senior leader of a children's group. Information of a medical nature will need to be both accessible and secure.

The administration of medication during an activity must be the responsibility of the qualified first-aid leader. Administration of non-prescribed medication like Panadol or Aspirin etc. can be harmful and will not be allowed to be administered, except under the instruction of the first-aid leader, and after seeking permission from the child's parent / guardian.

Supervision

It is very important that at least 2 leaders should be with the children under supervision at all times. This allows for any emergencies. One should have experience and at least one should be 18 or over.

It is *never* appropriate for teenage/apprentice leaders to be in charge of activities or events involving children in the absence of an adult or adults. All people under the age of 18 years assigned to function as teenage or apprentice leaders must be supervised at all times.

All children need to know that they are loved and valued and that they belong to a set of relationships that add meaning to their lives. Included in this is knowing that they are cared for, are protected and ultimately are safe. Providing a healthy nurturing church community will add to the environment of care and belonging that is helpful for children in their development.

Moral well-being

Ministry leaders should display these characteristics towards those they lead:

- Respect and work within the constraints of childhood and adolescent years, ensuring that the influence the leaders provide is positive in the development and growth of the young people
- Respect of their personhood, by giving them time and attention, and showing respect for the opinions they express
- Recognizing and affirming their competencies
- Allow, encourage and maximize participation by each young person in any group activity

- Recognize that much of what we ask young people to attempt, as we seek to train or teach them may be being tried by them for the first time. They must therefore be permitted the right to make mistakes without fear of criticism or rejection
- Acknowledge and encourage young people, according to age and ability, to be progressively involved in decision-making relating to programs being mounted for them
- Model equality of treatment of all young people regardless of race, colour, religion, gender, creed or social status
- Model in our own lives the behaviour and beliefs which we attempt to encourage or instil in the young people under our care
- Ministry leaders should ensure that any television programs, videos, computer programs, music and/or displays shown or used as part of the group's activities are suitable in content and appropriate to the age group represented, with due regard to a Christian understanding, as well as understood community norms
- Every ministry leader is expected to maintain a high moral code. Foul, demeaning, racist or sexist language is not to be tolerated by anyone working in a ministry team

Pastoral Care

When a Ministry leader is required to provide pastoral care, it is preferable for the Ministry Team leader to be involved in the conversation. As a minimum, the Ministry Team leader should always be informed of where the conversation is taking place, with whom they are going, for how long and the purpose of the interaction. (The purpose is pastoral care – it is not to divulge the nature of the discussion, which would breach confidentiality). To ensure that safety and integrity is maintained for all concerned, leaders must always try to work in a location with other people present. Best practice would suggest the advisability of having a third person involved in the session. However, the choice of whether there is a third person and whom that person might be, should be the right of the child or, at least, by mutual agreement. It is seldom appropriate for a male leader to counsel a female young person and it is never appropriate for this to be done with no one else present.

Touching

Any form of touching which could be misinterpreted, either by the one being touched or by an observer, should be avoided at all costs. It is the responsibility of the leader to ensure that this type of behaviour does not occur on his/her part, and that s/he takes a very respectful but firm stand if there is any such behaviour initiated by someone else. **Any form of touching can be misinterpreted, either by the one being touched or by an observer.**

Transportation

Negligent driving can have painful emotional and legal consequences. Anyone who cannot/does not drive responsibly must not transport program attendees. Vehicles need to be driven carefully, observing the legal speed limits and road laws.

- Responsible transportation is to be provided (road rule-abiding)
- Never be alone in a car with a child or other vulnerable person
- A driver should never be alone in a car with only children of the opposite gender
- At no time, should there more passengers in a car than the number of seat belts that are in working order and available for use
- All cars will be registered, in good working order and driven by licensed drivers
- If a child/young person is travelling in a vehicle driven by someone who possesses a provisional license, prior written consent should, wherever possible, be given by a parent/guardian, except in the case of emergencies.

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