

## Little Blessings

The Little Blessings program offers supervised care, play, and fellowship for independently mobile pre-school children within the same building as their parents or guardians during the latter part of the Sunday morning worship service.

### Little Blessing Workers.

Little Blessings always has at least one rostered church member who has a current Working with Children Check and has completed a Safe Ministry Check. If there are more than 5 children in Little Blessings, a second Little Blessings worker or teen helper or parent helper is required. Volunteer helpers who are a teen or a parent of a child present in the group do not require Working with Children Check although it is the church policy for regular volunteer helpers be both church members and have Working with Children and Safe Ministry checks.

### Forms & sign in.

As the Little Blessings program is now being run in the cry room immediately adjacent to the worship area with both windows and a glass door, we do not require parents to sign in or out their children. The Little Blessings worker will keep an attendance for the session. A parent or guardian is required to remain in the worship space during the Little Blessings program to be able to attend to any medical or toileting needs of the child when required.

Parents of children regularly attending Little Blessings are required to complete F004 Children and Youth Programs Enrolment form. They are also required to disclose any details of allergies or medical conditions impacting their child. Parents of children with anaphylaxis are required to bring the EpiPen to church and be readily available at need. If a child is going to regularly attend Little Blessings without their parents attending the church service, the normal enrolment form should be taken home and filled out by the parent who then nominates on the form the responsible adult who will be at church with the child. Parents of visiting (unenrolled) will need to fill out and sign their name and their child's name on the attendance sheet

## **Parental care**

In the event of a child requiring the toilet, or a nappy change, the Little Blessings worker will return the child to its parents, to attend their needs. The parent can return the child to the Little Blessings room when the child has been assisted.

In the event of illness, medical emergency, or sustained behaviour that is inappropriate or harmful, a Little Blessings worker will return the child to the parent for attention, or request the parent to attend in Little Blessings.

## **Physical Contact**

It is unlawful for any person other than the parents or legal guardian of a child, to physically discipline a child. A parent or guardian cannot pass that authority to another person. Under no circumstances is a child to be physically disciplined by a Little Blessings worker and every reasonable effort must be made to prevent a child being disciplined by another adult or older child.

Physical contact with children is to be kept to a minimum, and only for the appropriate care of the child: e.g. supporting an elbow to steady a child, leading by the hand from one area to another, or touching the shoulder, hand or elbow to get their attention.

## **Comforting a child**

A child may seek physical comfort from workers or helpers. The method encouraged is to sit beside the child, with an arm about their shoulder. If the child tries to hug, climb, or sit on your lap, workers may briefly return a hug but then should gently move to being seated beside the child and comfort with more minor body contact.

If the child is not comforted and willing to reengage in play within 5 minutes, the worker will request a parent to care for the child in the Little Blessings room if appropriate or to take the child back into their care.

## **Restraining a child**

Physical restraint should only be used in emergency circumstances where a child is at real risk of harming themselves, or others. Take the child’s hands firmly, or firmly hold their arms to their side. If restraint has been used, the parent must be called to take care and control of the child as soon as is possible.

## **Concerns of parents**

If a parent or carer has a concern they would like to discuss with a Little Blessings Worker, arrange for another worker or the Little Blessings Coordinator to also be present in that meeting, and hear the concerns.

If the matter is not resolved at the initial meeting, arrange a future meeting. Report the matter to the Little Blessings co-ordinator. The co-ordinator will follow up with Leadership, and the Pastor if necessary. The co-ordinator will sit in on the subsequent meeting.

## **Disclosures of risk of harm**

If a child displays behaviour, or visible physical marks which raise concern that the child may be at risk of abuse or neglect, this concern **MUST** be reported to the Pastor as soon as possible and a “Risk of Significant Harm Disclosure” Form 001 must be completed.

If a child says or reports to you information which raises the same concern as above, firstly, listen to the child. Let them know you have heard what they said. **DO NOT** question the child further, but report your concern as soon as is practical to the Pastor and complete a “Risk of Significant Harm Disclosure” Form 001.

Depending on the situation, the Pastor may initiate any of the following: a meeting with the parents, reporting to the BUV Professional Standards Worker, reporting to Child Protection or Victoria Police. Current Victorian legislation requires the mandatory reporting of all sexual abuse of children.

### Approved:

Name / role: ..... Date: ...../...../.....