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## Liberty Hill Christian Centre

### Safer Churches Guidelines

## GUIDELINE 1 – Safe Church Strategy Implementation

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statements:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *Upholding this Policy, and the relevant state or territory Child Safe and Child Protection laws through the implementation of the ACC Safer Churches Guidelines;*
- *As an ACC Constituent church, LHCC shall regularly review, evaluate and improve child safe procedures and practices; and*
- *As an ACC Constituent church, LHCC will ensure that clear policy and procedural documentation is up to date and readily available.*

National and State Executives shall:

- a. publicly endorse and actively promote the ACC Child Protection Policy and ACC Safer Churches Guidelines;
- b. develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability in relation to the ACC Safer Churches strategy;
- c. maintain up-to-date documentation of all policy and procedures;
- d. maintain secure records for Credential holder's screening and training;
- e. maintain secure records of complaints of responding to concerns of risk of harm and all workplace investigations into Credential holder misconduct (including Reportable Conduct investigations in jurisdictions that operate Reportable Conduct Schemes).

LHCC Board shall:

- a. endorse and implement the ACC Child Protection Policy and ACC Safer Churches Guidelines;
- b. ensure all LHCC workers understand and adhere to their obligations in accordance with the ACC Child Protection Policy, including the implementation of the ACC Safer Churches Guidelines as minimum standards for the protection of children
- c. develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability in relation to the ACC Safer Churches strategy. Includes making Safer Churches (including Child Safety and Wellbeing) a standing item of Board meetings and providing opportunities for LHCC People to clarify and confirm the procedures to apply when taking action in relation to Children's welfare and safety;
- d. maintain up-to-date documentation of all policy and procedures;
- e. maintain secure records for worker screening and training, and of complaints of responding to concerns of risk of harm and all workplace investigations into worker misconduct (including Reportable Conduct investigations in jurisdictions that operate Reportable Conduct Schemes); and

f. implement relevant ACC Safer Churches procedures and practices.

## **GUIDELINE 2 – Culture of Safety & Wellbeing**

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statements:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *Child safety and wellbeing in a way that recognises their right to grow in a safe and stable environment and the right to be protected from harm by having a zero-tolerance stance for all forms of child abuse and maltreatment; and*
- *Recognising and responding to the diverse needs of all Children including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and also the safety of Children with a disability as relevant in the local church setting*

LHCC Church workers (paid and volunteer) shall minister out of the love God has for everyone, by acting in the best interests of all people they serve in ministry, through:

- a. practising servant leadership (Matthew 20:25-28);
- b. respecting and valuing all people, with special care for those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island or diverse cultural backgrounds, and/or those with a disability including:
  - i. encouraging and supporting a child's ability to express and enjoy their culture; and
  - ii. acknowledging and appreciating the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and understanding its importance to the wellbeing and safety of First Nations children;
- c. ensuring racism, along with all forms of discrimination and abuse within the organisation are identified, confronted and not tolerated;
- d. ministry in transparent and accountable teams
- e. upholding National Privacy Principles; and
- f. providing opportunities for formal debriefing and/or counselling for families of Children or Young People who have experienced abuse and any other family in the community who may indirectly be affected by an incident.

In relation to Children, it is recommended that LHCC People support healthy development and wellbeing through:

- a. understanding and upholding the rights of Children according to their age and stage of development;
- b. providing regular opportunities for workers to clarify and confirm the procedures to apply when taking action in relation to Children's welfare and safety; and

c. good practice in accessing local resources when Children are experiencing distress or crisis.

### **GUIDELINE 3 – Promoting Support Networks**

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statements:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *recognising the family as the primary means of providing for the nurture, care and protection of Children and to accord high priority to supporting and assisting the family to carry out its responsibilities to Children,*

It is recommended that LHCC:

- a. provide practical pastoral care.
- b. assist church attendees to recognise and access their support networks within the church and also in the local community; and

### **GUIDELINE 4 – Promoting Empowerment and Participation**

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statement:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *empowering Children by engaging with Children and Young People and Caregivers in relation to decisions that impact them, including inviting feedback as part of our services,*

LHCC Church workers (paid and volunteer) shall:

- a. listen to the views of, and respond appropriately to, concerns of all people they serve; and
- b. encourage all church attendees to speak to the Safer Churches Person if they are concerned about harmful behaviours or harmful situations.

In relation to Children, LHCC People shall:

- c. actively promote the empowerment and participation of all people at their church in the protection of Children, including:
  - i. providing opportunities for Children to tell us their views, express their culture, and give feedback about the services we provide to them;
  - ii. making information about the Child Protection Policy available to Children in an age appropriate way, and Parents/Carers;
  - iii. ensuring that Children have access to adequate and age-appropriate information about child safety and how to protect themselves;

- iv. ensuring that Children have access to adequate support to promote safety and intervene early in concerns that they raise; and
- v. listening to Children and appropriately addressing any concerns that they raise with us, that is consistent with the paramount concern to protect the Child from harm and promote the Child's development.

## **GUIDELINE 5 – Appointment of Workers (paid and volunteer)**

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statement:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *Ensuring that persons who have a Direct Role with Children within the movement are appropriately selected, screened, trained, supervised and performing their responsibilities, including ongoing education and equipping.*

LHCC shall:

- a. screen, appoint, and induct all workers (paid and volunteer) using a formal accountable/transparent process, including:
  - i. compliance with State and Territory legislation with regard to Working with Children Checks
  - ii. self-declarations, including Code of Conduct
  - iii. referee checking (at least two referees); and
  - iv. police background checking for paid employees.
- b. provide adequate and role-relevant induction training as required by Health and Safety legislation;
- c. store securely and permanently all successful applicant worker appointment documentation; and

An individual must not be permitted to commence or continue in any role if they have been charged with, or convicted of, an offence that would make them ineligible for a Working with Children Check clearance.

It is illegal in all Australian States and Territories for a person who does not hold, or is unable to obtain, a valid Working with Children Check to engage in any child-related work.

The church board will need to complete a full risk assessment to ascertain the current risks, and then implement a risk mitigation strategy to protect children and young people. This risk assessment must include seeking advice from the ACC Safer Churches Helpline and the church insurance company. LHCC People who have been charged or convicted of a crime that would make them ineligible to be

granted a Working with Children Check clearance have an ongoing obligation to inform LHCC of this matter.

## **GUIDELINE 6 – Safer Churches Training**

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statement:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *Ensuring that persons who have a Direct Role with Children within the movement are appropriately selected, screened, trained, supervised and performing their responsibilities, including ongoing education and equipping*

ACC Credential holders shall complete ACC Safer Churches training every three years at a minimum in order for Credentials or Certificates to be renewed.

This training develops the Credential Holder's awareness of their responsibilities under the ACC Child Protection Policy and ACC Safer Churches Guidelines.

ACC Safer Churches training includes understanding the concepts of child protection including knowledge of indicators of Child at risk of harm (e.g. abuse and neglect), and reporting procedures for when there are risk of harm concerns about a Child.

LHCC shall provide people who have a Direct Role with adequate training in the concepts of Child Protection at a minimum of every 3 years. Additionally, in states where specific legislation applies, such as Reportable Conduct and/or Child Safe Standards, awareness raising and ongoing training in the specific requirements of those laws shall occur.

Additionally, in states where specific legislation applies, such as Reportable Conduct and / or Child Safe Standards, awareness raising and ongoing training in the specific requirements of those laws shall occur.

This shall include indicators of Child risk of harm (abuse and neglect), and the reporting procedures for when they have risk of harm concerns about a Child who is involved in the church.

LHCC will provide all volunteers with adequate, appropriate, and ongoing training in Safer Churches related policy, procedures and practices.

## **GUIDELINE 7 – Supervision of Workers (paid and volunteer)**

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statement:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *ensuring that persons who have a Direct Role with Children and Young People within the movement are appropriately selected, screened, trained, supervised and performing their responsibilities, including ongoing education and equipping,*

LHCC shall:

- a. ensure all workers (paid and volunteer) have been provided with a Code of Conduct appropriate for their role and have agreed to uphold the requirements of it;
- b. adequately and appropriately supervise all workers,
- c. provide adequate support for workers in line with Health and Safety legislation; and
- d. make adequate provision for developing workers.

## **GUIDELINE 8 – Responding to concerns**

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statement:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *Child-focused responses to all child safety concerns so that risks to a Child's wellbeing are quickly identified, and any necessary support, protection or care is promptly provided including child-focused responses to allegations of risk of harm or harm in line with Safer Churches Guideline 8*

LHCC shall follow relevant New South Wales legislation.

Response processes shall be child focused and uphold the rights of Children and Young People in line with Child Safe Standards.

### **Children**

LHCC will appoint a Safer Churches Person, whose roles include: receiving reports, assisting in the process of reporting child protection concerns, and keeping accurate records permanently and securely in accordance with privacy legislation.

LHCC People shall report concerns when:

- a. a Child discloses they have been, or are at risk of being harmed;
- b. someone else (regardless of age) discloses that they know of a Child who has been/is at risk of being harmed; or
- c. there are concerns that the Child may have been, or is at risk of being harmed based on their physical appearance or behaviour.

LHCC People shall

- a. put the rights of a Child to the protection of harm ahead of any cultural and religious practices of families in their ministry programs;

b. follow reporting procedures without hesitation in response to concerns no matter who is involved; and

c. co-operate with police and/or other formal investigation procedure.

LHCC People are not required, as an initial response, to establish or investigate if harm has occurred, but rather report reasonable suspicions or concerns of harm, including the grounds for concerns, to the Safer Churches Person/Authorised Person.

In making Child Protection Mandatory Reports in States and Territories where this legislation is in place, it is essential that you follow the process mandated for reporting.

If the Safer Churches Person is not available, and the harm is currently occurring, or there are reasons to believe that a Child is at risk, a report should be made immediately to the police and appropriate authorities.

### **Process for reporting:**

a. Report to the Safer Churches Person.

Report concerns to the appointed Safer Churches Person, except when a disclosure occurs at a program or event where the Safer Churches Person is not available. **If a Child's immediate safety is at risk immediately phone the police and organise appropriate support for the Child/ren.** This can be done with the help of the most senior on-site leader, who will also need to assist with managing the immediate situation. If the allegation involves the Safer Churches Person, then this should be reported to the most senior person available, who will take the role of the Safer Churches person in this instance.

b. Complete applicable form/s and/or online reporting.

The Safer Churches Person will keep permanent and secure records for LHCC, upholding privacy principles.

c. Take the appropriate action with the Safer Churches Person including:

i. police/government child protection agency reporting;

ii. contact the National Safer Churches Helpline (1800 070 511) for advice and assistance and/ or to ensure ACC is aware of all child-related matters of concern; and

iii. initiate the correct complaints handling processes if the allegations are about LHCC Workers/Credential Holders.

d. Provide ongoing support, pastoral care and risk management processes.

It is the role of the Church Board to implement pastoral care and support for all parties involved, including the Child and family, as much as is practical. There may

also be a Church risk management action plan that needs to be implemented, e.g. stepping aside a leader/Credential Holder who has been accused of harming a Child whilst the investigation occurs.

## **Adults**

LHCC Church leaders shall report to police and/or government agencies all concerns involving adults as required by their State or Territory Legislation.

It is recommended that ACC Church leaders follow good pastoral practice in relation to concerns of harm or risk of harm in adults.

## **GUIDELINE 9 – Responding to Conflict**

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statements:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *Child safety and wellbeing in a way that recognises their right to grow in a safe and stable environment and the right to be protected from harm by having a zero-tolerance stance for all forms of child abuse and maltreatment*

LHCC shall:

- a. consider the pastoral, legal, and insurance implications of the conflict or allegation, and respond with transparency and accountability;
- b. refer to the State Executive for implementation of the ACC Grievance Procedure for Credential holders when responding to allegations of misconduct and/or abuse by ACC Credential holders; and
- c. work through an appropriate process that affords natural justice to all parties when responding to allegations of misconduct and/or harm by those who are not ACC Credential or Certificate holders.

## **GUIDELINE 10 – Safe environments**

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statement:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *providing for and promoting a Child safe culture in both physical and online settings that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer or access an LHCC program, service or managed facility,*

### **10.1 Safe online and digital practices**

LHCC People shall be mindful of the position of trust they hold by:

- a. actively being safe in all online and digital interactions, including maintaining transparency and accountability in the use of electronic communications with

- Children as far as is practical, that is as a team, not as individuals and that it is informational not personal;
- b. upholding all legislation regarding the age of persons able to hold a social media account;
  - c. not transmitting, downloading or storing any communication that is:
    - i. discriminatory or harassing;
    - ii. derogatory;
    - iii. obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic;
    - iv. defamatory;
    - v. threatening;
    - vi. for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to the Code of Conduct relevant to their position;
  - d. reporting any communication to their Safer Churches Person that breaches the requirements outlined above; and
  - e. not sending any electronic communication that attempts to hide their identity or represent the sender as someone else.

It is recommended that communications with Children under 16 occur with the full knowledge of the Parent/s or Carer/s of the Child.

It is recommended that photos or videos of Children under 16 not be shared without the consent of the Parent/s or Carer/s of the Child.

## **10.2 Compliance with Work, Health and Safety Legislation**

It is recommended that LHCC:

10.2.1. elect a Health & Safety Team, including at least one Board member, to oversee implementation of WHS compliance;

10.2.2 implement Health and Safety policies, including privacy policy and evacuations procedures;

10.2.3 keep Health and Safety on the agenda at every Church Board and team meetings;

10.2.4 notify incidents such as serious events and dangerous incidents within a prescribed period to the Health & Safety Team;

10.2.5. address health and safety concerns within a timely manner of the concern being communicated to the Health & Safety Team;

10.2.6 use incident report documentation to report serious incidents to LHCC insurer and your ACC State Safer Churches Officer;

10.2.7. ensure all workers know and follow the church's reporting and grievance procedures; and

10.2.8 have the Health & Safety Team undertake a safe environment audit of all church facilities regularly and frequently

### **10.3 Program approval**

It is recommended that all Children's programs be approved by the appropriate leaders prior to commencing and are regularly reviewed.

### **10.4 Managing event and/or program risks**

It is recommended that ministry coordinators manage individual program risk according to risk management good practice, including annual risk management as part of the annual program approval process.

### **10.5 Safe physical environments**

It is recommended for the safe running of programs and events that the following matters are considered:

FIRST AID including:

10.5.1 at least one on-site leader should have current first aid training; and

10.5.2 suitable, up-to-date and accessible first aid kit is to be available at all times and in all locations;

## **TRANSPORTATION**

including:

a. never be alone in a car with a Child unless they are related to you;

b. at no time should there be more passengers in a car than the number of seat belts that are in working order and available for use;

c. all cars will be registered, in good working order and driven by licensed drivers abiding by any licence restrictions (e.g. Provisional licence passenger conditions); and

d. if a Child is travelling in a vehicle driven by a worker, prior written consent should, wherever possible, be given by a Parent/Carer, except in the case of emergencies.

## **FOOD SAFETY**

including:

- a. prepare a food preparation & storage practices guide;
- b. display food preparation and storage practices guide in the kitchen or food preparation area; and
- c. checking with the relevant council to ensure compliance with local requirements in relation to food handling.

**SUPERVISION NUMBERS** including:

- a. LHCC People should ensure that adequate numbers of leaders are present to supervise the program;
- b. precise numbers of leaders are hard to determine and will depend greatly on the size of the group, their age, and the level of physical and/or emotional risk inherent to the activity. Programs aimed at younger children and those with an additional need require more supervision due to the increased level of risk involved;
- c. when considering supervision numbers, risk assessment should include how supervision would be affected by an accident or emergency. Adjustment to required leader numbers should then be made to reduce any reasonably foreseeable risk; and
- d. an example may be requiring a minimum of two adult leaders on site for all programs in addition to the leader-to-participant ratio of 1:10. This will allow for safe supervision if and when accidents or critical incidents occur. Of course, many more leaders will be needed for high-risk activities such as taking Children off-site, swimming, bushwalks, games nights or the like, or if the group is large.

It is recommended that LHCC People running Children's programs:

- a. make the distinction between those adults who are part of the team, and who are junior leaders (under 18 years). Junior leaders are not to be counted in the supervision ratios;
- b. use additional adult helpers for supervision purposes if needed, even if not directly providing program activities to help ensure the safety of the Children;

Such adult helpers, though still Volunteer Workers, would not actually run activities, whereas junior ministry leaders may run many. Adult helpers are important to help ensure the safety of the Children.

- c. do not allow leaders or helpers to be alone, one-on-one, with a Child unrelated to them. Where possible, have both male and female leaders to provide support for both boys and girls; and

One adult with a small group may be fine as long as there are other adults on site.

d. in relation to camps or overnight settings, it is not advisable that leaders sleep in the same room as Children. Leaders should be sleeping in a designated leaders' space (cabin) nearby.

**MANAGEMENT OF HIGH-RISK ACTIVITIES** including:

a. for high-risk and off-site activities: e.g. water sports, swimming excursions, white water rafting/caving/bungy jumping, inflatable sumo suit wrestling, gladiator games, horse-riding, high ropes activities, roller blading/skating, skateboarding or activities involving live animals, an employee/leader with appropriate (certified) training for the event should be running the activity;

b. active supervision is required at all times. Supervisors must not be involved in any additional activities that will distract from their role as a supervisor;

c. all participants involved in high-risk activities should have a signed liability release from each Parent/Guardian. However, it is important to note that a liability release form does not actually indemnify against an accident. Individual leaders may be protected where all due care has been taken, but a church may still be deemed liable, where duty of care failures are proven; and

d. contact the church's insurer for advice before running high-risk activities as some high-risk injuries may be excluded from the Church's liability cover.

## **GUIDELINE 11 – Responding to incidents**

As an outworking of the Child Protection Policy statement:

*LHCC People commit to:*

- *providing for and promoting a Child safe culture in both physical and online settings that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer or access an LHCC program, service or managed facility,*

LHCC Church workers shall

a. respond to incidents appropriately and promptly and take adequate follow up action;

b. use appropriate report forms for all injuries.

c. report incidents of a serious nature to our local church insurer; and

### **Liberty Hill Christian Centre**

### **Safer Churches Guidelines**

### **Policy Owner: Julia Angrisano**

### **Governing Authority: LHCC Board**

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