

Cityside Baptist Church Children and Youth Supporting Children and Youth with High Needs Policy

Reviewed December 2016

Purpose

To ensure that Cityside is inclusive and welcoming to all who wish to be part of anything we do together, including children and youth who may need extra support to participate.

Guidelines

- 1. Every effort needs to be made to make the things we do together as Citysiders inclusive and accessible to all children and youth who wish to be part of them.**
- 2. Aim to develop a relationship that is inclusive and welcoming to all children and youth.**
 - 2.1. Consult directly where possible and regularly with all children and youth about how their needs might best be met.
 - 2.2. Give regular opportunities for children and youth to give feedback as to how it is going for them and to make suggestions.
 - 2.3. Consider each person and situation individually and make every effort to be inclusive. While sometimes we may need to acknowledge that our resources can limit what can be managed at a particular point in time, we always want to be working towards becoming more effective.
- 3. Prioritise developing a relationship of trust and open communication with parents/caregivers.**
 - 3.1. It is our hope that all Citysiders will work on noticing and welcoming newcomers in our midst, and will look for ways of actively including others.
 - 3.2. We work to develop positive, two-way communication with all parents and caregivers.
 - 3.3. Parents are asked to share with the people responsible for leadership of children and youth any information that would help us cater effectively for their child's needs and to keep them safe, both through conversations and by completing the *Child, Youth and Family Info Form*.
 - 3.4. Children or youth with high medical or behavioural needs need a clear emergency action plan worked out between the parents/caregivers and people responsible for leadership of children and youth, ready put in place if ever needed.
 - 3.5. The people responsible for leadership of children and youth need to ensure that the information in 3.3 and 3.4 is shared as needed with people who are working with the child/youth.

- 3.6. We will communicate regularly with all parents/caregivers and their children and youth about our spiritual formation planning and social events. Ways this could be done: directly in conversation, via email, Cityside Bits, verbal notices in church services, posted letters, Facebook private groups, posters up around Cityside.
 - 3.7. Parents are asked to support the people leading a programme or organising an event by communicating with them beforehand if their child/youth has particular needs, and by planning together to address those needs.
 - 3.8. Children and youth can do a great job of drawing in atypical people or behaviour when they have a little bit of understanding about it, but they may be shy and not know what to do when there is no explanation or support available to them to help them engage. Parents and leaders can foster these peer-to-peer connections by providing small bits of appropriate information to children or young people who seem curious, or to a group if something odd happens, using a matter-of-fact, calm and positive manner and encouraging inclusiveness and relationship rather than standing back.
 - 3.9. People organising Cityside events are often able to cater for special food needs such as gluten-free, dairy-free, low-sugar and vegetarian. It is helpful practice if you are organising something at Cityside to advertise to parents/caregivers beforehand if there is going to be food present so that they can liaise with you about what their child can eat, or bring alternative parallel food if needed.
 - 3.10. Children or youth must not be dropped off at a group or event unless the leaders can be confident that they can cater for their needs without compromising safety or negatively affecting the child or youth concerned.
Parents/caregivers may need to stay and support their child or youth, although we will also work towards recruiting and training other adults if needed to allow children or youth to participate more fully without their parent/caregiver having to be present.
4. Sometimes we may be unable to cater for a child with high needs at a particular point in time. Reasons might include a current safety risk to them or other children due to the nature of the environment, activity or adult to participant ratio. However, **it is important to review regularly and to work towards inclusion**, perhaps by:
 - Recruiting more helpers, and perhaps having a designated support person available
 - Gaining some skills or knowledge that would assist with the management of the child/youth's needs or behaviour
 - Modifying the building, equipment or food
 - Planning activities and events that will be inclusive of particular needs