

Mennonite Church Canada



Volunteer Screening for a Safe Church

2007

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: There are two documents that are foundational to this policy. The first is the Volunteer Screening Guide (Mennonite Church Canada, 2003). The second is the Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) policy A Plan to Protect Our Children, Youth & Leaders. We gratefully acknowledge the permission and assistance of Galen Peters and the staff of MCEC for allowing us to freely adapt their area church policy to serve as a model plan for the wider church.

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VOLUNTEER SCREENING FOR A SAFE CHURCH

I. INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTEER SCREENING

WHY

Safe church or abuse prevention policies are primarily written:

1. to make the Church a safe place
 2. to prevent and minimize the possibility of the occurrence of abuse
 3. to protect workers from false allegations of abuse (Mennonite Brethren Children's Ministry Policy on Child Abuse and Safety, 1992).
 4. In addition, insurance companies and the legal courts are considering the lack of such policies to be a sign of negligent behavior, which threatens liability insurance.
- Screening volunteers is primarily built into the recruiting and orientation stages, but it works throughout the volunteer leadership cycle from planning to evaluation.
 - **Every church should have written volunteer screening policies tailored to meet its own needs.**

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

POSSIBILITY OF ABUSE

Jeremiah 6:13-14 – "...and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace."

The topic of sexual abuse in the church can produce a great sense of uneasiness and a reluctance or even resistance to talking about it. For those who have experienced a deep level of trust and care in their own family and church lives, it is disturbing to consider its very existence. However, this is a situation that can and does occur, both inside and outside of the church, in Mennonite and non-Mennonite homes (Block, 1991. Assault on God's image: Domestic abuse). In our pursuit of peace and justice, "...we must remember that silence and inaction can perpetuate violence" (Barrett, 1998, p.6, A Mennonite statement and study on violence), and that it is our duty as leaders of church programs to talk about potential abuses and build safe structures that protect those entrusted to our care.

As Lois Barrett writes (p. 9) "When any congregation meets for worship, undoubtedly victims, survivors, and perpetrators of abuse are present." In addressing this issue, one must also consider that church volunteer programs are very attractive places for "...sexual predators. They have large numbers of children, a shortage of willing workers and a culture of trust that no Christian could be suspect of such exploitation..." (Bob Harvey, quoted in the CCCC Bulletin [Sept. 2002]). Our volunteer recruitment methods must be examined in light of this, and certain screens put in place to prevent easy access to our children, youth and other vulnerable members.

Duty of Care

For most of our churches there is a heavy reliance on volunteers to run children's Sunday School and youth programs. In these and other cases where there is a stronger, more powerful and responsible person and a weaker, more vulnerable person, we have established a relationship based on duty of care. Duty of care can be applicable to relationships between adults as well (for example, visiting senior citizens, teaching mentally handicapped adults).

Duty of Care is a legal term that binds us all. Generally speaking, it requires that a person exercises reasonable care (or a Standard of Care) towards another as the circumstances require.

POWER, VULNERABILITY & JUSTICE

Micah 6:8 – “and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Many of us are traditionally uncomfortable with the concept of power in churches. However, power exists in all relationships whether it is acknowledged or not. Not acknowledging the existence of power in situations can often lead to abuse within a relationship. Recognition of the power relationship can also help us to become better and more responsible leaders when the power imbalance is in our favor.

It may be helpful to think of power in relation to vulnerability. Imagining two people in relationship, usually one will possess greater resources and one will possess fewer. How the resources are defined can vary, but it is *rarely* unclear who possesses the greater resources in relation to the other. The existence of this dynamic leads to two presuppositions: First, that there is a greater potential for abusing if one has the greater resources, and second, that in a given relationship the person with more is accountable for the proper use of resources and abstinence from abusing those with less.

If we are to provide all persons with a chance for hope and healing, it will be based on the seeking and provision of justice for all. Foundational to this process is an environment of openness and frank discussion about power and the types of violence that exist in our interpersonal relationships.

References

Barrett, L. 1998. A Mennonite statement and study on violence. Winnipeg: Faith & Life.

Block, I.I. 1991. Assault on God's image: Domestic abuse. Winnipeg: Windflower.

Gallagher, B. 1999. Screening in faith, 1st ed., Volunteer Canada.

Hammer, R., Klipowicz, S & Cobble, J. 1993. Reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in your church. Church Law & Tax Report. Can order at <http://www.churchlawtoday.com> or by calling 704-821-3845.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Borrow or purchase the manual Screening in faith, which outlines a 10-step approach to faith-based screening. It is available for purchase from Volunteer Canada or the MC Canada Resource Centre, or you can borrow it from the Resource Centre.
- Website at www.mennonitechurch.ca/financehr/volunteers, which includes Listowel Church's safe church policy.
- Get a copy of Reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church, which may be borrowed from the Resource Centre or purchased by contacting Church Law Today. It guides church leaders as to how to educate the church on this topic, and provides a very useful video and audio cassette tape for this purpose.
- Call your local volunteer centre for a one-on-one consultation on how to develop policies.
- **Once you have developed a volunteer screening policy, get some legal advice** to ensure that you have comprehensive policies and an implementation plan that will suit the needs of all the people in your church.

II. DEVELOPING YOUR SCREENING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SOME GUIDELINES TO GET STARTED

- In order to have an effective screening policy, your church must write and implement one that suits its particular needs.
- It will be influenced by "...many factors: the province; the type of community (urban, rural, large, small, northern, southern); the nature of the programs being run; the belief system of the community; the age of the participant involved; and the socio-economic level of the program participants." (s.3.5, Screening in faith). If you are a larger church, you may have to devise additional policies and procedures addressing how to run a program where workers do not know children or adults – do you need sign-out and identification procedures, waiver forms for parents and guardians to sign?
- Select a group of 4-5 members of your church to write these policies, with further review done by qualified legal counsel. Consider how you will regularly train people on the policies (just having them on paper isn't enough).
- Planning and implementing a good volunteer program depends on recruiting (advertising, screening, interviewing and covenanting), orienting (interviewing, training, sharing faith statements and vision, codes of conduct or expectations, and procedures and guidelines), supervising (regular feedback, interaction, and recognition) and evaluating (the program and incorporating it into future planning). Screening is an element that is intertwined with all of these factors – effective screening is incorporated throughout effective volunteer management processes.
- To engage in an effective volunteer screening or risk management process, you will need to:
 1. Write **job descriptions** for each volunteer position (i.e., Sunday School Teacher, Youth Worker),
 2. Assess the **risk factors** associated in each job and classify the position as either low, medium or high risk,
 3. Determine **what screens are available** to you that will answer questions about the risks associated with that category and write your screening policies,
 4. **Recruit volunteers** with the job description, clarify the expectations of a person holding this position and apply your screening measures, and
 5. **Covenant with, orient and supervise** the volunteer.

The additional benefits of this kind of a process is that your recruitment will be much more effective, as people like to know what they are doing and what is expected of them in clear, written terms. This often leads to a higher satisfaction level among your volunteers and, subsequently, better retention of volunteers (good news for stressed recruiters).

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Ephesians 4:11 "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers."

Recruiting volunteer workers is primarily a people job, where you are trying to match the right person with the right job. As you go about this, consider the following points:

- Know what you are asking volunteers to do and know what qualifications they need to perform the job. Provide accurate and regularly updated job descriptions.
- Brainstorm areas of service in your program that might lead to a better use of skills and talents and to provide more opportunities for people to participate (could they be a Sunday School Supply Shopper or News Reporter)?
- Help potential volunteers to identify how their purpose, passion and gifts can be used to fulfill a need in the church – should they be working directly with children, more indirectly in support of the program (treasurer or curriculum coordinator) or not associated with the program at all?

Letting people know up front that you have a selective and intentional process of matching the right person with the right job sends a clear message that volunteers are valued, the people they serve are valued, and that high-risk positions are not open to all who express an interest.

ASSESS LEVELS OF RISK AND RISK MANAGEMENT

The activity of risk management can begin once you have described your programs and positions. You can then assess the level of risk involved in each service area and job by considering the question “**what could go wrong here and how do we avoid it?**” (s.3.1, Screening in faith).

POLICY GUIDELINES AND SCREENING MEASURES

Context

Set the framework of your policies within the following context:

- Church’s vision, mission or purpose and faith statements and the purpose or mandate of the particular ministry area.
- Purpose of the policy. Why are you writing this and who does it apply to? Is this an inclusive policy dealing with various forms of abuse of power, i.e., physical, emotional and sexual abuse? What about appropriate discipline in the classroom? Elsewhere? Include definitions of terms, including “duty of care”.
- Note that the denomination’s Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure (2000) Version 9.12.00 is the process that must be applied to all cases involving alleged misconduct involving pastors (available from your area church minister). Consider whether you have current hiring and sexual abuse/harassment policies for paid church staff in place or whether these need to be developed.

Screening Measures

- Volunteer Application Forms – you should have one for every volunteer. Think about what you need to know to appropriately match the volunteer with the job.
- Job Descriptions – you should have one for every volunteer, outlining the qualifications expected and the screening measures used for each position.
- Interviewing and reference checks – consider who will do this, and what kind and number of reference checks will be required (the volunteer’s former pastor or volunteer coordinator?). Who will keep records and how will they be stored?
- Requests for criminal and child abuse registry checks – the process is different in every province. Call your local volunteer centre or police for local information.
- Length of time a candidate must have been a “member” in the church prior to volunteering in a moderate to high risk position (what do you consider to be an acceptable definition of “membership” for volunteer purposes?). Currently six months to one year is the most common.

Operational procedures

- Consider team teaching approaches in classrooms to increase visibility of interactions.
- The church should have appropriate forms and guidelines for reference checks and other screening documents. Consider who will generate, have access to and control how documents are kept. Note that Canada’s Privacy laws will impact the kind of records you keep and how they must be stored.
- How will bathroom assistance and diaper changing be handled and who will do it?
- Obtain the necessary parental consent forms for off-premises and other activities.
- Think about how to structure typically one-on-one ministries, such as youth mentor programs, to provide more observability and less chance of isolation.

Physical Modifications

- Modify spaces that provide too much privacy, especially in the children's and youth ministry areas. Ministry areas should be observable. Add windows to doors and consider other adjustments.
- Consider field trips, camping trips and sleeping arrangements. How will the environment be configured to provide safe supervision and meet necessary individual privacy needs? How will emergency situations be dealt with?

Orientation

- In Canada, it is the law for all adults to report suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities immediately. You should make sure that all volunteers and adults in the church understand this, and you may want to include a list of the signs of abuse in your policy.
- How will you orient new volunteers to their jobs and help current and returning volunteers to transition to the new structure?

Supervision

- Random visits to classrooms and other activities should be conducted on a regular basis.
- Regular interaction, feedback and training on policies are a part of maintaining healthy volunteers.

The Church's Response to an Allegation of Abuse

- The church should not interfere in the investigation process, but will want to provide an appropriate response to all parties and their families. Immediately upon the report of a complaint, the accused should be removed from their position until the conclusions of the investigation are released.
- If an abuse accusation occurs, your church and its members will need to work through the process. A task force of 3-5 impartial members should be struck to process the issues surrounding the investigation and after the investigation. Churches are encouraged to approach their local area church and the denominational office for additional advice and support. Thinking about these issues and having clear guidelines beforehand will help you immensely in dealing with an allegation when and if it occurs.
- Some of the issues the committee should consider when writing policies are:
 - Contacting appropriate church leaders (lead minister, area church minister, denominational minister), lawyer and insurer
 - Communicating appropriately with the parties involved
 - How and what to communicate to the congregation
 - Confidentiality
 - Conflict of Interest
 - Obtaining pastoral care or counseling outside of the church for all parties involved, including family members
 - Assisting the congregation in processing the incident
 - Reporting transferring members confirmed incidents of abuse to the receiving church
 - Reviewing the process upon completion and report of the findings with an eye to improving policies and procedures

III. SAMPLE POLICY

POLICY AND RATIONALE

Vision: Healing and Hope - God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

There will be no tolerance for abuse, harassment or neglect by staff or volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable others at [name of Church] events.

These policies and procedures exist to prevent harm to vulnerable persons and to protect caretakers from false and wrongful allegations.

As participants in [name of Church] and the missional church, the writing of these policies clearly flows out of our mission to "...facilitate God's mission in the world, so that all people may find healing and hope in all circumstances of life." It is our belief that these policies will help us to create safe spaces so that we will facilitate God's mission in the world by protecting our most vulnerable and creating an atmosphere where peace and justice exist.

Insert the statements about POSSIBILITY OF ABUSE and POWER, VULNERABILITY & JUSTICE from pp.1-3 here

DEFINITIONS

In order that it is clearly understood what constitutes unacceptable behavior, some definitions follow.

DUTY OF CARE

For church programs there is a heavy reliance on volunteers to run children's activities and youth programs. In these and other cases where there is a stronger, more powerful and responsible person and a weaker, more vulnerable person, we have established a relationship based on duty of care. Duty of care can be applicable to relationships between adults as well (for example, visiting senior citizens, teaching mentally handicapped adults).

Duty of Care is a legal term that binds us all. Generally speaking, it requires that a person exercises reasonable care (or a Standard of Care) towards another as the circumstances require. One would be negligent in the eyes of the law if there was a failure to exercise a reasonable standard of care where the duty of care was present.

ABUSE

Abuse includes, but is not limited to, the types defined below.

- a) includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse (see definitions below);
- b) all child abuse involves the misuse of power;
- c) misuse of power takes place when people take advantage of the authority or power they have over **vulnerable people**;
- d) **vulnerable people** includes adults with physical or mental challenges, children, and youth under 18 years of age.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the act or intent of using physical force or action that results, or could result, in the injuring of a child or youth. It extends beyond reasonable discipline. Injury to a child or youth can be caused by over-discipline, which is not acceptable, regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse constitutes any pattern of hurting a child or youth's feelings to the point of damaging their self-respect. It includes, but is not limited to, verbal attacks, sarcasm, insults, humiliation or rejection. A child or youth who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behavior.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child or youth is used for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may also be considered sexual abuse if older or more powerful children or youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful. Sexual abuse includes behavior that involves touching and non-touching.

Types of sexual abuse that fall under the category of touching include:

- a) Fondling;
- b) Oral, genital and anal penetration;
- c) Intercourse;
- d) Forcible rape.

Types of sexual abuse that fall under the category of non-touching include:

- a) Verbal comments;
- b) Pornographic videos;
- c) Obscene phone calls;
- d) Exhibitionism;
- e) Allowing children or youth to witness sexual activity.

Child Neglect

Child neglect is defined as the failure of those responsible for the care of children or youth to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs to an extent that the child or youth's health, development or safety is endangered.

Harassment

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, disturbing, worrying or unnerving, tormenting or distressing with annoying labour, care or misfortune. Harassment can take a variety of subtle or overt forms ranging from name calling to physical confrontation. The "accessory role," whether by silence, laughter, or non-intervention, implies indifference to a particular viewpoint or even tacit approval and is therefore also considered a form of harassment.

Acceptable and Inappropriate Touching and Discipline

Corporal or emotional forms of punishment are unacceptable. Intentionally touching a child or youth in an area normally covered by a bathing suit is unacceptable (For girls a bathing suit is defined as a one piece suit. For boys a bathing suit is defined as trunk shorts).

Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling as well as carrying older children or having them sit on your lap all constitute improper touch. Unacceptable touch includes any touch a child is uncomfortable with even if the touch is well intentioned.

Acceptable Touching: Love and caring can be expressed in the following acceptable ways:

- a) Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully;
- b) Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting;
- c) Patting a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her;
- d) Holding a preschool child who is crying.

Inappropriate Touching: Inappropriate touching includes instances when the touching is initiated by a youth or child to an adult. Staff and volunteers must avoid the following:

- a) Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling;
- b) Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a **bathing suit** (except when assisting a child with toileting as outlined below);
- c) Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap;
- d) Being alone with a child;
- e) Massaging a child or youth.

SCREENING

[name of Church] assesses the responsibility of all leaders involved with each of its events involving children and youth. Depending on this responsibility assessment, various screening procedures are necessary. Any staff person or volunteer with power or authority over children or youth will be subject to the screening assessment and procedures laid out below.

Responsibility Assessment

Low Responsibility

- a) *[name of Church]* has administrative responsibilities only;
- b) events where children and youth do not attend;
- c) events where there are no planned activities for children and youth.

Medium Responsibility

- a) includes events where children and youth are in groups with more than one adult at all times.

High Responsibility

- a) includes any event with an overnight component;
- b) any event where personnel would have an opportunity to be alone with children or youth;
- c) includes any staff persons or volunteers who are in a position of power or trust.

Screening Procedures

Depending on the responsibility assessment, the following screening procedures will be employed to qualify staff and volunteers for medium and high responsibility.

Low Responsibility

- a) volunteer registration

Medium Responsibility

- a) targeted recruitment
- b) volunteer registration

High Responsibility

- a) targeted recruitment
- b) volunteer registration
- c) background reference checks
- d) minimum waiting period
- e) police record checks

a) Volunteer Registration: See suggested Volunteer Profile in Appendix A. Volunteer profiles will be kept on file by the designated *[name of Church]* staff person(s) and by the volunteer coordinator in charge of the event on site.

b) Targeted Recruitment: All personnel who fall under medium and high responsibility categories, whether volunteer or paid, will be asked to take a leadership position by an *[name of Church]* representative or upon approval of an *[name of Church]* staff person.

c) Background Reference Checks: Volunteers and paid staff who fall under the high responsibility category must give two suitable references, including the name of a current pastoral reference. *[Name of Church]* staff will keep these references together with the volunteer applications using the reference check form in Appendix B.

d) Minimum Waiting Period: Volunteers who fall under the high responsibility category need to have at least 6 months attendance at the *[name of Church]* congregation before volunteering.

e) Police Record Checks: All staff and volunteers who fall under the high responsibility category will need to supply police checks. Costs, if any, will be covered by *[name of Church]*. A record involving any abuse of children or youth will, in all cases, disqualify the individual from working with children and youth. Any staff person or volunteer who has been involved in leadership in at least two church sponsored events, and are deemed by *[name of Church]* staff as having no incidents against them, will be able to be involved in events without further screening unless their responsibility is high. Volunteers in the latter case will need to provide a police check.

Adults at events other than those recruited specifically by *[name of Church]* Youth sponsors and other responsible adults from congregations normally attend events along with their youth. Each congregation will be responsible for their screening. Screening of staff and volunteer leaders and sponsors from various area churches will be the responsibility of that particular area church.

Type of Event	Example	Personnel	Responsibility Level	Screening responsibility
Youth Overnight	Retreats; Service Opportunities	MC Can youth ministries facilitator	High	MC Canada
		Area church leaders of youth ministries	High	Area Church
		Youth pastors and sponsors	High	Congregation
		Volunteers and parents	Medium	Congregation
		Workshop leaders or guest speakers	Medium	Sponsoring organization
Youth Overnight	Travel/Bus Trips	MC Can youth ministries facilitator	High	MC Canada
		Area church leaders of youth ministries	High	Area Church
		Youth pastors and sponsors	High	Congregation
Children, Youth and Jr. Youth Day Events	Special Activities	Area church ministers and leaders of youth ministries	High	Area Church
		Youth pastors	High	Congregation
		Workshop leaders or guest speakers	Medium	Sponsoring organization
		Sponsors and volunteers	Medium	Congregation
Nursery Care	Sundays	Care givers	High	Congregation
Sunday School	Sundays	Teachers	High	Congregation

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR PROVIDING SAFE SPACES AND PREVENTING ABUSE AT EVENTS FOR YOUTH AND CHILDREN

PREMISES

Premises is defined as any location at which an official *[name of Church]* event is being held and can also include the period of transit between two locations.

Open Door Policy

Facilities with doors in windows will be preferred. If no windows exist in doors for rooms being used, an open door policy will be employed unless two or more adults are present in the room.

Team Approach

The team approach is defined as always having two or more adults present on the premises. An adult is defined as anyone 18 years of age and over.

Monitor Designation

*[Name of Church]*_ staff or volunteers responsible for any given event will monitor all rooms periodically.

Access/Entry

If possible only one outside door will be unlocked during the event. Once registration is over this door will be locked if possible.

DOCUMENTATION

Documentation pertaining to staff, volunteers, and special events will be kept on file indefinitely.

Definitions

a) **Documentation** includes the following:

a) **Police checks,**

b) **Volunteer registration,**

c) **Accurate lists of participants and contact information.** Lists are made up for each special event and preschool activity and kept in a safe place at the event during the event (see Appendices C and D).

b) **Staff** is defined as any person at an *[name of Church]*_ event under the employ of *[name of Church]*_ (this excludes people receiving honorariums).

c) **Volunteer** is defined as any person who has been asked by an *[name of Church]*_ staff person or the designated volunteer coordinator to assist at a *[name of Church]*_ event (e.g. in food preparation, parking, registration, worship, etc.)

Parental Consent

Unless otherwise noted, congregations will be responsible for obtaining parental consent for attendance at *[name of Church]*_ events (see Appendix E).

GENERAL OPERATING PROCEDURES

Team Approach

At all *[name of Church]*_ sponsored events involving children and youth, a **team approach** will be employed to ensure that there are always two or more adults present. In rare circumstances, a *[name of Church]*_ staff member who has undergone the appropriate screening outlined in the "Screening" section may be in a situation where she or he will be alone with a group of youth. To guarantee accountability in this situation, the following points will be adhered to:

- a) The staff member will ensure that at least one other staff member is fully aware of the nature and location of the event,
- b) The staff member with the group will be clear to at least one other staff member about beginning and end times for meetings,
- c) The appropriate administrative assistant will have clear information concerning location and schedule for the meeting.

Out of Program and Off-Premises Contact

a) **Out of Program Contact:** Staff and volunteers running *[name of Church]*_ programs are strongly discouraged from social contact with children and youth outside of the program.

b) **Off-Premises Contact:** Contact between *[name of Church]*_ staff and adults running *[name of Church]*_ programs with children or youth off of the **premises** is not allowed. Children and youth are required to stay on the **premises** of an *[name of Church]*_ event at all times unless a specific part of the program requires groups of people to leave together and there is more than one adult present. In the case of an emergency where a child or youth has to go to a hospital, at least two adults shall accompany the child or youth.

Discipline

Reasonable Discipline is defined as the natural consequences for actions that are contrary to the stated rules or expectations of proper behavior at *[name of Church]*_ events; it will not involve physical contact or verbal or emotional abuse

Physical forms of discipline are not acceptable. Corporal punishment as a form of discipline is prohibited.

If staff or a volunteer person needs to talk with an individual child or youth in confidence, the conversation will be held in the presence of another adult or out of earshot but in view of at least one other adult. If this is not possible the staff or volunteer person must be accountable to another adult for any time spent with an individual child or youth one on one. This will be done by indicating to another adult the amount of time that will be spent with the individual child or youth.

Preschool Health, Safety, Sanitation Issues & Documentation

When child care is provided at *[name of Church]* events for preschool aged children there must be a sign-in sheet. An accurate sign-in procedure will include each child's name, the parent's name and parent's location during that period of time. Space on the sign-in sheet will be provided for parents to list any special needs. Preschool children should not be received into the program until properly signed in. Security precautions are to be taken for all children admitted to preschool and nursery programs. A child will be released to a parent or representative only on the basis of a signature (see Appendix D).

Child care workers will use a **team approach** with at least one **adult** on the team.

As a general rule, staff in the nursery will not be expected to change diapers. However, in the event that a diaper change becomes necessary the following rule will apply:

- a) Diaper change must always take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child being changed and the other children and workers in the room.

Covenant

This policy and procedures manual will be made available to all staff and volunteers working with vulnerable persons for each event. All *[name of Church]* staff and volunteers working in programs and events with vulnerable persons will be obligated to sign a covenant indicating that they have read and understood these policies and procedures (see Appendix G).

The policy will be reviewed annually with all staff and volunteers.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS: PROTOCOL AND GUIDELINES

All adults are expected by law to report suspected child abuse to the proper authorities. It is role of the local child & family protection agency or police department to investigate whether or not abuse has occurred.

1. Suspicions of potential child abuse may be raised in a number of ways, including: actual witnessing of an abusive incident, observing physical or psychological signs; symptoms of abuse with no actual report by the child; hearing a report from the victim or another child. Staff and volunteers will take seriously any report of a child of perceived abuse.
2. While it may, at times, be appropriate to ask a child how an **observed symptom** appeared, it is **never** appropriate to ask any leading questions which might suggest to a child that she or he has been abused or suggest names, places or methods of abuse. Further, no person shall conduct any investigation or question any individuals regarding suspected child abuse unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate authorities. Such investigations can be undertaken only by the local child & family protection agency or the police, as appropriate.

Observed symptoms include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- any unusual cuts, bruises or lacerations on the body.
- abnormal behavior unbecoming the child or youth in question.

3. Any *[name of Church]* volunteer or employee having reasonable suspicion of the abuse of a child attending a church event should indicate this immediately to the *[name of designated staff person]* or their appropriate designate. They will assist in determining what constitutes proper reporting in accordance with the laws of the province.
4. If step 3 would in any way delay the reporting of suspected abuse to the authorities, persons are expected to call the proper authorities directly.
5. A report of suspected child abuse may initially be on a consultative basis without revealing the identity of any person involved, but if the local child & family protection agency or the police representative indicates that an investigation

must be undertaken, then all pertinent information must be provided. *[Name of Church]* staff will assist with this process as necessary.

6. It is expected that any witness(es) to **observed symptoms** or events raising concern regarding abuse of children or youth will document their observations in an **incident report form** (see Appendix F), including:
 - a) specific signs of **observed symptoms**;
 - b) any report of abuse made by the child or others, or any witnessed event that raised the suspicion; as well as
 - c) the date and time relating to any of the above; and
 - d) any response the child made to any of the above.

Incident report forms for significant injury during a *[name of Church]* sponsored activity or suspected abuse must always be completed. This documentation will be kept by the *[name of designated staff person]* in a confidential file indefinitely. (See Appendix F)

This report is to be written and signed as soon as possible after appropriate reporting to the authorities. The report will then be provided to the *[name of designated staff person]*. A log of all follow up involvements regarding this concern will be maintained by those involved.

7. Any report and subsequent documentation of suspected child abuse is to be considered and treated as confidential. Access to this information will be limited to specified persons in *[name of Church]* responsible for providing leadership in this area and to the authorities responsible for investigation. In so far as is legally possible, assurance of confidentiality will be provided for both the alleged victim and perpetrator. When required, an *[name of Church]* service provider (for example, an attorney, insurance broker or carrier) will also have access. We will refrain from admitting liability or from making public statements without obtaining formal legal counsel.
8. Notification of the child or youth's parents or guardian of the suspicion of abuse will be carried out by the proper authorities, not by *[name of Church]* staff or volunteers.
9. It is recognized that the witness(es) to any suspicions of child abuse will require support, especially once a report is made to the authorities. The *[name of designated staff person]* will assess what supports are needed and wherever possible will arrange to keep the identities of the involved persons confidential.
10. In order to facilitate confidentiality, witnesses are instructed to refrain from:
 - a. Sharing any statement made by the child with anyone other than the *[name of designated staff person]* or their designate and the authorities until the authorities have determined whether or not the child needs to be protected from contact with the person in question;
 - b. Sharing information with the parent or any other person that has not been reported to the authorities.
 - c. Attempting to convince a parent that the alleged abuse happened or did not happen.
11. Witnesses are encouraged to
 - a. Listen to any information a parent or other party may offer about the suspected abuse, recording it immediately after the conversation, and ensuring that the additional information is reported in a manner consistent with the original report of the suspected abuse;
 - b. Assure parents of the confidential nature of the report and the need to maintain confidentiality.
12. Appropriate precautions must be undertaken to ensure that the victim of abuse and other children at the event or subsequent events are kept safe during the ongoing investigation by authorities. Such precautions should include the following:
 - a. If the accused is an employee or volunteer of *[name of Church]* she or he will immediately be suspended from her or his office or duty, pending the outcome of the investigation.
 - b. The suspension will be carried out with full pay (for paid personnel) and without prejudice.
 - c. Suspension shall be given in such a way that the investigation by the proper authorities will not be jeopardized.
 - d. The suspension from duties will not be viewed or accepted as the "guilt" of the accused, but only as an indication of the priority given to protect the victim(s).
 - e. An official will be designated to disclose to the conference staff and the congregations involved the facts, as known at the time, without disclosing any names of persons involved.
 - f. All of the above steps will be carried out in consultation with the authorities.

13. Plans for pastoral and possibly clinical support of all parties involved will be developed as soon as the investigation is under way.
14. The decision whether or not to reinstate the accused to his or her previous position or duty will be dependant on the outcome of the investigation. Reinstatement will be done only if it is deemed safe and proper to do so; therefore, in consultation with the proper investigative bodies, legal counsel and child abuse experts. If the accused is reinstated, efforts will be made to restore strained relationships and facilitate a healing process.
15. In the event of prosecution resulting in conviction, the abuser will not be restored to his or her previous position or duty within [name of Church].

Appendix A

NAME OF CHURCH

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Date: _____

Name (please print): _____

Home Address: _____

Home Phone Number: _____ Work Phone Number: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____ e-Mail Address: _____

How long have you attended/been a member of this congregation? _____

1. List all previous church work involving children or youth. Please give name and address of church, pastor or supervisor (if different from pastoral reference below), type of work and dates. Please use additional paper if needed.

2. List all non-church work involving children or youth. Please give name and address of organization, supervisor, type of work and dates. Please use additional paper if needed.

Please list any other relevant skills, training and experience:

1. Please give a pastoral reference that we may contact:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Relationship: _____

2. Please give the name of a second reference that we may contact:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Relationship: _____

VOLUNTEER PROFILE & BACKGROUND AUTHORIZATION RELEASE STATEMENT

As part of _[Name of Church]_'s volunteer screening processes, we require that you sign the following volunteer statement regarding your volunteer profile and authorization for the release of background information.

Volunteer Statement: I hereby acknowledge that the information contained in this profile for childcare ministry is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for children's or youth ministry and, except in the case of the conscious giving of false information, I release all such references from liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such evaluation to _[name of Church]_ or its representatives.

Printed Name

Signature of Applicant

Date

Appendix B

NAME OF CHURCH

REFERENCE CHECK FORM

Date: _____ Volunteer's Name: _____

Name of Reference _____ Phone Number: _____

❖ *Introduce yourself...name, title, organization*

“_____” gave your name as a reference. They are applying to work with children/youth by providing childcare services at the [name of Church, activity and dates].

❖ *Ask if this is a good time to talk to them or ask if there is a more convenient time to talk*

1. How long have you known _____ . What is your relationship (i.e., supervisor, pastor) _____

2. Briefly outline the job and the key skills required

3. In your opinion, what key strengths would _____ bring to this position?

Use prompts/questions to assist, such as: could you say more, can you clarify

4. What areas or aspects of the position would create obstacles for _____

Again, use prompts/questions to assist, such as: could you say more, can you clarify

5. Are there any other factors/concerns/considerations that you think would be helpful for me to know as I determine whether _____ would be a suitable match for this position?

Thank you for your time

Appendix C

NAME OF CHURCH

Staff, Volunteer and Event Summary Form

Name of Event: _____

Name of *[name of Church]* staff person in charge: _____

Date of event: _____

Location:

Job title	Name of volunteer	Registration on file?	Type of screening completed

Appendix E

NAME OF CHURCH

PERMISSION AND RELEASE FORM

(Please make enough copies of this form to complete one for each child.)

_____ (Child's Name) has my permission to participate in all scheduled activities, including travel to and from various locations, as part of the [name of Church] activities.

This form will be kept by the Childcare Coordinator, and a copy of this form will be kept by those directly caring for your child(ren).

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian's Address: _____

Parent/Guardian's Phone Numbers, including cell phone and pager numbers that you may have with you: _____

Other pertinent information that we may need to know about your child: _____

I hereby give approval of the above-named Participant's participation in any and all programs and activities sponsored or provided by [name of Church].

Printed Name

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Will you pick up your child in person? Yes No (circle one)

If not you, to whom may we release your child? (We will require picture ID)

Name of authorized person: _____

Phone of authorized person: _____

Appendix F

NAME OF CHURCH

INCIDENT REPORT FORM (Confidential)

Time:

Date:

Event:

Location:

[name of Church] staff person in charge:

[name of Church] volunteer coordinator in charge:

Person making this report:

Details of incident or observed symptoms:

Actions taken:

Others Present:

Response of child or youth:

Signature:

Date:

Return to *_[name of designated staff person]_*

Appendix G

Name of Church Volunteer Covenant

As a volunteer with *_[name of Church]_*, I covenant to:

1. Bring my best skills and abilities to my volunteer work and perform all assigned tasks to the best of my ability
2. Support the beliefs and values of *_[name of Church]_* and the implementation of its vision and mission while on duty as a volunteer
3. Abide by all relevant written policies and guidelines provided to me
4. Maintain strict confidentiality
5. Indicate to my supervisor when there is a potential conflict of interest situation
6. Fulfill the volunteer hours agreed upon
7. Accept supervision in the performance of my duties
8. Not represent myself as a spokesperson for *_[name of Church]_* or comment to the media unless approved by my supervisor
9. Participate in designated orientation and training sessions when provided to help in my volunteer assignment
10. Treat with courtesy each individual with whom I come into contact in the course of my volunteer work regardless of colour, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation or national ancestry

As a volunteer of *_[name of Church]_*, I understand that I may have access to confidential information, both verbal and written, relating to constituents, volunteers or staff and the organization.

I understand, and agree, that all such information is to be treated confidentially and discussed only within the boundaries of my volunteer position. I also agree not to discuss these same matters after I have left my volunteer position at *_[name of Church]_*.

Please sign below to indicate your acceptance and agreement with these terms outlined above.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date