

Lifecentre Church - Abuse Prevention Plan

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PROTECT THROUGH RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

Human Rights and Discrimination

1. The church is committed to treating people fairly, with respect and dignity, when hiring and recruiting, in accordance with applicable provincial human rights law.
2. Ministry Personnel will conduct their hiring and recruiting practices in line with applicable provincial human rights laws.
3. Ministry Personnel will avoid asking questions that violate applicable provincial human rights legislation in interviews and when checking references.
4. The church will be transparent about how applicable provincial human rights law permits religious organizations in certain circumstances to give preference in hiring persons or to hire only persons who are members of the same religious group or meet a creed-based qualification.

A. Recruitment and Screening Process

1. All ministry departments engaging the vulnerable sector must adhere to the recruitment and screening process.
2. Church Leadership and/or the Ministry Lead determine if an individual is a suitable or potential candidate for ministry.
3. Prospective Ministry Personnel are to submit to the recruitment and screening process managed by the Ministry Lead. Individuals will submit and complete the following:
 - a. Ministry Application Form (Including alignment to Church Statement of Faith)
 - b. Adhere to six month waiting period,
 - c. Face-to-face interview,
 - d. Reference checks.,
 - e. Police records check,
 - f. Training,
 - g. Final approval from Church Leadership.
4. Ministry Personnel must complete the recruitment and screening process prior to being placed in a Position of Trust.
5. Ministry Personnel who serve Children, Youth and Adults must have a personnel file kept with church records. These files are to be kept permanently.

A.1. Grandfathering Pre-existing Volunteers

1. Longstanding volunteers whose serving pre-dates 2024 will be grandfathered into the recruitment and screening process. Steps e, f, and g must always be adhered to. A Ministry Personnel file must be kept with all current and future relevant material.
2. Should a volunteer end their ministry commitment and at a future time desire to re-enter, they must adhere to the full recruitment and screening process unless it is within 12 months of serving, then only sections e, f, and g will apply.

B. Qualifications for Ministry

1. A minimum six-month waiting period prior to serving is required for individuals wanting to work in ministries serving the vulnerable sector. All prospective Ministry Personnel will have regularly attended the church for the previous six months.
 - Exceptions can be made in circumstances where the Ministry Personnel have transferred from another church of the same denomination in which they have been long-time members and are ministry workers in good standing or they are being employed by the church. In these circumstances, reference checks must be received from at least three individuals, including one from their previous minister or children's ministry director.
2. Ministry Personnel serving in a Position of Trust or leadership are members or adherents in good standing who support the doctrines, direction and by-laws or constitution of the church.
3. Individuals that have been accused, or convicted, or are under the suspicion of crimes against Children and/ or Youth, or who have been convicted of violent crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programs where Children or Youth participate until such time as they have been found innocent or the accusation has been found unsubstantiated.

C. Ministry Application Form

1. Prospective Ministry Personnel are to complete a Ministry Application Form. Student leaders are to complete the Ministry Application Form for Youth Working with Children.
 - a. Individuals who transfer from another congregation unknown to the Church Leadership must include contact information or a reference from a pastoral staff member of their previous church.
 - b. In accordance with PIPEDA1 regulations, the Ministry Application Forms must include the reason for which the information is being collected.
2. Ministry Application Forms are to be kept confidential and available only to the Ministry Lead, Church Leadership and/or the Plan to Protect® team.
 - a. Ministry Application Forms are to be kept in a secure location.
 - b. Ministry Application Forms are to be kept on file permanently.

D. Reference Checks

1. Designated Screening Personnel will conduct a minimum of two reference checks on all prospective Ministry Personnel. (Appendix 5).
 - a. Prospective Ministry Personnel must sign a liability release before reference checks are conducted.
 - b. Be sure that the references provided fit within the acceptable categories for Adults and for Youth who work with Children.
 - c. Reference checks are conducted by email or telephone to confirm the suitability and appointment of prospective Ministry Personnel.

E. Interview

1. Face-to-face (in person or by Zoom) interviews will be conducted by the Ministry Lead or an individual approved by Church Leadership.

2. Phone interviews are acceptable when prospective ministry personnel will attend a supervised ministry site visit by the interviewer.

F. Criminal Record Checks

1. The Screening Committee must identify the criminal record checks available within their region.
2. Criminal record checks must be conducted on all Ministry Personnel serving the vulnerable sector.
 - a. Criminal record checks are to be renewed every five years.
 - b. Criminal record checks are to be conducted on all Ministry Personnel 18 years of age and older and are to be kept on file permanently.
3. If a prospective Ministry Personnel has had a history with the Children's Aid Society, a request may be made by the Church Leadership for the individual to sign consent for a child welfare check.

G. Screening of Youth

1. Minors (Age 12+) who apply to work and volunteer shall complete the same screening requirements as Adult Personnel with the following exceptions:
 - a. No Criminal Record Check is required for applicants under the age of 18. When an active Youth volunteer turns 18, they will submit a Criminal Record Check within 3 months to continue volunteering.

H. Red Flags and Disqualifiers

1. Screening Personnel are to be trained on identifying red flags during the screening process.
2. During the screening process, Screening Personnel are to be alert to any red flags that may disqualify prospective Ministry Personnel from working with the vulnerable sector. When a red flag is identified, Screening Personnel are to bring the red flag to the attention of the Ministry Lead, Lead Pastor or their delegate.
3. Screening Personnel are to keep information confidential and information regarding red flags and disqualifiers will only be shared on a need to know basis.
4. The following red flags are to be automatic disqualifiers:
 - a. Any convictions of crimes against Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults or violent crimes, including but not limited to:
 - b. Child abuse, sexual or otherwise
 - c. Abduction, murder, or manslaughter
 - d. Incest
 - e. Rape
 - f. Sexual assault
 - g. Violent crimes wherein a weapon was used
5. The Lead Pastor and the Pastor's Council are to make a decision to disqualify or not to disqualify someone from a Position of Trust due to one or more red flags. Depending on the severity of the red flag, the decision may be made in conjunction with legal counsel and the insurance company. Their decision, reasoning, and steps taken to mitigate any potential risks are to be documented and kept permanently. No exceptions are to be made for convictions that fall under automatic disqualifiers.

6. Documentation is to be maintained permanently for all prospective Ministry Personnel applying to be Ministry Personnel. If someone does not qualify for a Position of Trust, the reason for disqualifying the candidate is to be kept confidential but is to be included on their personnel record which is to be kept under lock and key.

I. Plan to Protect® Training

1. An initial Orientation training on abuse prevention education is required for all Ministry Personnel serving with Children, Youth and those serving in a Position of Trust (check-ins and safety teams for example). All employees, Pastor's Council Members, Screening Personnel, Ministry Leaders must also go through training regardless of contact with children or youth.
2. Training must be conducted by a qualified trainer. The training must include a review of the Plan to Protect® Policy and all safeguarding procedures. Ministry Personnel are to be educated about their obligation to report suspected abuse and on how to recognize and identify the symptoms of abuse and molestation.
3. All Ministry Personnel are required to attend Orientation training prior to placement. All Ministry Personnel, employees, Pastor's Council Members, Screening Personnel, Ministry Leaders are required to attend annual Refresher training sessions thereafter.
4. Attendance is to be taken at all training events and noted in the Ministry Personnel file for each individual present.

J. Approval Process

1. All Ministry Personnel are to be approved by designated Church Leadership upon completion of recruitment and screening process.
 - a. Approval must be signed and dated.
2. The recruitment and screening process must be completed within a three month period of time
 - a. Workers in process of completing the recruitment and screening process are not to be placed in a Position of Trust.
 - b. The screening process can take longer where police record checks are back-logged or protracted.

PROTECT THROUGH DOCUMENTATION MANAGEMENT

A. Plan to Protect® Program Maintenance

1. Ministry leadership will be responsible for program maintenance, ensuring that training, the updating of files, and the physical environment are compliant with policy at the beginning of each ministry year.

B. Documentation

1. Registration Forms, Attendance Records, and Letters of Informed Consent(family forms, releases and waivers must be collected and kept on file.
2. Incident Reports must be written and submitted on all accidents and injuries.
3. Suspected Abuse Report Forms must be written for all suspicions, allegations and disclosures of abuse.
4. Documentation on screening and involvement of Ministry Personnel will be compiled in Ministry Personnel files.
5. All documents will be scanned, saved as a PDF or saved on the cloud in a secure format that cannot be easily manipulated. A secure backup of documentation will be retained, and files will not be overwritten.
6. Documentation mentioned within this policy must be retained permanently.

C. Documentation Storage and Retention

1. As there is no statute of limitations for child abuse in Canada, and extended statute of limitations for crimes and personal injury related to Vulnerable Adults in Canada, all documentation pertaining to program activities involving Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults shall be kept and stored permanently following the church's document retention procedures, and in compliance with the areas below.
2. Wherever possible, forms must be legible, include the date, location and full names of everyone present or involved, and include any explanatory notes which provide context. The individual who completed a form must be identifiable.
3. This policy applies to all documentation created and gathered in relation to Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. The documentation to be retained includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. All documentation gathered during Recruitment, Screening, Training of Ministry Personnel
 - b. Ministry Personnel files
 - c. Insurance policies
 - d. Registration Forms
 - e. Attendance Forms
 - f. Disciplinary memos of Ministry Personnel
 - g. Letters of Informed Consent (Releases and Waivers)
 - h. Transportation records
 - i. Rental agreements
 - j. Incident Forms
 - k. Suspected Abuse Forms

Documentation storage and backup

1. All documents and files pertaining to the church's activities, participants and supervision will be stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to authorized Ministry Personnel. A backup will be maintained, containing copies of all documents.
2. An online backup of all files will be maintained, hosted on a secure server.
3. Online storage will be password protected and secure (preferably encrypted). All information stored on the server will be done in an unalterable format (i.e., PDF or password protected) where possible, and the ability to delete items be removed.
4. Scans of all paper documents will be made, and added to the online storage. Where possible, use software that tracks all changes to stored information.

Access to archived documentation

1. Archived documentation may be needed from time to time, to verify someone's past history, for audit purposes, or to ensure accuracy. In all cases where the archived, stored information must be accessed, care will be taken to adhere to a transparent process.

D. Personal Information and Privacy

1. The protection of personal information is all of our responsibility. Therefore, it is the responsibility of everyone serving to ensure that personal information provided is kept confidential according to this policy.
2. All Ministry Personnel that have access to personal information must sign a Confidentiality Agreement.

3. The collection of personal information is limited to what is necessary for the identified purposes and will be collected by fair and lawful means. Personal information must only be used and disclosed for the purposes for which it was collected, except with consent or as required by law. It will be retained only as long as it is necessary to fulfill those purposes. In most cases, information that relate to minors and Ministry Personnel serving with minors will be retained permanently as there is no statute of limitations on child abuse in Canada.
4. Personal information must be as accurate, complete and up-to-date as is necessary. Personal information must be protected by adequate safeguards. Information about a church's privacy policies and practices must be readily available to individuals upon request.
5. An individual has the right of access to personal information about themselves and has the right to seek correction. Both these rights are subject to some exceptions as specified in each statute. The church must provide the means for an individual to challenge their compliance with the above principles. Please refer anyone requesting information to the Church Administrator.

PROTECT THROUGH PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

General Protection Procedures of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

Administrative Policies

A. Planning for Safety

1. All Ministry Personnel must ensure a safe environment in their planning and evaluating of activities.
2. Safety precautions must be posted and highly visible for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

B. Supervision of Ministry Personnel

1. For the protection of our Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults, supervision of all Ministry Personnel will be intentional and will take place through formal and informal visits to classrooms and programs by a Ministry Lead or a Pastor.

C. Lifestyle

1. For the protection of everyone, Ministry Personnel are to be committed to maintaining a consistent spiritual life including prayer, Bible reading, attendance at relevant events, planning meetings and worship services.
2. Ministry Personnel are to be role models of integrity at all times. Ministry Personnel are to refrain from activities that are illegal or could be considered morally and biblically questionable.

D. Ministry Personnel Identification

1. Ministry Personnel are clearly identified with a name tag or approved clothing which identifies them to Parents, Children and Newcomers.

E. Registration and Compliance with PIPEDA*

1. At the beginning of every ministry year, all program participants are to submit completed Registration, Medical Consent Forms and Media Consent Forms signed by their Parent. If paper, these forms are to be photocopied and originals maintained and filed permanently. If digital, these forms are to be printed and stored.
2. The Registration and Medical Consent Form will not replace specific Letter of Informed Consent Forms for activities that involve an elevated risk or for overnight trips.

3. The inclusion of 'liability shields' on permission forms has been considered for activities that involve a level of risk.
4. Letter of Informed Consent Forms for activities that involve elevated risk, are for overnight or off-site trips must be copied and brought with Ministry Staff in the case that a parent cannot be reached for consent.
5. A release and permission statement will be included on all Registration Forms releasing the church from unforeseen and accidental damages. For example:

I/We, the parents or guardians named above, authorize the Ministry Personnel of _____ Church to sign a consent for medical treatment and to authorize any physician or hospital to provide medical assessment, treatment or procedures for the participant named above.

I/We, named above, undertake and agree to indemnify and hold blameless the Ministry Personnel, _____ Church, its pastors and Board from and against any loss, damage or injury suffered by the participant as a result of being part of the activities of the _____ Church as well as of any medical treatment authorized by the supervising individuals representing the church. This consent and authorization is effective only when participating in or traveling to events of the _____ Church.

6. A statement will be included on all Family Registration Forms which stipulates the purpose and extent for collecting personal information of Youth.

Purposes and Extent:

_____ Church is collecting and retaining this personal information for the purpose of enrolling your Child in our programs, to assign the Student to the appropriate classes, to develop and nurture ongoing relationships with you and your Child, and to inform you of program updates and upcoming opportunities at our church. This information will be maintained permanently as it is a requirement of our insurance company and legal counsel. If you wish _____ Church to limit the information collected, or to view your Child's information, please contact us.

F. Attendance

1. Attendance must be taken each time a classroom, program or event is in session (including offsite events). These attendance records are kept on file permanently.
2. A record will be kept of Ministry Personnel on duty in each classroom or program. This record will be maintained with the record of attendance and kept on file permanently.
3. Attendance records must include the date, time, and classroom and everyone present (including visitors) during the program.

G. Outside User Groups (Renters and Service Providers)

1. If Service Providers are onsite when programming is happening for Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults, the Service Providers are to be clearly identified with a uniform or a name tag and are to always be accompanied and supervised by Ministry Personnel.
2. The criteria for Renters or outside user groups to use the church's facility include:
 - a. Renters must complete a Rental Agreement which must be approved by the Board or by a Ministry Lead.
 - b. Renters must provide a certificate of insurance, with no less than \$2,000,000 Commercial General Liability coverage and the church be named as additional insured.
 - c. Renters must provide evidence that they have a strong abuse prevention policy and protocol in place, including but not limited to screening and training of staff and volunteers, and minors may not be left unsupervised.
 - d. They must abide by the following for all activities where Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults are present:

- i. Two Screened Workers providing oversight; or
- ii. One Screened Worker providing oversight where Parents accompany their Children, or Caregivers accompany Vulnerable Adults.

Note 2: If these individuals and groups lack an Abuse Prevention Policy, we are not to provide them with one, rather, we will refer them to Plan to Protect® to secure their own copy of the *Plan to Protect®* manual.

4. In the case that the church partners with other churches, agencies or community groups for the delivery of a joint activity or event with Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults in attendance, Church Leadership requires that their insurance agent be consulted during the planning stage, to determine risks, insurance coverage and shared liability. A Ministry Lead is required to obtain written opinion from the insurance agent acknowledging the status of insurance coverage for these joint activities.

H. Misconduct and Accountability

1. Ministry Personnel are to refrain from all forms of misconduct.
2. It is the responsibility of the Pastors Council, Lead Pastor and Ministry Leads to hold each other and their direct reports accountable. Every member of a church must be accountable for their actions that could impact the reputation of the church, no one is exempt. This flows both up and down in reporting concerns. For example: Ministry Personnel are to be supervised and held accountable by Ministry Leads, Ministry Leads are to be supervised and held accountable by Staff Members, Staff Members are to be supervised and held accountable by the Lead Pastor, and the Lead Pastor is to be supervised and held accountable by the Pastors Council as a collective body.
3. As a community of faith, we reserve the right and freedom to bring to the attention of individuals anything we believe is compromising their integrity, walk with God, or could bring harm to the reputation of the church and cause of Christ. Individuals with concerns must follow Matthew 18 when confronting an individual unless they feel unsafe to do so. Matthew 18 calls for individuals to confront the individual alone first, and if they do not feel that the concern has been taken seriously, they are to bring in another. In the case of the church, they must then bring in the individual's Supervisor, followed by the Church Board. If a person does not feel safe to confront the individual (i.e., in the case of abusive behaviour), they must follow the whistleblower policy. (See Whistleblower Policy).
4. Individuals with concerns must follow Matthew 18 when confronting an individual unless they feel unsafe to do so. Matthew 18 calls for individuals to confront the individual alone first, and if they do not feel that the concern has been taken seriously, they are to bring in another. In the case of the church, they must then bring in the individual's Supervisor, followed by the Church Board.
5. With reasonable cause, Church Leadership reserves the right to look at staff computers, cell phones, and tablets that are primarily used for ministry purposes. This includes but is not limited to photographs and communication. Upon request, these devices must be turned over immediately. Staff Members must provide their passwords for their primary ministry electronic devices to the Office Administrator upon request.
6. All petty cash and expenses must be accounted for.
7. If a person is involved in a situation where a boundary is violated, or something occurs that is out of the ordinary or could be misinterpreted, or where such a violation or occurrence is alleged, he or she must immediately report it and discuss it with a Supervisor. If the Ministry Lead is unwilling, unable, or unavailable for discussion, he or she must seek out a Board Member or the Pastor to discuss the issue.

I. Disciplinary Action of Ministry Personnel

When a Policy or Procedure of the church has not been adhered to, the following progressive disciplinary actions are to be taken, depending on the given nature of the offence. Serious offences such as physical or sexual abuse, assault or theft will have zero tolerance (See steps 3 and 4).

Step 1 - Verbal Compliance Reminder

1. Ministry Personnel are to be given a verbal compliance reminder regarding the non-compliance or action.
2. Ministry Personnel are to be given an explanation of when and how the non-compliance or action took place. This will include the reason as to why the behaviour or action was unacceptable, such as a reminder of relevant policy or training.
3. Ministry Personnel are to be given an opportunity to explain the situation and their actions. This is an opportunity to give their side of the story.
4. Ministry Personnel are to be given a description of desirable compliance or actions.
5. Ministry Personnel are to be reminded that they signed a Covenant of Care affirming they would abide by the Policy and Procedures of the church. A copy of this may be given to them.
6. Ministry Personnel are to be informed of further steps that will be taken if non-compliance continues.
7. Ministry Personnel are to be notified that a note will be added to their file with a record of the verbal compliance reminder.

Step 2 - Written Warning

1. Ministry Personnel are to be given a written warning regarding non-compliance, unacceptable behaviour or action in the event that the behaviour or action had either been discussed in a previous verbal warning or the behaviour or action was considerably severe in nature.
2. Ministry Personnel are to be given an explanation of when and how the non-compliance, undesirable behaviour or action took place. This will include the reason why the behaviour or action was unacceptable.
3. Ministry Personnel are to be given an opportunity to explain the situation and their actions. This is an opportunity to give their side of the story.
4. Ministry Personnel are to be given a description of the desirable compliance or acceptable behaviour or actions.
5. Ministry Personnel are to be provided with a copy of the written warning and another will be placed in their Ministry Personnel file and shared with a Ministry Lead or Pastor.
6. Ministry Personnel are to be reminded that they signed a Covenant of Care affirming they would abide by the Policy and Procedures of the church. A copy of this should be given to them.
7. Ministry Personnel are to sign the document as proof of receipt.
8. Ministry Personnel are to be notified that future infractions will be addressed with further progressive disciplinary actions up to and including termination.
9. At this point it is recommended that the individual take additional professional development training in the area of the infraction or attend Plan to Protect® Orientation or Refresher Training again.

Step 3 - Suspension

1. Ministry Personnel are to be given written documentation regarding the suspension in relation to the severe non-compliance, unacceptable behaviour or action, in the event that the behaviour or action had either been discussed in a previous verbal or written warning, or the behaviour or action was considerably severe in nature.
2. Documentation must include information on the offence, the length and terms of the suspension and why the individual has been suspended.
3. Ministry Personnel are to be given an explanation of when and how the undesirable behaviour or action took place. This will include the reason why the behaviour or action was unacceptable.
4. Ministry Personnel are to be given a description of the desirable compliance, or acceptable behaviour or actions.
5. Ministry Personnel are to be provided a copy of the suspension documentation and another copy will be placed in their Ministry Personnel file.
6. Ministry Personnel are to sign the document as proof of receipt.
7. Ministry Personnel are to be notified that future infractions will be addressed with further progressive disciplinary actions up to and including termination.
8. Church Leadership are to be notified that an individual has been suspended.
9. During the suspension, the individual may be required to take additional professional development training in the area of the infraction and re-attend Plan to Protect® Abuse Prevention Orientation or Refresher Training.

PLEASE NOTE: Ministry Personnel suspended due to suspicions or allegations of abuse may have no contact with vulnerable individuals and may not be placed in a Position of Trust during their suspension. The suspension will **NOT** be overturned unless they have been cleared of any and all allegations or suspicions of abuse.

Where applicable, legal counsel, an insurance company representative, and Child and Family Services must be consulted prior to termination and reinstatement.

Step 4 - Termination

1. Church Leadership must be consulted and notified prior to termination of any Ministry Personnel.
2. Ministry Personnel are to be given written documentation regarding the termination and the breach of policy or process, or inappropriate behaviour or action leading to and justifying the termination.
3. Documentation must include information on the offence and any previous disciplinary steps documented.
4. Ministry Personnel are to be given a description of when and how the unacceptable behaviour or action took place. This will include the reason why the behaviour or action was unacceptable.
5. Ministry Personnel are to be given a description of desirable or acceptable behaviour or actions.
6. Ministry Personnel are to be provided with a copy of the termination notice and another copy will be placed in the Ministry Personnel's file. Ministry Personnel file documentation is to be kept permanently, even after termination.
7. Ministry Personnel are to be escorted from the location while maintaining the dignity of the terminated Ministry Personnel.
8. Where possible, the reasons for dismissal are to be kept confidential.
9. At Church Leadership's discretion, the individual may be encouraged to attend services, bring their Children to programs, and participate in community events held at the church.

Examples of Behaviour That Requires Disciplinary Action (not limited to)

1. **Verbal Compliance Reminder** (first-time, minor, or unintentional issues — coaching & correction)
 - a. A volunteer is briefly alone with one child in the hallway while waiting for a parent (violates the “never alone / two-deep rule”).
 - b. A leader gives a child an unapproved gift without checking the gift-giving policy.
 - c. Forgetting to complete the sign-in/out sheet or attendance record for one session.
2. **Written Warning** (repeated minor issues or a first moderately serious violation)
 - a. Repeatedly friending youth on social media or sending personal texts without parental consent and leadership approval (violates technology & social media policy).
 - b. Consistently failing to follow proper child-to-leader ratios (e.g., leaving the room understaffed multiple times).
 - c. Ignoring a reported minor boundary concern from another volunteer and not documenting or escalating it.
 - d. Providing pastoral counselling to a youth without a second adult present or without following the approved “Counselling and Pastoral Care” procedures.
3. **Suspension** (serious single violation or continued non-compliance after warnings)
 - a. Engaging in prolonged or inappropriate physical contact (e.g., extended hugging, lap-sitting, or wrestling that exceeds the “Proper Display of Affection” guidelines).
 - b. Failing to immediately report a suspicion or allegation of abuse/harassment (even if the person is not the accused — violates mandatory reporting rules).
 - c. Repeated violations of the same policy after a written warning, or conducting an unauthorized home visit or one-on-one mentoring session.
 - d. Deliberately bypassing training refreshers or refusing to update their ministry file as required.
4. **Termination** (egregious violation, pattern of disregard, or ongoing risk to children)
 - a. Deliberately isolating a child or youth for personal reasons (clear grooming-type boundary violation).
 - b. Multiple ignored written warnings or continued serious breaches (e.g., repeated social media contact after suspension).
 - c. Any behaviour that leadership determines puts children/youth at clear risk despite previous interventions (e.g., persistent refusal to follow ratios or supervision rules).
 - d. Violating the “Discipline and Classroom Management” rules in a harmful way (e.g., harsh, humiliating, or degrading treatment of a child).

PERSONAL INTERACTIONS

A. Occasional Observers

1. Occasional Observers who join a class will have their attendance recorded and kept on file with the classroom attendance for that day. Visitors do not need to be screened or trained. Visitors will be clearly identified as guests and should be coached on proper protocols for guests. Since they have not been

screened and approved, they will not be placed in a Position of Trust with Children who are not their own.

B. Bullying

1. Our Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, and Ministry Personnel have a right to a caring, respectful and safe church environment. An anti-bullying policy will therefore be in effect at all times and will be clearly communicated and enforced among participants and Ministry Personnel. All Ministry Personnel will take action to prevent bullying, teach against it, and assist and support Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults who are being bullied. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.
2. Bullying is defined as unwanted, aggressive behaviour that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and is repeated or has the potential to be repeated.

Types of Bullying:

- a. Verbal Bullying
 - b. Social Bullying
 - c. Physical Bullying
 - d. Cyber Bullying
 - e. Racial Bullying
 - f. Homophobic Bullying
 - g. Sexual Harassment
3. Any incidents, reports or suspicions of bullying will be acknowledged, reviewed and dealt with appropriately and immediately. All incidents, reports or suspicions of bullying must be reported immediately to the Ministry Lead.
 4. Appropriate action will take place based on the situation. Possible action may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Completing an Incident Report after each incident;
 - b. Notifying both sets of Parents after each individual incident;
 - c. Providing a warning that bullying will not be tolerated;
 - d. Suspension for one day/event if bullying persists;
 - e. Suspension for three days/events after next incident;
 - f. Prohibiting the bullies from participating in programs if the bullying does not stop;
 - g. If necessary and appropriate, contacting and consulting with police.
 5. All attempts will be made to work towards change of behaviour with the person who is bullying. Counselling and support will be recommended and if possible provided for the victim of bullying.

a. Harassment and Discrimination

1. Our church is committed to fostering an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment and one in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Every attendee of our church community has a right to equal treatment with respect to the receipt of services and facilities without discrimination or harassment based on the following prohibited grounds: race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, or disability.
2. A right to freedom from discrimination and harassment is also applicable where someone is treated unequally because she/he is in a relationship, association or dealing with a person or persons identified by one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination.

3. Every attendee of our church community, especially screened Ministry Personnel, is responsible for creating an environment which is free of discrimination and harassment. Those found to have engaged in such conduct will be subject to discipline.

C. Discipline and Classroom Management

1. The following forms of punishment are not permitted:
 - a. Corporal punishment of a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult by Ministry Personnel;
 - b. Deliberate harsh or degrading measures that would humiliate a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult, or undermine their self-respect;
 - c. Depriving a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult of their basic needs;
 - d. Locking or confining a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult in a room separate from others.
2. All discipline and group management are to be conducted in a loving and caring environment. All attempts are to be made to prevent discipline problems from arising and to avoid the need for remedial discipline. All attempts to provide discipline are to adhere to the following:

Preventative Discipline:

- a. Create a loving, caring atmosphere.
- b. To gain respect, you must grant respect.
- c. Model self-discipline and structure in your own life.
- d. Prepare exciting and interesting activities with short transitions in-between.
- e. Arrange your environment in an age-appropriate way and for learning.
- f. Establish and communicate realistic expectations for the Children and Youth.
- g. Be sure the activities that you provide are meaningful and age-appropriate.
- h. Be fair and consistent with all Children and Youth.
- i. Be sure your focus is on positive actions and reward positive behaviour.
- j. Be aware of Children and Youth with special needs and bring their needs to the attention of the Ministry Lead.

Remedial Discipline:

- a. Deal with problems individually.
 - b. Explain to the Child or Youth why the behaviour is unacceptable and instruct them how to do it correctly.
 - c. Redirect the Child or Youth to positive action.
 - d. Explain the consequences of unacceptable behaviour by defining the correct way to behave as well as the result of the wrong behaviour.
 - e. Offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the Child or Youth.
3. Group rules are to be established to clearly communicate the expectations required of Children and Youth. Some suggested rules are:
 - a. One voice talking at a time, and always use inside voices.
 - b. Use good manners.
 - c. Respect each other.
 - d. Quiet hands get answered.

- e. Obey directions the first time.
 - f. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
 - g. Be friendly.
4. Ministry Personnel must complete an Incident Report form when an individual is removed from a program or activity or if a Child is returned to their Parents. The Incident Report Form must include the behaviour that resulted in the discipline step, the steps taken and if needed, the expected outcome prior to returning.

D. Contacting Opportunities

We encourage leaders to build real relationships with kids and youth — but only within safe boundaries.

Simple rules to follow:

- a. Connect with children or youth mainly during regular program times. Any extra contact outside programs needs prior written approval from your ministry leader and parents.
- b. Never meet one-on-one in private. All extra meetings must be in public places, with parent permission on file, and your leader informed in advance.
- c. Group settings or having another approved leader present is always required.
- d. Keep doors open or use rooms with windows for any mentoring or counselling.
- e. For texts, social media, or email, follow our Technology & Social Media rules (always copy a parent).

a. Counselling and Pastoral Care

1. Ministry Personnel are prohibited to counsel* the vulnerable sector unless the counselling is approved by the Pastors Council, and then only by professional counsellors with appropriate insurance in place.
2. Pastors may engage in pastoral care but should refer clients to also seek out a professional counsellor if they show signs of being affected by the following, or if they require or request specific counselling to deal with any of the following but not limited to:
 - a. suicidal ideation,
 - b. signs of mental illness,
 - c. gender dysphoria,
 - d. self-injury
 - e. working through a history of substance abuse, or past trauma.
3. Pastoral care for children and youth must be conducted with an 'open door' policy. The door must remain open or in a room/space with a clear door window/line of sight to be seen by others, and with prior approval (including parent/guardian consent where appropriate). This ultimately is best done at the church during business hours with other ministry staff present.

Note: For the purposes of this section, counselling is referred to as the provision of assistance and guidance in resolving personal, social, spiritual or psychological problems and difficulties by a professional.

E. Gift Giving

1. The church requires that all Ministry Personnel demonstrate our commitment to treating all individuals impartially. Ministry Personnel will demonstrate the highest standards of ethics and conduct in all matters when dealing with:

- a. Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults
- b. All vendors and suppliers, both existing and potential
- c. Employees, Volunteers and prospective Ministry Personnel
- d. Any individual or organization with whom they come into contact

To demonstrate our commitment to these standards and behaviour, all Ministry Personnel must abide by the following gift giving policy requirements:

- 2. Ministry Personnel are to refrain from giving gifts to Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults unless the gift is given to everyone in a class or in a group/public setting or by parental consent and is in no means in exchange for services or favours.
- 3. No gifts of any kind, that are offered by vendors, suppliers, Parents, potential employees or volunteers, potential vendors and suppliers, or any other individual or organization – no matter the value – will be accepted by Ministry Personnel at any time, on or off the work premises if it is given as a means to receive benefit or a bribe including any business courtesy offered. This could include a product discount or any other benefit if the benefit is not extended to all Ministry Personnel, i.e., sale, special accommodation, registration spot, etc.
- 4. Exempted from this policy are gifts such as t-shirts, pens, trade show bags and all other tchotchkes that employees or volunteers obtain, as a member of the public, at events such as conferences, training events, seminars and trade shows, that are offered equally to all members of the public attending the event. This includes:
 - a. Food, beverages, and tchotchkes provided at events, exhibitor trade show floor locations, press events, and parties funded by conference or event sponsors.
 - b. Cards, thank you notes, certificates, or other written forms of thanks and recognition.
 - c. Food, beverages, moderately priced meals and tickets to local events that are supplied by and also attended by current customers, partners, and vendors or suppliers in the interest of building positive business relationships.
- 5. When a gift is offered, and it does not fall under the exceptions policy, Ministry Personnel are required to professionally inform vendors, potential vendors and others of this policy and the reasons the church has adopted the policy.
- 6. Ministry Personnel will request that vendors respect our policy and not purchase and deliver any gift for our employees, a department, an office, or the church, at any time, for any reason.
- 7. Certain gifts given to or received by Ministry Personnel may be appropriate given a context or situation outside of the scope of this policy. Church Leadership may make a written exemption to this policy detailing the reasoning and scope of their decision for any gift.

F. Dating

- 1. Ministry Personnel must not pursue, enter into, or continue any dating, romantic, emotional, or physically intimate relationship with a minor (anyone under 18) or with any child, youth, or vulnerable adult participating in or attending the ministry programs in which they serve.
 - a. This includes students/youth in youth group, Sunday Kids participants, etc., regardless of the minor's age of consent in law.
 - b. The prohibition applies even after the ministry personnel turns 18 if the relationship began while they were a minor in the program (to prevent grooming or ongoing power imbalances).
- 2. Ministry Personnel are encouraged to pursue healthy, consensual dating relationships with other adults outside of any power dynamic in ministry.
 - a. Ministry Personnel may date other consenting equals (including other volunteers or attendees) as long as:

- There is no supervisory or leadership authority over the other person in ministry roles.
 - The relationship does not interfere with ministry duties, create conflicts of interest, or affect the safety/environment for children/youth.
- b. If a relationship develops that could involve a power imbalance, it must be disclosed.
3. Ministry Personnel must immediately self-disclose to appropriate designated leadership any and all new intimate (psychological/emotional, romantic, or sexual) relationships that begin, particularly if they involve:
- c. Another person connected to the church/ministry (e.g., another volunteer, attendee, or staff).
 - d. Any potential conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety.

G. Home Visits

1. Ministry Personnel must secure permission from the Ministry Lead to visit individuals that are deemed Vulnerable Adults in their home.
2. Ministry Personnel are never to visit a Child in a home without a Parent/Guardian present at all times.
3. Ministry Personnel are to abide by the church's visitation procedures in order to protect both parties in these situations - the visitor and the visited.

H. Hospital and Nursing Home Visits

1. There must be at least two (2) unrelated Ministry Personnel at all events and for all visitation to hospitals and nursing centres, **or** the door must remain open with family members, nursing staff, **or** caregivers nearby or present.
2. When visiting Vulnerable Adults, Children or Youth in a hospital, a Parent or family member should be present, or visitation must be done with Parental permission and follow above (1) guideline.

I. Disabilities and Personal Support Workers

1. On Registration Forms, Parents and Caregivers are encouraged to list known disabilities. Upon registration, Ministry Leads are to determine how best to provide inclusive programming for individuals with disabilities. Ratios will be adjusted to provide additional support needed.
2. Ministry Personnel are to receive training on accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
3. If the church is unable to provide accommodations and support for individuals with disabilities, personal support workers may accompany the individual to the program.
4. All personal support workers shall comply with the church's screening and training process prior to taking responsibility over any individual.
5. If a personal support worker is personally hired and screened by a Child or Youth's Parents then the Parents will provide a signed form identifying the support worker as a private hire and provide copies of the criminal record check and references conducted.
6. A personal support worker who is not hired or screened by the church may only take responsibility over the individual they were hired to support, but may not supervise any other participants in a program, activity, or event.
7. All documentation regarding personal support workers and their screening procedures will be kept on file permanently.

J. Gender Identity

1. In the beginning, God created humans as relational beings, the inherent design of male and female reflecting God's image. Sexuality, our maleness and femaleness, is a dimension of our embodied existence. Sexual difference and complementarity are thus good features of our identity. While

identity, fulfillment, and the path to human flourishing are founded on a relationship with the Creator, in Genesis we learn that God made sex an expression of intimacy, love, and self-giving, to be experienced between one man and one woman in a lifelong covenant.

2. Given the inherent dignity of all persons, the church will not tolerate the harassment, discrimination or any language of hate or loathing towards those who hold a differing view on human sexuality. Ministry Personnel, and members of the church must treat all persons, regardless of gender, belief or sexuality, with respect and compassion. It is our desire to create a place of welcome and grace, and we are committed to creating a safe environment for all individuals. In light of this commitment, the church will take every reasonable step to ensure that its learning, working and living environments are maintained free from harassment and discrimination.
3. Every individual has a right to equitable treatment without discrimination with respect to accessing the activities or facilities of the church. No person shall be asked or required to 'prove' their gender (e.g., by providing a doctor's note, identity documents, etc.) in order to gain access to these opportunities.
4. Everyone who associates with the church community is encouraged to communicate using respectful, gender-inclusive language. Those who identify as a gender other than their biological sex should confirm with the church the name(s) and pronoun(s) by which they prefer to be referred. Everyone within the church community is encouraged to respect these preferences in their communication.
5. Intentionally addressing anyone within the church community by the incorrect name or gender pronoun is considered by the church to be a form of harassment and discrimination. Inadvertent slips or honest mistakes are not covered by this provision, but intentional and persistent refusal to acknowledge or use an individual's preferred or changed name or pronoun is unacceptable.
6. Disclosing the gender status of an individual associated with the church community without explicit and directly expressed consent or in the absence of a "need to know" circumstance is generally known as "outing". Outing in any form is not supported by the leadership of the church as it is recognized as a form of harassment that puts the individual's physical, emotional and psychological safety at risk.
7. The church will make reasonable efforts to ensure that all members of the church community can use washrooms with safety, privacy and dignity, regardless of their gender identity or gender expression.
8. Individuals within the church community have the right to express legitimate concerns about human rights violations they may experience in their interaction and engagement at the church without fear of reprisal. On the other hand, complaints made in bad faith are strongly discouraged since any accusation or complaint of harassment or discrimination is a matter that can cause considerable hardship to the person who is the subject of the complaint.
9. If individuals associated with the church community request counselling or guidance concerning Gender Dysphoria or Gender Identity Disorder, all Ministry Personnel and congregants are to notify a Pastor who can refer them for appropriate counselling.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

A. Health and Safety Guidelines

1. Ministry Leads and Ministry Personnel are encouraged to be certified and trained in first aid.
2. The names and contact information of individuals who are certified in first aid are to be maintained by the Office Administrator.
3. Ministry Leads must be informed of any individual(s) having severe allergies. The information is to be posted in the Children's and Youth departments for easy access and Ministry Personnel who have the individual(s) in their care must be informed.

4. The cleaning and sanitation of toys and table surfaces must be done after each use.

Illness:

1. An individual who is ill and could therefore expose others to illness are not to be received into the program room. Factors to consider are:
 - a. Fever, unusual fatigue, irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat
 - b. Individuals showing signs of a contagious illness such as viruses, pink eye, measles, chickenpox, or any other communicable disease that could be spread by touch or by coming in close proximity

Medications:

1. Ministry Personnel are not to give or apply any medications (i.e., Tylenol, Polysporin, vitamins, etc.) without written authorization from a physician and Church Leadership.
2. Any prescription medication must be brought in the original container with the doctor's prescription, dosage and date clearly printed on the label. Parents must fill out a medication form and sign dosage instructions. Medication must be presented to the Ministry Lead or designate on duty in the Child's room and handed over at sign-in. (Appendices 15 and 16)
3. When medication is brought for a Child, the medication is to be kept in a locked box in the cupboard or refrigerator. This also applies to non-prescription substances such as tobacco and cigarettes brought by Youth to events.
4. Dosage times must be recorded in the daily journal or Attendance Form for all staff to see.
5. At dosage time, the Ministry Lead or designated health worker must double check the medication form and instructions, dispense medication to the Child and sign the form noting the amount and time medication was given.
6. In the extreme case where EpiPens and puffers are needed for allergies or asthma, written instructions are to be provided by the Parent or Guardian to the Ministry Lead. Requests should be written, signed, dated and filed permanently.

Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood:

1. Universal precautions must be used when administering any kind of first aid.
2. When an individual is injured, they are to be separated from others. The area where the injury occurred or where any blood may have dropped on the floor or toys is also to be isolated.
3. Ministry Personnel need to ensure that no other individuals have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury.
4. Non-latex gloves are to be used when bandaging the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.
5. Extreme care must be taken in cleaning up all blood and bloody bandages and the safe and secure removal of waste and disposal of gloves.
6. Hands are to be washed carefully with sterilizing soap available in the first aid kit.
7. When ministering to individuals with HIV or AIDS, specific guidelines for the education and care of these individuals are to be developed and followed.

Emergencies:

1. Emergency and evacuation procedures are to be reviewed annually by the Pastor and the Board. These procedures are to be posted in a visible place in each classroom stating the planned route of escape to the nearest exit.
2. Pastors, in communication with the Ministry Lead, are to arrange for annual fire and evacuation drills.
3. A first aid kit must be kept in each ministry area with Ministry Personnel being educated on the kit's contents.
4. In addition to the first aid kits in ministry area, a first aid kit must be available in any church-owned vehicle.
5. Each kit must contain a pair of disposable non-latex gloves, disinfectant towelettes, two or three 4" x 4" gauze pads for blood absorption, small scissors and bandages.
6. A Parent must be contacted when an injury, accident or medical emergency occurs that involve their Child. Incident reports are to be completed for any and all accidents (Appendix 18). Injuries are to be reported to the Ministry Lead.

a. Severe Allergies

1. Parents and Caregivers are responsible for notifying the church of any known allergies which their Children have. This information is to be noted on their Registration Form.
2. Upon permission of Parents, the notification of severe allergies are to be posted in the Child's classroom for high visibility, including a picture of the Child or one the child's identification label, it may contain a list of his or her allergies and typical signs of reaction. Ministry Personnel assigned to care for the Child must be made aware of the allergy and the treatment required if a reaction occurs.
3. In light of severe peanut allergies, children spaces should be considered peanut free zones.

b. Drugs and Alcohol

1. The legalization of cannabis does not change the church's legal obligation to provide a safe workplace and programs. Ministry Personnel are not to be impaired while serving or working at the church.
2. During employment or volunteer service, the church has zero tolerance for the possession and/or consumption of illegal drugs and misuse of alcohol at any time.
3. Ministry Personnel will take action to prevent the abuse of drugs and alcohol, teach against it, and promote a safe environment for everyone.
4. The church will take steps to ensure individuals who are impaired or whose ability to work is affected by consuming substances such as alcohol and drugs, including cannabis, are removed from the premises, unless accommodation has been provided for medicinal use.
5. Individuals under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be escorted off the premises as they may pose a risk to other individuals. Children and Youth removed in this way will be separated from others until their Parents arrive to collect them. Any time an individual is removed from the premises due to drugs or alcohol, an Incident Form must be completed and a report made to the Ministry Lead.
6. Ministry Personnel cannot possess or consume alcohol or cannabis during program hours or at any time during hours of service, unless prescribed by a physician, as outlined in this policy.
7. Ministry Personnel may not possess or consume alcohol or drugs (legal or non-legal) where minors are present or where Ministry Personnel are responsible for the supervision and oversight of minors.

8. If minors are found to be in the possession of alcohol or non-medicinal drugs, it will be confiscated and reported to the police. The police should be asked if they would like the items turned over or destroyed. An Incident Report must be completed and Parents notified.
9. All Ministry Personnel working with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults are required to notify their Ministry Lead of their use of prescription and non-prescription medication which may produce side effects causing them to be under the influence of the medication or left impaired by the medication. If such medication is prescribed, Ministry Personnel may be required to provide relevant documentation by a physician. The church reserves the right to verify with a physician (either with such Ministry Personnel's own physician or an independent medical examination) that Ministry Personnel can safely continue to perform their duties. If the church determines from the examination or medical information that the Ministry Personnel is unable to safely perform his or her duties, the church will not grant continued service in ministry for the period of time that the Ministry Personnel remains impaired. The church is committed to respecting the privacy of Ministry Personnel, and Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.
10. Ministry Personnel that travel on behalf of the church are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and positive manner at all times. Irresponsible consumption of alcohol or cannabis at any time during employment, volunteer service or engagement with the church may result in immediate termination. Therefore, Ministry Personnel should exercise responsible alcohol and drug consumption when off-site, including after working hours. Any consumption should be conducted in a way that does not impede Ministry Personnel's capacity or ability to respond competently to situations that arise and in a way that does not negatively impact the reputation of the church. Ministry Personnel are prohibited from wearing church uniforms when purchasing or consuming alcoholic beverages, or while smoking or purchasing cigarettes or cannabis.
11. Ministry Personnel whose duties include driving must not be under the influence of any drugs or alcohol while operating a motor vehicle. It is important for church drivers and the passengers to be fully functional and alert when operating or driving in a motor vehicle. When church drivers are transporting other members of the church or any Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults on behalf of the church in commercial vehicles, such as a rented vehicle, or in their own vehicles, there is a zero alcohol and cannabis consumption policy for those drivers for a full 24 hours prior to the scheduled time of departure.

B. Inclement Weather Conditions

1. In extremely hot or cold weather, Ministry Leads may use their discretion to determine if it is safe to take Children and Youth outside for programming (Temperature, conditions, appropriate clothing).
2. Children and Youth are not to be forced to go outside if the temperature is below -15 degrees Celsius, or if there is a wind-chill advisory in effect, causing the temperature to feel below -20 degrees Celsius. They are also to be kept indoors if the temperature is above 31 degrees Celsius, with a humid reaching 35-40+. All outdoor activity in more extreme temperatures should be monitored and limited if possible.
3. Ministry Personnel must use discretion when smog alerts are in effect, especially if there are Children and Youth with respiratory ailments in attendance.
4. In the event of a thunderstorm with lightning, Children and Youth are to remain inside.
5. In the event of a natural disaster, Children and Youth and Ministry Personnel are to remain indoors, away from windows. If required to go to the lowest part of the building, Ministry Personnel are to escort Children and Youth calmly.
6. In the event of inclement weather (heavy snow, tornado warning, etc.) the church may close due to travel warnings and high-risk of injury and danger. All available means of communicating closure should be used to inform families.

C. Missing Person

The safety of Children and Youth will be given our highest priority. If a person goes missing, time is of the essence. As soon as an individual is found to be missing, all available Ministry Personnel must follow the steps below:

1. Conduct a preliminary search of their last known location.
2. Assemble all remaining Children and Youth together in a central safe location, enabling as many Screened Leaders as possible to search for the missing person. Split the Screened Leaders into two groups - one group to search, and one group to supervise the remaining Children and Youth. One person is designated as the primary point of contact.
3. The Primary Point of Contact must contact the Ministry Lead and Church Leadership immediately, and remain available to coordinate between the searchers, remaining Ministry Personnel, off-site leadership and outside groups.
4. The group supervising the Children and Youth must stay together and wait for further instructions from leadership. Do not send any minors to search for a missing person.
5. The searching group must appoint individuals to keep watch over points of entry or exit, and to reduce movement in the area by any other groups - under ideal circumstances, no one exits the area.
6. Remaining Leaders and Volunteers, (as many as possible without putting the remaining Children at risk) must begin by conducting a search of the "hot spots" - nearby, likely and dangerous areas - then move to less immediate areas.
7. Search both inside the building and outside the building. Search inside locations: cupboards, washrooms, closets, stairwells, classrooms, auditorium/sanctuary, baptismal tanks and offices. Search outside locations: parking lot, beach, river, swimming pool, nearby streets, parks, play grounds, railroad tracks, and ravines, etc.
8. After the initial adequate time of searching, the Primary Point of Contact must call 9-1-1 to notify the police and emergency officials of the missing person. Provide them with the individual's age, physical description (including a description of their clothing), last known location, and possible whereabouts in the building or community where the Child went missing. If possible, provide a photograph.
9. The Primary Point of Contact is to designate someone (themselves or a Church Leader) to notify the family members (in the case of a Child, their Parents) immediately after notifying the police.
10. Continue to search, cooperating with the police and local authorities.
11. Once the missing person is found, administer first aid as needed.
12. If a Child is found with another Adult, attempt to calmly and gently detain the Adult until the police arrive. If the Adult leaves, record a description of the individual as soon as possible if they are unknown, and provide it to the police.
13. Complete an Incident Report, and keep the report on file permanently.
14. If the media arrives on the scene, only the Church Leader should speak to the media.

D. Lockdown Guidelines

These guidelines are to be put into action in the event of a lockdown or during a lockdown drill. Each church campus is to draft their own site specific lockdown procedures with details pertaining to their specific needs and facilities. Below are some potential guidelines to consider.

Keep people safe during a threat inside or near the building.

1. Listen for the announcement.

2. Get to the safest room fast and quietly.
3. Stay hidden and silent until told it's safe.

Three Threat Levels

- **Hold & Secure** – Danger is outside. Lock all outside doors. Everyone stays inside and keeps doing normal activities.
- **Lockdown** – Danger is inside or right at the door. Hide in a locked room. Make the room look empty.
- **Evacuate** – It's safer to leave. Go quickly to the pre-planned meeting spot outside (we will tell you where).

Notification

One clear announcement only:

"Code Red – Lockdown. This is not a drill."

Communicated by PA System, text to leaders, or shouted if needed by a pastor, safety person, or leader on site.

What to Do Right Now

1. Call 911 immediately (unless police already called us).
2. Turn phones to silent/vibrate.
3. Move fast and quiet from open areas (hallways, foyer, gym, sanctuary) into the nearest lockable room (classroom, office, nursery). If not possible stay away from windows/doors as best as possible.
4. If an outside door is right there and it is safe, leave and go to the designated area outside.

Inside the Rooms

- Lock the door.
- Turn off lights.
- Cover windows (blinds, paper, whatever is there).
- Hide behind furniture or in corners.
- Stay completely quiet and calm.
- Take an attendance.
- Do NOT open the door or call anyone unless it's life-or-death.
- Comfort kids if they are with you.

When Police Arrive

Police are in charge. Do exactly what they say. Leaders can help with building info if asked.

All-Clear

Only the pastor or safety leader (or police) will say "All clear – lockdown is over."

Then follow their instructions. In areas of positions of trust (Kids/youth) realize parents to students as per regular check out procedures.

Drills

Schedule a biennial drill (potentially with fire drill).

Follow up on areas that can be improved/made safer.

For Example

- Every classroom and office has a door that locks from inside.

- Ushers/greeters lock outside doors when they hear “Code Red.”

E. Fire and Emergency Evacuation

These guidelines are to be put into action in the event of a fire alarm/fire. Each church campus is to draft their own site specific emergency procedures with details pertaining to their specific needs and facilities. Below are basic guidelines to incorporate.

1. Whenever the fire alarm sounds, everyone is to leave the building and wait in the designated waiting area, even if it is a false alarm or a drill.
2. Ministry Personnel, Church Leadership, and selected members of the congregation are to be trained in Emergency Evacuation Policies and Procedures and must be prepared to assist in the event of an Emergency Evacuation. These Ministry Personnel and members of the congregation are to be referred to as Fire Marshals.
3. Ministry Personnel must not wait for Parents to pick up their Children when there is an alarm. Rather, they must immediately vacate the building with the Children and Youth and go to the designated location with class roster and check-in/out lists.
4. Congregation members are to immediately vacate the building. Parents are to be notified to meet their Children at the designated locations outside of the building. A fire alarm does not negate the need for appropriate sign-out and pickup of Children.
5. The congregation shall periodically conduct a “Fire Drill” in order to practice safe evacuation of the building, according to the procedures.
6. Administration, in coordination with Ministry Personnel, must be responsible to:
 - a. Assure the periodic training of Ministry Personnel, Church Leadership, and additional selected members of the congregation in Emergency Evacuation Policies and Procedures;
 - b. Schedule and carry out biennial “Fire Drills;”
 - c. Periodically review and update the Emergency Evacuation Policies and Procedures.
7. Exits are to be maintained free of snow, ice and obstructions.
8. In the event that the Fire Department is called to the scene, the Fire Department (and other Emergency Responders) have authority to determine a course of action. Ministry Personnel, church members, and building occupants are to follow their directives.

TECHNOLOGY CONCERNS

A. Online Forums and Gatherings

1. Online Forums and Gatherings must be hosted by the church’s licensed and operated accounts only, no personal accounts may be used.
2. The church’s licensed and operated accounts must be accessible to more than one Ministry Lead (passwords, usernames and email credentials).
3. To host an Online Forum/Gathering, Ministry Personnel must first secure permission in writing from the Ministry Lead overseeing the department or their Supervisor. Hosts must be screened and trained according to the Recruitment process for Ministry Personnel.
4. An Informed Letter of Consent must be prepared and submitted to the Parent prior to the event. Parents must sign and submit the Informed Letter of Consent to allow a student to participate utilizing an electronic signature platform (i.e., SmartWaiver or DocuSign).
 - a. Parents will be provided with an opt-in option on the Informed Letter of Consent to allow their Child(ren) to use a webcam while a session is being recorded.
 - b. Parents will be notified of the documentation management and retention policies outlined in the church’s Plan to Protect® policies and procedures.

- c. Any Children or Youth that do not have expressed, written permission from a Parent to use the webcam will not be permitted to do so.
5. For the duration of the meeting, Ministry Personnel will have the video platform in 'Moderator' mode to restrict the video and webcam sharing of other attendees.
 - a. If the 'Moderator' mode is unavailable on the video platform, or the church deems it beneficial for attendees to use a webcam, only Children and Youth that have expressed written consent from a Parent to be recorded will be permitted to use a webcam. Those that do not have consent to be recorded will not be permitted to use their webcams.
6. Ministry Personnel will either:
 - a. Remain on the video platform until all attendees have left before closing the session; OR,
 - b. Close the session to end the meeting for all attendees.
7. Ministry Personnel are encouraged to use videos, fun games and songs to share with families, to limit direct attendee communication.
8. All persons (Children, Youth, Parents, Ministry Personnel) will be educated on the expectations for the use of the online platforms, both video and social media, to encourage safe and productive use.
9. If Ministry Personnel is found to be contacting Children or Youth through personal accounts, they will be subject to disciplinary action by the church.
10. In the event that conversation with a Child or Youth moves beyond regular program activities, Ministry Personnel must inform Church Leadership and provide a copy of the conversation immediately. Church Leadership will follow the procedure outlined in the Plan to Protect® manual for Suicide, Substance Abuse and Self-Injury. Procedures may include:
 - a. Reporting to the proper authorities; or,
 - b. Informing the Parents of the Child or Youth.

For Children Grades 1-6:

In order to create a safe experience, the church must:

1. Maintain at least TWO screened, unrelated Adults (in accordance with the Recruitment and Screening section in the Plan to Protect® manual) in the church's Gatherings. This is a practice under the church's Plan to Protect® policy in all Children's ministry programs.
2. The church's host will be recording the program. The recordings are not to be posted online and will only be used for security and resource purposes.
3. Attendance is to be taken at each Forum/Gathering.
4. A Parent must be in the room at the beginning and at the end of a call. This is our check in and out process.
5. Parents must remain in the same room as their Children when they are on the call. Children must not be left in front of the computer alone in an isolated room.
6. Parents are requested to ensure that the call is played on a computer/device with speakers instead of earphones/headphones.
7. The church's Gatherings are not permanent to facilitate chat rooms. Parents are to be required to check in their Children in each Zoom Gathering. Hence, Children are not to be able to join the church's [Name of Platform, i.e., Zoom] Gatherings outside our pre-set program time.

8. Upon completion of the call, the attendance record and the recording must be sent to the Ministry Lead of the department.

For Youth Grades 7-12:

In order to create a safe online experience, the church must:

1. Maintain at least TWO screened, unrelated Adults (in accordance with the Recruitment and Screening section in the Plan to Protect® manual) in the church's Gatherings. This is a practice under the church's Plan to Protect® policy in all our Youth ministry programs.
2. The church's host will be recording the program. The recordings are not to be posted online and will only be used for security and resource purposes.
3. Attendance is to be taken at each Forum/Gathering.
4. The church's Gatherings are not permanent chat rooms. Hence, Youth are not to be able to join the church's [Name of Platform, i.e., Zoom] Gatherings outside our pre-set program time. (ie: Zoom 'waiting rooms' must be used)
5. Upon completion of the call, the attendance record and the recording must be sent to the Ministry Lead of the department and retained.

B. Social Media

1. Church members, adherents and Ministry Personnel are encouraged to demonstrate and model humility, integrity, transparency and accountability with all communications including those noted above.
2. Email or text communication with Children 12 years of age must include parents/guardians in messaging.
3. Communication with Youth 13 years of age and older is permitted under the following conditions:
 - a. Communication with a Youth is via a church recommended platform that provides moderating and allows for oversight of conversations (ie: Twelve app)
 - b. In other forms of communication, one of the following must take place:
 - i. Ministry Personnel may communicate with Youth via email with written Parental knowledge. The Parents will be copied on all communications; or
 - ii. In cases where Ministry Personnel contact Youth via email, social media without copying Parents, they must include another Ministry Personnel in the communications.
 - c. Ministry Personnel will attempt to limit their online communications with Youth to daytime hours (8:00am-11:00pm) to promote healthy lifestyle.
 - d. Online communication will not involve video messaging (FaceTime, Skype, etc.) in any form, unless it is a training post or group conference call approved by the Ministry Lead.

C. Internet and Computer Use

1. Public tablets/computers are to be placed in open areas where the screen is easily visible. Every effort should be made to ensure limited access to unsafe materials on these devices.
2. The Church Leadership are to ensure access to browsers history, as well as the documents downloaded onto church-owned computers is possible by approved technology oversight.
3. Ministry Personnel should closely monitor the use of their church owned devices and not allow unsupervised minors to use these devices.
4. Computers/tablets used for ministry purposes should be password protected and every effort should be made to ensure limited access to unsafe materials on these devices.

D. Photography and Video Recording

With a desire to capture memorable moments at the church, photography and video recording are to be closely monitored by Church Leadership. The Media Department and Ministry Departments must abide by the following guidelines:

1. Photography and video recording are to be done by designated Ministry Personnel who have been screened and trained in safeguarding policies and procedures.
2. For public church activities including services where video recording is to be done in the sanctuary, and with the church family together, it is required that signage be posted notifying those in attendance that the event will be captured on film. Individuals can either stay out of the line of the camera or, if necessary, opt out of the event.
3. For all Children and Youth ministry activities and programs, Parental permission must be secured prior to taking photographs of Children and Youth. Parental permission must be secured on an annual basis on the Registration Forms;
 - a. No photographs of Children or Youth are to be taken without prior written approval.
 - b. No photographs are to be posted on the church's website, Facebook, Instagram, or other online social networks without Parental permission and only on sites monitored closely by Church Leadership.
4. All pictures of minors should be screened by Ministry personnel to ensure compliance with policy. All effort must be made to adhere to the Parent's request.
5. No photographs of Children or Youth are to be tagged or labeled with the name of the individual at any time, including but not limited to, newsletters, websites, social media sites without specific parental/guardian approval each specific time.
6. Written permission forms must be kept permanently on file in the church office.

FACILITY PRECAUTIONS

A. Modifying Your Facility

1. Recognizing that there are many storage areas within the church, elevated precautions must be taken to monitor these areas. Storage closets and doors must be locked at all times except when in use.
2. All windows in doors in Children's program areas are never to be covered in any way so as to keep clear sight lines into rooms.
3. Washroom facilities in the preschool area are for the sole use of Children.
4. Nursery doors are to be secured from the inside.
5. All electrical outlets are to be kept covered when not in use in the nursery and toddler classrooms.
6. Doors of rooms and closets must be locked when not in use during Children's programs.

For Accessibility:

1. Install ramps and automatic doors where possible.
2. Consider elevators or stair lifts.
3. Provide accessible seating and space for wheelchairs.
4. Make washrooms accessible with wide doors, space for assistive devices, low sinks, and handrails.
5. Accommodate those with hearing loss.

B. Security Systems and Cameras

1. Security cameras are provided for the purpose of elevated safeguarding precautions, and to aid in investigations.
2. As the purpose of Plan to Protect® is to prevent injury, harm and abuse from happening, security cameras that are installed for recording purposes are not to be considered a replacement for Hall Monitors or elevated supervision.

HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES

A. High Risk Activities

1. High risk activities include each of the following:
 - a. Activities identified as having a higher risk, such as off-site events, water activities (pool or open body of water), extreme sports, online events, overnight events, billeting, transportation, mission trips, and one off events.
2. High risk activities that fall into the categories above may only take place under the following criteria:
 - a. Permission must be granted from the Church Leadership;
 - b. Parents must be provided access to a Letter of Informed Consent in advance of the event;
 - c. A qualified instructor or lifeguard has been appointed; and
 - d. Ratios have been modified to provide elevated supervision.

B. Transportation

1. When planning off-site activities, Parents are to be encouraged to drop off and pick up their Children and Youth at the event location when applicable. For out of town/long distant events, commercial school carriers are to be used whenever possible.
2. Our first concern in transportation is the safety of the passengers. Drivers must obey all the rules of the road including the speed limits. Reckless or unsafe driving will not be tolerated.
3. When not using commercial carriers, all Ministry Personnel drivers transporting on behalf of the church during church activities must complete the following prior to an event:
4. Be pre-approved by the Ministry Lead;
5. Provide a copy of their valid driver's license;
6. Provide a copy of their current automobile insurance policy;
7. Have a minimum of five (5) years driving experience in good standing.
8. The number of occupants in vehicles transporting Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults during church sponsored activities must not exceed the number of seat belts and each passenger must be in age-appropriate safety restraints. Seatbelts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times the vehicle is in operation.
9. Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults must never be left alone in a vehicle. At least two (2) Ministry Personnel must be in each vehicle transporting Children during church sponsored activities including driver. Exceptions to this policy should only happen when Ministry Leads and Parents are informed, and there is more than one Child or Youth in the vehicle, avoiding isolation.
10. A copy of the 'Trips and Off-site Travel Form' will accompany ministry leaders with the original left in the church office and filed permanently. The form contains information consisting of:
 - a. Names and phone numbers of all participants
 - b. Location of event and phone number(s)
 - c. Drivers and vehicles involved

11. When transportation is being provided by your church, a Letter of Informed Consent for Transportation must be signed by Parents of minors. The travel forms must be maintained and filed in the church office. Forms are to be kept on file permanently.

C. Off-Site Event Planning

1. All off-site trips must be pre-approved by a Pastor.
2. A Letter of Informed Consent for the off-site trip will be accessible to the Parents no less than one week prior to the event. Information must include the exact location of the event, travel plan (if travel is included), emergency phone numbers, and any inherent risks of the event.
3. Sufficient supervision by at least two screened Adults is required to ensure protection and safety for all involved.
4. Copies of Letters of Informed Consent, medical authorizations, and any additional Registration Forms for each Student must be kept on hand at each event.
5. Attendance of all Ministry Personnel, Children, Youth, and Occasional Observers must be recorded on the Trip and Off-Site Travel Forms. The Travel Forms must be maintained and filed in the church office. Forms will be kept on file permanently.

a. Off-Site Event Planning: Shared Activities

1. In the case that outside users, members, adherents or renters are granted permission to use the facility for activities involving Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults, that are not direct ministries and activities of the Church, it is required that they provide a certificate of insurance, with no less than \$2,000,000 Commercial General Liability coverage with abuse coverage and the Church be named as additional insured. The user or renter is also required to demonstrate that they have a full Child/Youth protection policy and protocol in place. If they lack an Abuse Prevention Policy, the Church will refer them to Plan to Protect® to secure their own copy of the *Plan to Protect®* manual.

b. Off-Site Event Planning: Home Groups

The following protocols is to be adhered to for all group meetings hosted in homes:

1. Host homes and families must be approved by a Pastor or Ministry Lead.
2. Home groups with children in attendance are always under the supervision of parents, not the church.
3. Programming for Youth is to be planned in advance in conjunction with Church Leadership. Prior to each event, Parents should be notified of the activities that the youth will participate in.
4. Programming should have two (2) screened ministry personnel present at all times.
5. Youth are **not** to be left alone with Unscreened Adults.
6. Home Group Leaders will be responsible to:
 - a. Take attendance each time a group meets as part of a Cell/Home Group;
 - b. The Attendance Form must include the date, location and the names of all Adults and youth in attendance;
 - c. The attendance must include the participant's first and last name, full names of all Ministry Personnel and Occasional Observers attending on that date.
7. Each Home Group Leader must remit this Attendance Form within one week to the Pastor or Ministry Lead or to the church office.
8. These Attendance Forms are to be kept on file permanently.

D. Special Events and Overnight Policies

Field Trips and Special Events:

1. All off-campus activities are to be pre-approved by the Ministry Lead with Parents having access to trip information at least one week prior to the outing.
2. Proper written Letter of Consent and Registration and Medical Consent Forms are required for each individual participating in field trips and special events. Photocopies of the forms must be kept in the Ministry Lead's possession during trips and events with the originals filed in the church office. (Appendix 19 and 15)
3. All trips and outings are to be supervised by a minimum of two approved, unrelated Adult Ministry Personnel.
4. When planning local special events, it is preferred that Parents drop off and pick up their Children at the event location. For out of town events, it is preferred that a commercial carrier be employed.
5. Children and Youth may not be transported one-on-one. Mentoring relationships should be conducted in teams and in public places. Parents are encouraged to drop their Children or Youth off and pick them up.
6. All Ministry Personnel drivers transporting individuals during church activities must be pre-approved by the Ministry Lead, provide a copy of their valid driver's license and current automobile insurance in accordance with the church insurance policy, and have had a minimum of five years of driving experience.
7. Church vehicles are to be driven by Ministry Personnel that have been pre-approved by Church Leadership. They must provide a copy of their valid driver's license and current automobile insurance in accordance with the church insurance policy.
8. The number of occupants in the vehicle are not to exceed the number of seat belts and each Child must be in age appropriate safety restraints. Seat belts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times the vehicle is in motion.
9. Children are not to be left unattended in a vehicle.

Overnight Events:

1. All overnight activities are to be pre-approved by Church Leadership.
2. Proper written Letter of Consent and Registration and Medical Consent Forms are required for each Child or Youth participating in overnight events. A copy of the forms must be kept in the Ministry Lead's possession during trips and events and the original filed in the church office. The originals are to be kept on file permanently.
3. All overnight activities must have a minimum ratio of two Ministry Personnel for every 10 Children or Youth. Ministry Personnel are to be assigned a specific group of Children or Youth for who they are responsible. If both genders are in attendance, there must also be both male and female Ministry Leaders providing supervision.
4. All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of two approved, unrelated Adult Ministry Personnel.
5. When transportation is being provided by your church, an Informed Letter of Consent for Transportation must be signed. The travel forms must be maintained and filed in the church office. Forms are to be kept on file permanently.

E. Shower and Locker Room Guidelines

1. Public Locker Rooms (open to unscreened adults) must be supervised at all times. Two Adult screened individuals must be present together in the dressing or locker room with Children or Youth while they are showering or changing; screened personnel must not be alone with minors in this setting.

2. In Private Locker Rooms (camp/retreat centres where only the church group has access) when entering, it must be two screened adults into areas where youth and children are changing or showering.
3. Out of respect for the Children and Youth, and to maintain a high standard of professionalism, Ministry Personnel will announce their arrival prior to entering a dressing or locker room.
4. In facilities that offer private cubicles for showering and changing, screened adult individuals are not allowed to enter cubicles to help children or youth unless another screened adult individual is present.
5. Screened personnel are not permitted to change or shower at the same time as Children and Youth unless it is a facility with private personal cubicles using their own cubicle for showering and changing.
6. Separate facilities should be designated for both genders or, if these are not available, separate showering/ changing times will be arranged.
7. The use of photographic or video recording devices, including cell phones, is prohibited in dressing or locker rooms at all times.

F. Overnight Trips and Housing

For the protection of our Children and Youth, the following guidelines will be followed prior to all off-site trips where overnight accommodations must be secured:

1. A notice with a Letter of Informed Consent (Appendix 19) will be sent home to Parents at least one week in advance, advising them that an overnight trip is being planned, which requires the team to stay in a conference centre/camp/hotel/motel. The notice will note:
 - a. The inherent risks associated with the event;
 - b. The precautions being taken to minimize the risk and to raise the level of safety provided for their Children and Youth; and,
 - c. Specific sleeping and travel arrangements that have been planned.
2. The Parent must return the signed and witnessed Letter of Informed Consent which includes the required liability shields.
3. Ministry Personnel travelling with Children and Youth must complete the screening and training process outlined in this policy prior to departure. Screened and trained Ministry Personnel who are placed in a Position of Trust with Children and Youth must be known by the church for six months.
4. Any individuals travelling with the team who do not qualify as screened Ministry Personnel must have separate sleeping arrangements.
5. When travel plans require overnight housing, housing must be arranged in the homes of screened and approved billets, or in a conference centre, camp, or church where Children or Youth can stay together, and where more than one screened Adult can be assigned to each common sleeping area. When this is not possible, and it is necessary that the group stay in hotels or motels, the following plans must be made so that Children and Youth have distinctly separate sleeping arrangements from Ministry Personnel. In these plans, safety will be prioritized using the following guidelines when possible:
 - a. Hotel rooms will be secured all together in one wing of the hotel or motel if possible; and
 - b. Parents are encouraged to accompany the group, assigning the family to hotel rooms; or,
 - c. Ministry Leads request the availability of suites with two or three bedrooms per suite and assign two Children or Youth of the same age to a separate room, set apart from the two Adult screened Ministry Personnel; or,
 - d. Ministry Leads must assign two unrelated Adult Ministry Personnel to a hotel room with two or more Children or Youth; or,
 - e. In hotel or motel rooms with adjoining doors, Ministry Leads must assign one Adult Ministry Personnel with two Children or Youth in each room. For accountability purposes, the door separating adjoining rooms must be kept ajar or open at all times. Children and Youth must have distinctly separate sleeping arrangements from other Adults.

- f. Ministry Personnel are never to be alone in a room with a Child or Youth.

G. Billeting and Hosting

1. For the protection of our minors, it is required that all Adults residing in the home where billets are provided must complete the following screening process prior to hosting. Screening includes:
 - a. A recommendation from a Pastor or member of Church Leadership
 - b. A Criminal Record Check
2. Information guidelines are to be distributed to host homes no less than one week in advance of minors arriving at their home.
3. Any allergies and medications for minors will be communicated to the host home prior to arrival, with clear directions on how to manage allergies and medications.
4. Minors must always be billeted in teams or small groups of the same gender, must have distinctly separate sleeping arrangements from the household members, and are not to be left alone in the home without adequate adult supervision.
5. Curfews shall be established and enforced when minors are being billeted. All minors staying in host homes are to be informed of proper etiquette, rules and curfew guidelines.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

A. Staff to Student Ratios

1. Classroom settings must comply with established ratios for Adults and Children at all times. This includes off-site activities and trips. Established ratios are:
 - a. Two Ministry Personnel for every six infants (birth – 18 months)
 - b. Two Ministry Personnel for every 10 toddlers or preschoolers
 - c. Two Ministry Personnel for every 20 elementary-age Children

B. Proper Display of Affection

Appropriate Touch:

1. Recognizing that Children need appropriate displays of affection that reflect pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love, appropriate touch with Children will be age and developmentally appropriate. We encourage Ministry Leaders to:
 - a. Hold a preschool Child who is crying,
 - b. Speak to a Child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears,
 - c. Hold a Child's hands when speaking, listening or walking him or her to an activity,
 - d. Gently hold the Child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the Child's behaviour,
 - e. Put your arm around the shoulder of a Child when comforting or quieting is needed,
 - f. Pat a Child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.
2. All touch must be done in view of others.

Inappropriate Touch:

1. Recognizing that the innocence of Children must be protected, Ministry Leaders will be made aware that the following actions are deemed inappropriate and will not be permitted:
 - a. Do not kiss a Child or coax a Child to kiss you,

- b. Do not engage in extended hugging and tickling,
 - c. Do not hold a Child's face when talking to or disciplining the Child,
 - d. Do not touch a Child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (strictly prohibited except in cases of diapering and assisting preschoolers as outlined in washroom policies),
 - e. Do not carry older Children and do not allow them to sit on your lap,
 - f. Avoid prolonged physical contact with any Child or Youth.
2. Ministry Personnel are not to be left alone with a Child or Youth.

C. Child-to-Child Sexual Play or Abuse

1. If caregivers discover age-appropriate consensual Child-to-Child sexual play, use it as a teachable moment. Calmly figure out what happened by asking open-ended questions. Provide appropriate consequences and provide education in the area that appears most relevant to the situation. For example: learning names and functions of body parts, clarifying social rules and privacy, understanding how to respect their own bodies and others, identifying friendship vs. intimate relationships, and age-appropriate sexual education.
2. Reassure the Child that you care about them.
3. Fill out an Incident Report, notify Parents and leadership, and respond appropriately.
4. If it is inappropriate sexual play, if there is an imbalance of power or authority, if there is a difference in age, ability or strength, if the actions are aggressive in nature or do not follow age of consent laws, fill out an Incident Report and make a report to the proper authorities immediately.
5. Notify Parents as instructed by authorities.
6. Keep all documentation of Child-to-Child sexual play and abuse permanently.

D. Washroom Guidelines

1. Upon registering Children for programs, Parents will be notified to take their Children to the washroom prior to programs.

For Nursery:

1. Ministry Personnel are not required to change the diapers of young Children. It is the responsibility of a Child's Parents to change diapers.
2. Diaper changing procedures are clearly posted in the nursery diaper changing area. (Appendix 11)
3. In the rare case Ministry Personnel do change diapers, it is to be done only by a designated Adult Ministry Personnel and must be conducted within view of other Ministry Personnel.

For Preschool Children:

1. Preschool Children are not to go to the washroom alone.
2. One of the following are to be adhered to when accompanying preschool Children to the washroom:
 - a. Two Ministry Personnel are to escort a group of Children to the washroom, or,
 - b. One Ministry Personnel is to escort a group of Children to the washroom with one Hall Monitor appointed to assist with washroom and security duties.
3. No Ministry Personnel must ever be alone with a Child in an unsupervised washroom and they are never to go into the cubicle with a Child and shut the door.

4. When a preschool Child needs assistance in the washroom, Ministry Personnel may enter the washroom cubicle to assist utilizing the following guidelines:
 - a. The outside washroom door must be propped open and the Adult must stand in an open cubicle doorway,
 - b. Ministry Personnel will take into consideration the privacy of the Child.

For Elementary Children:

1. Elementary boys and girls are not to be sent to the washroom alone but should be accompanied by a buddy in the same age group.
2. Ministry Personnel are to escort the Children to the washroom and prop the door open to make sure that everything is in order. Ministry Personnel must then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the Children before escorting them back to the classroom.
3. Ministry Personnel are not to be alone with Children in an unsupervised washroom and are never to enter into the cubicle with a Child and shut the door.

E. Receiving and Releasing Children

1. Receiving and releasing Children under the age of 6 is strongly monitored. A mandatory sign-in and sign-out form is to be used in all Children's programming. (Appendix 29)
2. Children are not to be dropped off in a classroom without Ministry Personnel present.
3. Babies and preschool Children are to only be released into the care of the Child's Parent or designate utilizing a signature, security number or identification card.
4. Parents and visitors are not to enter the nursery or preschool classroom when picking up their Child unless requested to do so.

For Elementary Students:

1. Younger elementary students and newcomers are to remain in the classroom until the Parent or designate comes to pick them up and the student demonstrates recognition.
2. Consideration must be given to security, church facilities and location when determining the age release of older elementary Children. Ministry Personnel are to ask on an informal basis whether the Child knows where to find his or her Parent. If the Child demonstrates uncertainty, the Ministry Personnel will keep the Child with them in the classroom until the Parent or designate picks up the Child.

YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES

A. Physical Contact

1. 'Physical Contact Guidelines' are to be posted in the Youth department.
2. Ministry Personnel are aware of what constitutes appropriate touch:
 - a. one-arm hugs
 - b. shoulder-to-shoulder hugs
 - c. touch on the back or shoulder
3. Ministry Personnel must refrain from inappropriate touch at all times:
 - a. chest-to-chest hugging
 - b. extended hugging
 - c. overexuberant affection

- d. lap-sitting
 - e. kissing
 - f. touching of thighs, knees or inappropriate spots of the body
- 4. Ministry Personnel must be cognizant of conduct that could be misinterpreted:
 - a. horseplay
 - b. tickling
 - c. extended backrubs
- 5. All touch should be done in view of other people.

B. Staff to Student Ratio

1. Programs for Youth must comply with established staffing ratios as follows:
 - a. **Junior High events** – Two Ministry Personnel for every 16 students
 - b. **Senior High events** – Two Ministry Personnel for every 20 students
 - c. **Overnight/Off-Site events** – Two Ministry Personnel for every 16 students
2. There must be at least two unrelated Ministry Personnel at all events.
3. Overnight events with mixed genders must be accompanied by both male and female Ministry Personnel.
4. It is recommended that there be a five year gap between Ministry Personnel and the Youth they serve.

C. Mentoring

1. Church Leadership must grant approval for a mentoring ministry to take place. Once approved, for the protection of those we mentor and for Ministry Personnel engaged in mentoring, the following policies are to be followed:
 - a. The Ministry Lead is responsible for assigning mentees with mentors.
 - b. Ministry Personnel granted to be mentors must be screened and trained according to recruitment and screening policies and procedures.
 - c. Ministry Personnel are encouraged to meet with Youth in small group settings and in teams.
 - d. Parental permission must be granted in writing using a Letter of Informed Consent.
2. If off-site mentoring, the following must take place:
 - a. A risk assessment must be submitted to Church Leadership.
 - b. The Ministry Lead must be informed of the time and place of the meeting prior to the meeting.
 - c. Mentoring must be done in small groups, or in conjunction with another team of two.
 - d. Mentoring can then take place at the church or an approved stationary public location, such as a coffee shop, library, restaurant, or campus cafeteria; and
 - e. Separate transportation must be arranged (avoiding isolation in a vehicle).
3. If mentoring is not done in small groups, it may only take place at the church or in a public setting, in view of other people. Furthermore, these additional policies must be followed:
 - a. The Ministry Lead must pre-approve the conducting of any one-on-one mentoring with the information being documented and filed.

- b. The public setting where mentoring takes place must be a static location, not subsequently moving to another location.
 - c. One-on-one mentoring is permissible only for mentoring minors thirteen (13) years of age and older.
 - d. The difference in the age between the mentor and the mentee must be five (5) years or more, subject to the mentor being a minimum of twenty-one (21) years of age, or older.
- 4. Mentors must avoid meeting in a home setting unless it is the home of the mentee, and the Parents are at home during the meeting and the mentoring happens in a common shared room (i.e., living room, family room, or dining room).

D. Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity

- 1. If Ministry Personnel discover the occurrence age-appropriate consensual sexual activity, use it as a teachable and mentoring moment. Calmly discuss your concerns with open-ended questions. Provide education in the area that appears most relevant to the situation. For example: discussing the church's theological position, safety concerns, clarifying social rules and privacy, understanding how to respect and honour each other, identifying friendship vs. intimate relationships, and age-appropriate sexual education.
- 2. Reassure the young people that you care about them.
- 3. Fill out a Suspected Abuse Report Form, and respond appropriately by encouraging the Youth to discuss their relationship and activity with their Parents. If they are not willing to tell their Parents, it may be appropriate for Ministry Personnel to notify their Parents if you deem the Youth to be in an unsafe sexual relationship or if they are below the age of consent.
- 4. If it is inappropriate or not consensual sexual activity, if there is an imbalance of power or authority, if there is a difference in age, ability or strength, if the actions are aggressive in nature or do not follow age of consent laws, fill out a Suspected Abuse Report Form and make a report to the proper authorities immediately.
- 5. Notify Parents as instructed by authorities.
- 6. Keep all Incident Forms and documentation permanently.

ADULT PROTECTION PROCEDURES

A. Physical Contact

- 1. Ministry Personnel must refrain from inappropriate touching at all times:
 - a. Chest-to-chest hugging
 - b. Extended side hugs
 - c. Overexuberant affection
 - d. Sexual activity
 - e. Kissing on the mouth
 - f. Touching of the thighs, knees, lower back, buttocks, or other inappropriate spots of the body
 - g. Any form of touch that makes someone feel uncomfortable, i.e., attempting to forcefully hold their hand or any part of the body, or even trying to hug someone without their consent.
- 2. Ministry Personnel are aware of what constitutes appropriate touch of Adults:
 - a. One-arm hugs
 - b. Shoulder-to-shoulder hugs

- c. Brief touch on the shoulder or hand
- 3. Ministry Personnel must be cognizant of conduct that could be misinterpreted and avoid these actions:
 - a. Compliments regarding someone's body or clothing
 - b. Whistling
 - c. Tickling
 - d. Offers of backrubs

B. New Immigrant and Refugee Settlement

Newly arrived immigrants and refugees to Canada are vulnerable due to their dependency on others to assist with acclimation to a new country, culture, and in some cases a new language.

1. A plan and strategy for Refugee sponsorship and engagement has been approved by the Board and is reflective of both the Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holder handbook and the Plan to Protect® policy. The plan:
 - a. Requires all Refugee Sponsorship team members be screened and trained per the Plan to Protect® policy;
 - b. Ensures Refugee family members are solely responsible for their own Children;
 - c. Includes both oral and written translation;
 - d. Remains in place until the Refugees are independent or no longer the legal responsibility of the church.
2. For the initial year of sponsorship and dependence, Ministry Personnel are not to assign the care of Refugee Children to minors under the age of 18 years old. Following this time, all Child protection procedures will be adhered to in accordance with the procedures outlined under the "Child Protection Procedures."
3. All care procedures will be followed as outlined in "General Protection Procedures," "Child Protection Procedures," and "Youth Protection Procedures." This includes Occasional Observers, personal care and washroom guidelines, dating, discipline, contacting opportunities, and transportation.

Temporary Housing

1. If temporary housing is provided with a church family, the following guidelines must be followed:
 - a. All Adult members of the home must be appropriately screened and trained.
 - b. Refugee family members will have distinctly separate sleeping arrangements from the other household members. Separate sleeping arrangements must be made available for each family member, or as preferred by the Refugees.
 - c. The Refugee family members will be housed together, and Children are not to share a bedroom or bed with the host family Children.
 - d. Children will accompany Parents to meetings and appointments whenever possible.
 - e. If young Children are part of the family, all electrical outlets will be kept covered when not in use.
 - f. Children will not be left alone in the care of any minors.
 - g. For the protection of all parties, the host family will maintain a daily log of activities. This log is to be submitted to the church office on a monthly basis.

C. Personal Care

1. Personal Care is the responsibility of caregivers and family members, not Ministry Personnel.
2. Caregivers and family members may look forward to the respite of Ministry Personnel coming to visit the Vulnerable. It is at the Ministry Personnel's discretion if they wish to provide this extra level of care; however, at no time will Ministry Personnel be left alone in a home or behind closed doors with Vulnerable Persons.

D. Mentoring Adults and Pastoral Care

1. Only Ministry Personnel approved by the Lead Pastor may mentor Adults or provide pastoral care under the umbrella of the church.
2. Mentoring and pastoral care must take place in a church office or a stationary public location, such as a coffee shop, library, restaurant or another public location, or a room with the door fully open.
3. Mentors are to maintain and submit monthly communication and appointment logs.
4. Individuals providing pastoral care must maintain a journal or calendar of appointments and a summary of pastoral care that has been provided.
5. When meeting off-site, separate transportation is to be arranged (avoiding opportunities for isolation).

E. Shelters, Recovery and Rehabilitation Ministries

This policy is for ministries of the church where overnight housing and shelter is provided to individuals in recovery or seeking a safe residence.

Visitors

1. Visitors and non-housing Ministry Personnel are discouraged from coming to the residence, this includes Board members and Directors. In the rare occasion that this may occur, the visit must be scheduled well in advance when there is a minimum of two unrelated Ministry Personnel present.
2. No individuals of the opposite gender are allowed in the sleeping quarters of residences.

Guest Log

1. In the rare occasion where visitors do come to the shelter or residence, a guest log is to be maintained.
3. Guests' first and last names, along with the names of Ministry Personnel present must be acquired for every visit. The date and time of all guest comings and goings are to be captured on the guest log. The log will be retained permanently.

Confidentiality

1. Unless granted permission, the location of the residence must be kept confidential. It is a vital matter of the safety of residents and Ministry Personnel working and living in the house.
2. This specifically refers to any mention of: a. The ACTUAL STREET ADDRESS of the house; b. ANY IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS of the house or programs, (i.e., description of buildings, neighbourhood, etc.)
3. No information shall be divulged without written, informed consent of Leadership.
4. In addition, Ministry Personnel taking participants on outings may not disclose to associates, friends, relatives or anyone that you encounter, that is not involved in shelter ministry, that the participant is part of the Shelter or Residence programs. Participants should only be referred to as 'friends'.

F. Violence and Harassment

The church is committed to the prevention of violence and is ultimately responsible for the health and safety of individuals that come to our services and who work at the church. We will take reasonable steps to protect our Ministry Personnel and attendees from violence.

1. A security plan has been put in place. It is the responsibility of the Board and Church Leadership to ensure this policy and the supporting security plan are implemented and maintained, and that all Ministry Personnel have the appropriate information and instruction to protect them from violence within the church.
2. Ministry Leads are to adhere to this policy and the supporting security plan. Ministry Leads are responsible for ensuring that measures and procedures are followed by Ministry Personnel, and that they have the information they need to protect themselves.
3. Violent behaviour in any form is unacceptable from anyone. All concerns regarding violence or not feeling safe within the church must be reported to the Pastor or Chair of the Board.
4. Ministry Personnel must work in compliance with this policy. Everyone is encouraged to raise any concerns about violence and to report any violent incidents or threats. If it is an emergency, immediately call 9-1-1. Please complete an Incident Report Form and submit all concerns and complaints to the Pastor or Chair of the Board. The Board must be made aware of these incidents.
5. The Board and Church Leadership pledge to investigate and deal with all incidents and complaints of violence in a fair and timely manner, respecting the privacy of all concerned as much as possible.

Incidents of Aggressive and Violent Behaviour

1. To ensure the safety of participants, aggressive behaviour by an attendee will result in the request for them to leave the premises.
2. In an effort to discourage aggressive behaviour, Ministry Leads are to follow the disciplinary action policy guidelines.
3. If aggressive behaviour has occurred, the aggressive individual is to be required to stay home from the program for at least one event. Additional incidents are to result in a progressive number of days out of the program. In some cases, it may be necessary to impose permanent removal. This would be addressed on a case-by-case basis, and only after other reasonable alternatives have been exhausted. The Ministry Lead is to work with the individual, caregiver or guardian to identify behaviour triggers and look for solutions.
4. Complete an Incident Report Form for any act of violence.

G. Financial Aid

1. Ministry Personnel may not distribute money or loans from their own resources.
2. Ministry Personnel are not to give money, or loans to individuals in their programs as a bribe or in exchange for any services or favours.
3. If an individual asks for aid, requests must be submitted in writing, with supporting documentation demonstrating the need to the Ministry Lead of the benevolent fund. Leadership must approve these funds, whether the aid is being provided personally or from the benevolent fund. Groceries and gift cards can be given in the case of need, but must be approved by the Board or benevolent committee.
4. All financial aid distributed by the church is to be accounted for by the finance department.

REPORTING AND RESPONSE

Response to Abuse

A. Hearing of an Allegation or Suspicion of Child Abuse

The following policies outline the recommended procedure and sequence for reporting suspected abuse cases.

1. For the protection of our Children, Youth and Adults, all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse against Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults are to be taken seriously.
2. Immediately upon hearing of potential abuse or allegations of abuse of a Child or Youth, the Ministry Personnel must complete a Suspected Abuse Report Form documenting all pertinent information (Appendix 33). The victim must not be asked leading questions nor should the accused or any other parties be contacted at the point of completing the Suspected Abuse Report Form.
3. Make an immediate report to Child and Family Services. Reporting may be done in conjunction with the Lead Pastor or a Ministry Lead.
4. All forms must be kept permanently unless otherwise directed by legal counsel.
5. Reporters are requested to submit a copy of the Suspected Abuse Report Form to the Lead Pastor.

B. Reporting Child Abuse

1. Any person including, but not limited to, Ministry Personnel, who has reasonable grounds to believe that a Child is in need of protection, is legally required to immediately report the matter to Child and Family Services (Children's Aid) or the police. Reporting must be done orally by telephone or in-person.
2. A person who knowingly fails to report in these circumstances is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offence and may be subject to disciplinary action in the church.
3. If the abuse occurred within the context of the church, the Lead Pastor or his designate must notify the church's insurance provider and seek legal counsel upon hearing of a suspected child abuse case.
4. The church will notify and work in conjunction with denominational leadership in any and all allegations or suspicions of abuse that may have happened in the context of church ministry.
5. If the suspected abuse happened in the context of church ministries or was committed by a church member or attendee, the Parents of the victim must be notified by the Lead Pastor or by Church Leadership in conjunction with Child and Family Services and legal counsel.

C. Hearing an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse Against an Adult

1. All allegations and disclosure of abuse or harassment against Adults are to be taken seriously.
2. Upon hearing an allegation or disclosure of abuse or harassment against an Adult, Ministry Personnel must complete a Suspected Abuse Report Form (Appendix 32) documenting all pertinent information. Do not ask the individual leading questions, and neither the accused nor any other parties should be contacted at the point of completing the Suspected Abuse Report Form.
3. All forms must be kept permanently unless otherwise directed by legal counsel.
4. Ministry Personnel are requested to notify the Lead Pastor that they have heard an allegation or disclosure of abuse.
5. If the abuse occurred within the context of the church, the Lead Pastor or his designate must notify the church's insurance provider and seek legal counsel upon hearing of a suspected child abuse case.
6. If the abuse happened within the context of the church, leadership will notify and work in conjunction with denominational leadership in any and all allegations or suspicions of abuse that may have happened in the context of church ministry.

D. Reporting and Responding to an Allegation of Abuse or Harassment Against an Adult

1. All allegations, disclosures and suspicions of abuse and harassment against an Adult will be taken seriously and responded to with empathy.
2. If an allegation or suspicion of abuse represents a situation that is an emergency and a crime is about to be committed, immediately call 9-1-1 and report it to police.
3. If it is not an emergency or no imminent threat exists, and an accusation of abuse, harassment, misconduct or exploitation towards an Adult is made or suspected, the following guidelines are to be followed:
 - a. If the Adult has the cognitive ability to make a report to police, then Ministry Personnel are to encourage the person to make that report, and support them in their decision, whatever they decide. At no time should the individual be discouraged or instructed not to call the police.
 - b. If the Adult does not have the cognitive ability to make a report, then Ministry Personnel are to complete a Suspected Abuse Report Form (Appendix 32) and make a report to police, where the accusation involves a crime.
 - c. In some cases, such as Long Term Care homes, additional laws define anyone who works with certain Adults as a Mandatory Reporter. In these cases, whether the Adult has the cognitive ability to make a report on their own or not, Ministry Personnel are to complete a Suspected Abuse Report Form (for Adults) and make a report to the mandated reporting agency.
4. If the Adult has the cognitive capacity to make a report, but is unwilling to do so, and no law requires mandatory reporting, Ministry Personnel should:
 - a. Express concerns for the individual's well-being;
 - b. Provide them the phone number to make the report in the future;
 - c. Offer to be with them when they report it;
 - d. Inform them about the laws in place regarding abuse and harassment and that they are not alone, that there are supports available to them;
 - e. Encourage them to consider what to do next time;
 - f. Arrange for a follow-up; g. Develop a safety plan.
5. Ministry Personnel and leadership are not to confront the accused as this may put the victim in more danger. They may offer pastoral care and professional counselling to the individual that disclosed the abuse but they are not to confront the accused about the abuse.
6. The church requests that when a report is made to police on behalf of an Adult who does not have the cognitive capacity to report on their own, in the case where a Ministry Personnel provides support to an Adult who makes their own report to police, or in a case where the Ministry Personnel is a Mandatory Reporter, that Ministry Personnel must notify the Lead Pastor that such a report has been made.

E. Assessing and Investigating an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse

1. No persons, including Church Leadership, are to assume the function of assessing, substantiating or investigating the need for intervention or interpretation of suspected Child abuse or abuse against an Adult.
2. The church is to engage an external investigator to investigate allegations and disclosures of sexual misconduct and abuse of Adults.
3. The church and its individuals must avoid any undue interference when a report of Child abuse has been filed with Child and Family Services or the police. The church must ask how it can assist in helping and supporting the investigation and the victim. The church must maintain frequent

communication and supportive relationships with those suspected or guilty of child abuse as long as these persons exhibit a willingness to listen, change and look to Christ for help. This does not exclude the need for hurting individuals to receive professional counselling.

4. The church must maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with those suspected of abuse as long as the individual exhibits a willingness to listen. This does not exclude, or should it be at the expense of those that are victims and in need of professional counselling. A victim advocate must be appointed to walk alongside the victim.
5. The church is to support Ministry Personnel when they fulfill their duty to report abuse as outlined in the Plan to Protect® training and church policies.

F. Protecting Confidentiality and Dignity of the Victim and the Accused

1. During the process of reporting and response, all Ministry Personnel will be committed to prayer and strive to remain calm and hopeful.
2. Discretion must be observed and details of the suspected abuse must not be shared among the church community. Information should be shared on a need-to-know basis, expanding only as individuals are drawn into the response and investigation. Confidentiality for the suspected victim and the accused must be protected.

G. Spiritual Abuse

1. The church is opposed to any form of spiritual abuse. Ministry Personnel are not to misuse their positions of authority or influence to manipulate or coerce others to act or believe in a certain way for the apparent benefit of the church or those in a position of authority.
2. Ministry Personnel are not to use scripture out of context or to use the Bible as a weapon to unduly manipulate an individual.
3. Ministry Personnel and Board members must attend additional professional development training on spiritual abuse awareness and prevention. Volunteers must receive training on the definition of spiritual abuse as part of their safeguarding training.
4. A whistleblower policy must be put in place to provide a safe contact to receive concerns about any form of injury, harm, and abuse. All complaints of spiritual abuse are to be brought to the attention of the Board and are to be fully investigated as outlined under the Whistleblower Policy.
5. Ministry Personnel are to be held accountable if they have been found to have misused their positions to unduly cause spiritual harm to another individual and are to be subject to progressive steps of discipline.
6. If an individual raises a concern about spiritual abuse, they are to be encouraged to seek out professional help and healing. Church Leadership are to assign a knowledgeable person to provide care to the individual, and where able, are to extend the offer of professional care and therapy to help with the recovery of the spiritual harm that has occurred.

H. Whistleblower Policy

1. The church is to act with due diligence in its investigation and follow through on all allegations of misconduct. They are to do their utmost to protect any whistleblower from reprisal, dismissal or any other retaliation.
2. The church is not to tolerate any harassment or victimization (including informal pressures) and is to take appropriate action to protect the whistleblower when they raise a concern in good faith, even if they are mistaken. Any harassment or victimization of a whistleblower may result in disciplinary action against the person responsible.

3. In situations where we have a legal duty to report child abuse, no internal investigation is to take place until such time as an investigation has been conducted by law enforcement or the child protection agency.
4. Any investigations into allegations arising from whistleblowing are not to influence or be influenced by any other Ministry Personnel procedures to which the whistleblower may be subject.
5. All concerns are to be treated in confidence and every effort is to be made not to reveal the identity of the whistleblower if that is their wish. If a concern cannot be resolved without revealing the identity of the whistleblower, steps forward are to be determined in collaboration with the whistleblower. This policy encourages the whistleblower to put their name to their allegation whenever possible.
6. Church Leadership has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The church is to maintain a record of concerns raised and outcomes (in a form which does not endanger confidentiality) and is to report as necessary to the governmental, or other legal authority as required by law.
7. The church is to respond to every complaint or allegation. Within 10 working days of a concern being raised, a member of Church Leadership is to write to the whistleblower to:
 - a. Acknowledge that the complaint or allegation has been received;
 - b. Indicate how the matter will be dealt with;
 - c. Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
 - d. Indicate whether any initial inquiries have been made;
 - e. Supply the whistleblower with information on support mechanisms;
 - f. Tell the whistleblower whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.
8. Where appropriate, the matters raised may:
 - a. Be referred to the next level of leadership;
 - b. Be referred to the Board of Directors;
 - c. Be referred to the disciplinary process;
 - d. Be referred to the police;
 - e. Be referred to an external investigator; or
 - f. Form the subject of an independent inquiry.
9. The church is to take steps to minimize any difficulties which the whistleblower may experience as a result of raising a complaint or allegation.
10. If a complaint or allegation is not confirmed by an investigation, no action is to be taken against a whistleblower. If, however, a complaint or allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against the complainant.
11. Subject to legal constraints, the church is to inform the whistleblower of the outcome of any investigation.

Response to Abuse

A. Spiritual Response and Counsel for the Victim

1. The church is committed to providing a trauma-informed response, prioritizing the needs of the victim.
2. For the protection of everyone, all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse are to be taken seriously and handled with the utmost care. The suspected victims are to be treated with dignity and respect.

3. During the process of reporting and response, all Ministry Personnel are to be committed to prayer and strive to remain calm and hopeful.
4. Situations of abuse must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality. Discretion must be observed and details of the suspected abuse must not be shared among the church community. Information must be shared on a need-to-know basis, expanding only as individuals are drawn into the response and investigation. Confidentiality for the victim must be protected.
5. Church Leadership are to seek opportunity to provide individual care and counsel both for the abuse victim and their family. In consultation with the individual, a victim advocate will be assigned to support the victim. Church Leadership are to determine the need for professional assistance and evaluate and designate resources as needed and able.
6. The victim will be empowered to make decisions and granted opportunity for their voice to be heard. At no time will the victim be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement in relation to the incident of abuse.

B. Biblical Response and Discipline for the Accused or Convicted

1. The accused is to be treated with dignity and respect. If the accused is a paid Ministry Personnel, that person is to be relieved temporarily of all duties until an investigation is completed with arrangements made to either maintain or suspend income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
2. It is the responsibility and right of Church Leadership to exercise and practice church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18 and as stipulated in denominational guidelines.
3. Church Leadership are to seek opportunity to provide individual care and counsel both for the accused and their family. Church Leadership are to determine the need for professional assistance and evaluate and designate resources as needed and able.
4. Anyone accused of abuse to Children or Youth is to be prohibited from having access to Children or Youth until they are cleared of any and all charges. Clear written guidelines are to be provided to the individual with restricted activities and areas of the church that they are not permitted to use.
5. Anyone convicted of Child abuse will be prohibited from having access to Children or Youth. Church Leadership may designate an individual to be responsible to be informed whenever the convicted person attends church activities and to accompany the convicted person while on church property. Clear written guidelines are to be provided to the individual listing restricted areas and access points on the church property.

C. Media Relations

1. It is the responsibility of the Church Leadership and Lead Pastor to designate a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the church to media and to the public in relation to any crisis or allegation of abuse. All inquiries must be directed to this person and comment must not be made by other individuals unless given permission to do so.
2. Public statements must be well prepared and presented under the guidance of legal counsel.
3. The media spokesperson is to cooperate with the media to communicate our deep concern about the incident and reaffirm our commitment to cooperate with the investigation.

D. Ongoing Investigation

1. Full cooperation must be given by all parties to civil authorities under the guidelines of legal counsel.

2. At no time should Church Leadership or its individuals either engage in denial, minimization or blame, or admit responsibility which could prejudice the case or cause increased liability to the church.
3. A confidential follow-up report with conclusions and action taken must be documented by the Lead Pastor following a report of abuse. This report should be placed in a confidential Ministry Personnel file and kept permanently.
4. Church Leadership are to inform others of any ongoing investigation strictly on a need-to-know basis. In consultation with legal counsel, a trauma informed summary report will be shared with the complainant, accused and the congregation.

E. Offender's Policy

This policy relates to Offenders, meaning individuals who have been convicted of sexual crimes against Children or Youth who wish to attend the church on a consistent basis.

1. Offenders of Child sexual abuse may attend the church on a regular basis if they enter into an Offender's Covenant Agreement with the leadership of the church.
2. Two delegates from the Board and the Lead Pastor are to meet with the individual and inform the individual that the church requires Offenders to enter into an Offender's Covenant Agreement in order for them to attend the church on a regular basis.
3. The Covenant Agreement is to be written and signed by the Lead Pastor, two representatives of the Board, and the individual, making up the accountability team.
4. The Offender's Covenant must include the following:
 - a. Who is to be informed when the Offender will be at the church.
 - b. What part of the building the Offender may come to.
 - c. Locations in the building the Offender is not allowed to go to (Children and Youth wings of the church).
 - d. Where in the sanctuary the Offender may sit (recommend the front of the sanctuary with one of the accountability team members).
 - e. Restriction to take pictures at the church.
 - f. Restrictions for befriending and spending time with families with Children.
 - g. When the Offender uses the washroom, one of the chaperones are to first check the washroom to make sure there are no Children in the washroom. If there is a Child in the washroom they are to wait until the Child is done before entering.
 - h. Restrictions from participating in programs with Children and Youth, i.e., church property during special Children's events (such as VBS, mid-week Children's/Youth programs, etc.).
 - i. The requirement for annual review and signature of the Offender's Covenant Agreement by the accountability team.
 - j. The consequences if the covenant is broken.
2. Information regarding an individual's convictions are to only be disclosed to the members of the Board, the Pastor, key Ministry Leaders and individuals involved in supporting the Covenant Agreement or on a limited need-to-know basis.

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