



# Reduce The Risk

Children Youth & Leader Abuse Protection Plan

April 2023

## CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES

# Reduce the Risk Protection Plan Our Children, Youth and Workers

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## Policies & Procedures Manual

REF MINISTRIES

Version Date: January 1, 2021

M-1 CHILDREN'S & YOUTH

### Reduce the Risk Protection Plan CHILDREN, YOUTH, and WORKERS

The gospel of Mark records that when people brought little children to Jesus, He took them in his arms, put His hands on them and blessed them. As a church, it is our desire to bring children to Jesus, too.

In the church, we recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care and we take our responsibility to them seriously. In our ministry to children we must follow carefully what the scriptures teach:

Avoid every kind of evil. (1 Thess. 5:22) But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. (Eph. 5:3)

But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. (Matt. 18:6)

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan. (Matt 18:15-17)

#### SECTION ONE: PURPOSE

The church has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children participating in church programs which are under the auspices and authority of the church.

At the same time we are concerned about the safety and reputation of the adults and teens who volunteer to make these ministries possible.

Child abuse is a violation of God's moral law within the context of trusted relationships. It is criminal behaviour that causes emotional, physical and spiritual trauma to victims and has destructive consequences for abusers. Devastating effects on the credibility of the church's ministry and the name of Christ make it essential that this church take all appropriate steps to prevent abusive incidents from occurring.

#### SECTION TWO: POLICIES

##### 1. Screening, Recruiting and Training:

- .1 1 A screening committee comprised of a minimum of three, *maximum of five*, individuals to include two elders and a representative from children's/youth ministries, which will be appointed by the Church Board and ratified by the church. This committee to be responsible for screening all workers, employees and volunteers, recruited to work with minors, and to include:
  - Coordinating annual policy awareness and training sessions;
  - Conducting interviews, reference checks and completing the associated paperwork;
  - Soliciting criminal record searches;
  - Maintaining a master list of individuals accepted for children's/youth ministry-Discovery Zone (DZ) at The Northern Collective Church
  - Ensuring completed ministry application forms, records of training undertaken by those working with minors, and related documents are stored securely in perpetuity in a central registry file;
  - Maintaining the confidentiality of personnel ministry records; and

Handling incidents of abuse as they are reported, including communications with the police and media.

- 1.2 All workers, paid staff and volunteers, serving in children's/youth ministries will be required to:  
Complete an application form in the form prescribed by the screening committee (see Appendix "A");  
Request and submit a criminal record check from the local Police detachment (minors under 18 years are exempt from CRC, this may differ with jurisdiction, check with your local Police Authority);  
Participate in seminars or workshops as prescribed by the screening committee directed at issues of child abuse, identification and reporting obligations;  
Read resource material as prescribed by the screening committee directed at issues of child abuse and safety.  
Sign a Ministry Covenant/acknowledgement of having read this policy and related guidelines and agreeing to comply with church policies and guidelines.
- 1.3 All paid staff not involved in working with minors, will submit to a screening process as prescribed by the Church Board. This process will include criminal records checks, minimally every two years, for their own and the church's protection.
- 1.4 Individuals with a known history of having committed abuse as defined in this document or anyone with questionable references will not be permitted to work with minors.
- 1.5 We will follow the "Six-Month" rule (an adult or youth who has been an adherent, in good standing, of our congregation for a period of at least six months) for purposes of recruiting personnel for our children's/youth ministries.

## **2 . Staffing, Supervision, Security & Identification:**

- 2.1 We will follow a basic "Two-Adult" rule which says that two adults (individuals aged 18 years or over) are to be present during any children's/youth ministry program. This rule reduces the risk of child molestation, and also reduces the risk of false accusations of molestation by individuals seeking a quick legal settlement.
- 2.2 Where more than one room is being used for a program, a minimum of one adult worker, or two youth workers aged 16+, are to be present in each room. All classrooms, offices and hallways have windows or doors with windows, allowing for easy viewing by parents and supervisors. Sight lines through these windows are to remain unobstructed at all times. All storage and utility areas are to be kept locked and made accessible only to those who have a need for access.
- 2.3 Workers are to avoid one-on-one situations with children/youth, except in parentally pre-approved counselling situations where the adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child.
- 2.4 In counselling situations, a second adult should be in the immediate area with the door open to the counselling room. (For protection of the family unit, we recommend the second adult be unrelated.)
- 2.5 All those serving in nursery/preschool and primary elementary (grades 1 to 4) children's programs must wear name tags provided by the church or approved clothing, which identifies them with the ministry or program.
- 2.6 Security precautions are to be taken for all children admitted to nursery/preschool programs. Children must be signed-in and released only to those authorized by the parent(s). Doors are to be supervised to ensure children are not able to exit alone and/or cannot be taken from the room without the adult worker's awareness
- 2.7 Names and addresses of parents and children/youth, the name(s) any alternate approved by the parent, and any special concern (e.g. allergies) will be carefully maintained.

### **3. Field Trips, Special Events & Transportation**

- 3.1 Activities conducted away from the church property are to be pre-approved by the elder responsible for children's/youth ministries and the ministry coordinator, to ensure that potential risks have been addressed.
- 3.2 Parents are to be notified at least one week prior to the outing and proper written consent/medical release forms are required for each child participating in the event.
- 3.3 All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of two approved adult workers.
- 3.4 Overnight events should have a minimum ratio of 1 approved adult worker for every 5 children with a minimum of 2 workers at all times. If only two workers are required, they must be unrelated.
- 3.5 When the transporting of children is involved in an activity, all drivers must be at least 18 years of age, have a valid driver's license, and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts.

### **4. Allegations of Abuse & Incident Reporting**

- 4.1 Concerns for a child's safety are to be reported in accordance with procedures prescribed in this document.
- 4.2 The Northern Collective Church will not engage in denial, minimization, or blame. Our response strategy will be based on the following underlying principles:  
All allegations will be taken seriously.  
Situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.  
Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of legal counsel.  
Adequate care must be shown for the well being of victims. The victim should not be held responsible in any way.

### **5. Policy Implementation, Monitoring & Amendments**

- 5.1 We will take seriously our policies to prevent abuse and see that they are enforced.
- 5.2 The screening committee will work with ministry coordinators to implement and monitor this policy.
- 5.3 Amendments to this policy will be approved by the Church Board.

## **SECTION THREE: CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES**

### **1. Child Security**

Programs for nursery and pre-school aged children must provide a sign-in sheet and maintain an accurate sign-in procedure including child's name, parent's (or alternate's) name and location during that period of time and any special needs.

- 1.1 Parents of nursery-aged children will be provided with an I.D. # at the time the child is brought to the nursery.
- 1.2 A child will be released to a parent or approved alternate only on the basis of personal identification, a signature or in the case of a nursery child the bearer of the I.D. #.
- 1.3 Children are never to be dropped off in the nursery or classroom without a teacher/caregiver present.

- 1.4 Doors are to be supervised so that children are not able to exit alone and/or a parent cannot take them from the room without a worker's awareness.
- 1.5 Parents are not to enter the nursery or classroom when picking up their child unless requested to do so. This better enables the child-care staff to maintain order and provide the level of security that parents would expect.

## 2 Staffing & Supervision Guidelines

Programs that involve children and youth must always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should also be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

### 2.1 Ratios/Age Expectations:

In large churches, where parents are not known to the volunteer, it is important to have at least one volunteer who is 18 years of age or older. In smaller churches where volunteers and parents are known to each other, volunteers between the ages of 12 and 18 may be used. It is recommended that they be paired with an older adult.

- 2.1.1 As a general rule there is to be a minimum of two workers in any room with nursery, pre-school and elementary children, except in the event of an emergency situation.
  - 2.1.2 Ideally, there will be a minimum of one worker for every 4-6 pre-school children and one for every 8-10 children in grades 1-4.
  - 2.1.3 Pre-school classrooms - to facilitate observance of washroom guidelines:
    - 2.1.3.1 During activities when the adjacent areas are in use (e.g. during Sunday School) the classroom may be staffed with one adult and one youth 14 years or older.
    - 2.1.3.2 During activities when the adjacent areas are not in use (e.g. during Junior Church) the classroom should be staffed with a minimum of three workers - one adult and one youth 14 years or older. The third worker may be a youth 12 years or older.
  - 2.1.4 All preschool rooms are to be staffed with at least one female adult worker to better facilitate observance of the washroom guidelines.
  - 2.1.5 The nursery may be staffed with one approved adult because of its location with high visibility and a open half-door, provided a 1:4 ratio is maintained and there are no children who are not yet walking. Children, Grade 6 and up, who have been cleared by the screening committee, may serve as a second worker in the nursery, up to a maximum of 8 children. If there are more than 8 children, a second adult must be brought in. Non-walking infants should not be accepted into the nursery unless sufficient adult workers are available to have a 1:2 ratio.
- 2.2 Obtain Parental Permission;
- 2.2.1 Church staff or volunteer workers must obtain the consent of the child's parent or guardian before spending one-on-one time with that child. Workers must also notify an appropriate church leader of such meetings in advance and the meeting should occur in a public place with parents dropping the child off and picking the child up. See policy regarding counseling situations, Section Two, Article 2.4.
  - 2.2.2 Children/youth must also have parental permission for involvement in church sponsored field trips or overnight events.
- 2.3 Unobstructed Windows: Classroom windows are to remain unobstructed at all times to allow ministry supervisors to look in occasionally without interrupting the teaching process and to provide for worker security when there is only one worker in the classroom.

- 2.4 Supervisory Staff: The supervisory staff should make regular visits to the classroom to make sure the class is properly staffed and supervised.
- 2.5 Family Protection: Family ministry teams work well together and should be encouraged as a method of staffing. However, for the protection of this family unit, we recommend the presence of at least one other person not related to the family, including in counseling situations.

### 3. Proper Display of Affection

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love:

- 3.1 Appropriate Touch:  
**Love and caring can be expressed in the following appropriate ways, by:**  
Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully  
Taking a child's hand and leading him or her to an activity  
Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting.  
Taking both of the child's hands as you say, "You did such a good job!" (or "I'm so glad to see you. We've missed you!" etc.)  
Patting a child on the head, hand, and shoulder or back to affirm him or her.  
Holding a child by the shoulders or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behavior.  
Gently holding a child's chin to help him or her focus on what you are saying. (important for children with attention deficit disorder)  
Holding a preschool child who is crying
- 3.2 Inappropriate Touch:  
**You must avoid:**  
Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling.  
Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child with toileting as outlined previously).  
Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.  
Being alone with a child.  
Prolonged physical contact.  
Opposite sex piggyback rides.  
Seductiveness or suggestive contact.  
Any physical contact of any kind that is done for the pleasure or satisfaction of care providers.  
Any touching used to express power or control over a child.

### 4. Discipline and Classroom Management

God's definition of discipline is outlined in Hebrews 12:7-11. "Discipline is not something you do to a child. It is something you do for a child. The word discipline does not mean punishment. It comes from the root word disciple, which means training that molds character, behavior and values. Rather than seeking to merely maintain control or keep children quiet, our goal in managing children's behavior should be to shape their character in such a way that they will become disciples."

- 4.1 General Guidelines
- 4.1.1 Every ministry working with children or youth should have clearly defined rules and discipline procedure. Children may help establish some rules; teenagers should be involved in setting rules for their classes.
- 4.1.2 Children and parents should be made aware of established rules and discipline procedure.



4.1.3 Ongoing problems in discipline are to be brought to the attention of the ministry coordinator.

4.2 Preventative Discipline

Create a loving, caring atmosphere.  
Arrange your environment for children and for learning.  
To gain respect you must grant respect.  
Establish and communicate realistic expectations for the children.  
Be sure the activities that you provide are meaningful and age-appropriate.  
Be fair and consistent with all children.  
Be sure your focus is on positive actions.  
Be aware of children with special needs.

4.3 Remedial Discipline

Try to deal with the problems individually.  
Explain to the child why the behavior is unacceptable.  
Redirect the child to positive action.  
Explain the consequences of unacceptable behavior by defining the correct way to behave as well as the result of the wrong behavior.  
Offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the child.

4.4 Classroom Rule Suggestions

One voice talking at a time.  
Quiet hands get answered.  
Use “indoor” voices.  
Obey directions the first time.  
Use good manners.  
Keep your hands and feet to yourself.  
Respect each other.  
Be friendly.  
Visit the washroom before class begins.  
Remember – life isn’t fair.

4.5 Some examples of appropriate discipline within the ministry setting are:

Praising the specific behaviors you want to see in your group (i.e. “good listening”, “thank you for waiting”)  
A firm gentle voice addressing and redirecting the behavior (i.e. “you are running; walk please”)  
Confidential parental discussion when necessary.  
Age appropriate “time outs” or withdrawal from activity.

Some examples of inappropriate discipline within a ministry setting are:

Corporal punishment of any kind.  
Any words or tone that would cause a child to think he or she is the “problem” rather than a specific behavior being addressed (e.g., screaming at a child)  
Any words that could cause feelings of condemnation or shame in a child about any aspect of their person—including derisive references to anything physical, emotional, mental, or position (or station) in life, such as saying, “Are you a strong boy? Strong boys don’t cry” or “Shame on you.”

4.6 Sunday School Discipline Procedure (*written from child’s perspective - suitable for posting*)

<b>If I forget and break the rules,</b>
<b>1. My teacher will remind me ONCE.</b> If I don't listen,
<b>2. I will have a time-out to think about what I have done and how I will make it right</b> (example, telling the person I hurt I am sorry and not doing it again). If I am not quiet during my time-out and/or continue to disrupt my class by repeatedly breaking the rule(s),

**5. Washroom Guidelines**

Parents are to be encouraged to take their children to visit the washroom prior to each class or service. This recommendation is to be communicated to parents at the beginning of each new school year, and throughout the year to newcomers.

5.1 Nursery Children; As a general rule, parents will be called in to change diapers - nursery workers will not be expected to change diapers. However in the event that this becomes necessary the following rules will apply:  
 Diaper changing must always take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child that is being changed, as well as the other children and workers in the room.  
 Children under the age of 14 who are assisting in the nursery should not change diapers.

5.2 Preschool Children:  
 For preschool children, two adults will escort a group of children to the washroom. Where we do not have two adults available to take children to the washroom, hallway or safety monitors (preferably female) will be appointed to assist with washroom and security duties.  
 If just one child must go to the washroom, the adult worker should escort the child to the washroom and prop the outside door open. The volunteer should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom. The volunteer should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.  
 Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.  
 When preschool children need assistance in the washroom, an adult may enter the washroom cubicle to assist only when a second adult is within visual contact. If this is not possible, inform another adult when taking a child to the washroom and when returning.  
 In light of the fact that most abusers are male, and for the protection of our male workers, it would be wise for men to avoid assisting boys or girls of any age in the washrooms. We suggest that only women assist children in the washrooms.

5.3 Kindergarten and Up:  
 If washrooms are isolated from the area(s) of activity, (e.g. downstairs room is being used), children under 7 years should not be sent to the washroom alone and above procedures for preschoolers utilized.  
 If an older child seems to be gone longer than necessary, an adult worker should check on them, following the procedure outlined above.

**6. Health and Safety Guidelines**

6.1 Sick Children: A child who is ill and could therefore expose other children and workers to illness should not be received into the nursery. Some signs of illness are unusual fatigue or irritability,

coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat. Any child with a known communicable disease should not be received into the nursery or a classroom.

## 6.2 Emergencies:

6.2.1. The Northern Collective Church workers are not to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medicating, the parent must give it. No medication will be left in the classroom or with a worker or child. In extreme cases (i.e. peanut allergies, ventilators, etc.) arrangements should be made with written instructions and the permission of the child's parent.

6.2.2 Procedures will be reviewed semi-annually for fire/evacuation emergencies. These procedures are posted in each classroom/area and state the planned route of escape. Weather permitting, a fire drill will be held each fall.

6.2.3 First aid boxes are located in the kitchen above the fridge, in the copier room and in the nursery. Ministry coordinator is to be notified when supplies used so that they may be restocked. Contents are to be reviewed annually by the screening committee.

## 6.3 Procedures for Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood:

Separate the injured child from the other children. Isolate the area where any blood may have dropped on carpet, toys, etc. Apply first aid measures and send someone to locate the parents. If other children have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury, their parents should be informed.

Put on latex gloves (available in each classroom and the first-aid kit) and bandage the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.

Carefully wipe up all blood and bloody bandages and remove to a secure, inaccessible waste removal receptacle.

Any blood on the floor or toys must be washed away using a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water.

Remove and properly dispose of latex gloves. Wash carefully with sterilizing soap (available in classroom and in first-aid kit).

6.4 Cleanliness Sanitize the childcare areas weekly. Regularly clean all surfaces, toys, tables, trays, bedding, bibs and doors. Clean toys used by children with colds with special solution provided by your nursery coordinator. Area carpets in nursery and pre-school classrooms will be cleaned quarterly or as required.

## 6.5 Nursery Facilities

Nursery change tables should be in full view.

Nursery doors should be secured from the inside to prevent anyone from entering unnoticed.

There should be no baseboard heaters.

Electrical outlets must be covered or out of reach of children

Cribs and toys must meet safety standards.

## 7. **Special & Overnight Events**

Teachers are encouraged to have special class activities in their homes, plan social activities and involve their pupils in field trips and service projects. Special precautions need to be taken with these activities and workers should consider how they can achieve the desired benefit to the children while ensuring both the children and themselves are not at risk.

7.1 Approval, parental notification, supervision and staffing ratios as stated in our policies, Section Two, Article 3 are to be followed.

- 7.2 For programs that are essentially community-based, e.g. our Youth program, a release form for all regularly scheduled events is required prior to the start of the ministry year and as new youth become involved in the group.
  - 7.3 Each worker should have an assigned group of children or youth for whom they will be responsible while in the community and during an overnight event.
  - 7.4 A 1:8 ideal, or 1:10 maximum, adult to youth ratio should be maintained while in the community. A 1:5 ratio is required for overnight events.
  - 7.5 Special attention should be given to ensure that the group stays together and no worker or child is in an unsupervised one-on-one situation.
  - 7.6 Transportation to and from programs, should normally be provided by the parent(s). In the event that a church worker must provide transportation for a child, one-on-one child to adult ratios are to be avoided.
  - 7.7 Where the church is providing the transportation, our policy as stated in Section Two, Article 3 is to be followed.
8. **Suspicious Behaviour** - *Some conduct just deserves counsel and advice from a supervisor while other conduct requires reporting. See Incident Reporting Procedures in this document should a legitimate allegation occur.*
- 1.1 Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between ministry workers and a youth or child must be confronted immediately and investigated.
  - 1.2 Prompt warnings must be issued when appropriate, and the situation monitored very closely.
  - 1.3 Ministry workers should note when a youth or child appears aloof or withdrawn, or exhibits a marked personality change. This may indicate a problem that deserves attention. See *Symptoms of Abuse* in this document.

## SECTION FOUR: UNDERSTANDING CHILD ABUSE

### 1. Abuse Definitions & Behaviours

"Child abuse" is defined as follows:

- 1.1 **Physical Abuse** is using physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child or youth. It is more than reasonable discipline. Sometimes injury is caused by over-discipline. Injuring a child or youth is not acceptable, regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline. **Note: *Within the context of the church, it is not permissible to strike a child.*** ("In 97 per cent of reported cases of physical abuse, parents are the perpetrators. The perpetrator of physical abuse is approximately 1.5 times more likely to be male than female." Wolfe, David. *Child Abuse. Implications for Child Development and Psychopathology.* Newbury Park, California: Sage, 1987. P.20.)
- 1.2 **Emotional Abuse** is a pattern of hurting a child's feelings to the point of damaging their self-respect. It includes verbal attacks on the child, insults, humiliation or rejection. A child or youth who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behaviour.
- 1.3 **Sexual Abuse** occurs when a child or youth is used by somebody else for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may also be sexual abuse if older or more powerful children or youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful.

## **Child sexual abuse includes behaviour that involves touching and non-touching aspects.**

*Types of abuse that involve touching include:*

1. Fondling
2. Oral, genital and anal penetration
3. Intercourse
4. Forcible rape

*Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include:*

1. Pornographic videos
2. Obscene phone calls
3. Exhibitionism
4. Allowing children to witness sexual activity
5. Verbal comments

The full extent of child sexual abuse in North America is not known. Current conservative estimates suggest that from 500,000 to over 1,500,000 children are sexually abused each year.

- 1.4 **Neglect** means the failure of those responsible for the care of the child to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs of a child to an extent that the child's health, development or safety is endangered. (Reference: Inter-ministry Child Abuse Handbook Province of British Columbia, 1988, pages 10 & 11)

## **2. Understanding & Reducing the Risk**

- 2.1 The Northern Collective Church has a mandate to minister to individuals, families, adults, youth and children. In that context, The Northern Collective Church stresses the sanctity of human life and the importance and worth of each individual as a child of God.
- 2.2 The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. Unfortunately, churches that have children's programs are not insulated from this alarming trend. In response to this trend, it is our commitment to provide reasonable protective care to all preschoolers, children and youth attending any programs sponsored by The Northern Collective Church. We feel compelled to establish guidelines for the prevention of child abuse. We recognize that formal guidelines and procedures will help prevent the opportunity for abuse to arise.
- 2.3 We believe that childhood innocence is a gift given by God. Children readily place their faith in adults who care for them. It is our task as a church to safeguard that trust.

### **It Can Happen in Any Church – It Can happen in Our Church**

- 2.4 Incidents of molestation can occur in any church - including ours. Churches have traditionally accepted the services of anyone expressing an interest in working with children or youth. Churches can be trusting and unsuspecting institutions. Asking sensitive questions of those who are giving their time and talent can be seen as distasteful by church leaders. No one wants to offend potential workers, especially long time church members with a history of good service. These qualities can make a church susceptible to incidents of child molestation.
- 2.5 A single incident of child molestation can devastate a church and divide the congregation. Members become outraged and bewildered. Parents question whether their own children have been victimized. The church's youth and children's programs are jeopardized. And church leaders face blame for allowing the incident to happen.

Such incidents often result in massive media attention, sometimes on a national scale. Television stations conduct live interviews from church property on the evening news. Front page stories hit the local paper. Community residents begin to associate the church with the incident of molestation. But far more tragic is the emotional trauma to the victim and the victim's family, and the enormous potential legal liability the church faces. If a trial ensues, the issue stays alive in the media for months, sometimes even years.

### 3. Symptoms of Abuse and Molestation

- 3.1 Church workers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioural and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit. A one-time event would not necessarily constitute a potential abuse case; sudden unexplained changes, however, would warrant investigation. Some of the more common signs are summarized below:

Physical signs may include:

- lacerations and bruises
- nightmares
  - \$ nightmares
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
  - \$ irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- difficulty with urination
  - \$ difficulty with urination
- discomfort when sitting
  - \$ discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
  - \$ torn or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease
  - \$ venereal disease

Behavioural signs may include:

- anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- nervous or hostile behaviour toward adults
- sexual self-consciousness
- "acting out" sexual behaviour
- withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don't like (*names a particular person*)
- (*Particular person*) does things to me when we're alone
- I don't like to be alone with (*particular person*)
- (*Particular person*) fooled around with me

### 4. The Effects of Child Sexual Abuse

- 4.1 Child sexual abuse robs children of their childhood and can potentially scar its young victims for life. Too often in the past, the effects of abuse were minimized or dismissed. Children were viewed as being resilient. Recent research has shown that children can suffer significant pain from even a single abusive incident. Church members must be aware of the pain and long term suffering that can accompany such abuse. Abused children can display a wide range of negative symptoms in the aftermath of abuse. Abuse can result in abnormal fears, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), aggressive behaviour, sexual "acting out", depression, diffused sexual identity, and poor self-esteem. (Ksendall-Tackett, Williams, and Finkelhor, 1991) The incidence of sexually transmitted disease is also a possible outcome.
- 4.2 The degree of damage depends upon several factors including the intensity, duration and frequency of the abuse. In addition, the relationship of the perpetrator to the child matters. If the abuser is a known and trusted authority figure in the child's life, the degree of impact increases dramatically.

- 4.3 Consequences of child sexual abuse can plague victims into adulthood. Outcome studies of adult survivors of child sexual abuse suggest the following effects: sexual dysfunction, eating disorders, substance abuse, promiscuity, disassociation from emotions, and possible perpetration of sexual abuse on others. When church leaders, pastors, and respected congregational workers perpetrate the abuse, lifelong religious confusion and deep feelings of enmity toward God and the church can occur.

## 5. The Profile of a Child Molester

- 5.1 Who is the typical child molester? Some church leaders assume that molesters are “strangers wearing trench coats” or “dirty old men.” These stereotypes not only are inaccurate, but they dangerously contribute to a false sense of security. Researchers in the field of child sexual abuse currently indicate that no one profile fits the various perpetrators of abuse. Church leaders can become preoccupied screening stereotypes, while not suspecting the real molester could be an active adult or teen in the church.

### Consider the following:

If abuse occurs in our church, a respected member will most likely be the molester. Emphasis upon “stranger danger” will leave our church ill prepared. While it’s uncomfortable even to consider this, the most likely assailants include Sunday School teachers, religious educators, nursery or preschool workers, teachers in a church operated school, camp counsellors, scout leaders, “concerned” adults who volunteer to transport children to church, and clergy. Trusted adults – male or female – can easily mislead children and most incidents of child sexual abuse take place in the context of an ongoing relationship between the abuser and the child.

## SECTION FIVE: UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH’S LEGAL VULNERABILITY

### 1. Why Churches are Susceptible

Churches have unique features that can make them susceptible to incidents of child molestation. This risk increases dramatically for overnight activities.

**Access:** The Boy Scouts, Big Brothers, and similar organizations have instituted comprehensive programs to reduce the risk of child molestation. Child molesters are attracted to an institution in which they have immediate access to potential victims in an atmosphere of complete trust.

**Need:** Most churches struggle to get adequate help for children and youth programs. Recruiting nursery workers, for example, can become an unending effort. Turnover among volunteer workers is also high. A willing volunteer worker provides welcome relief.

Churches need to understand the extent of their liability. Churches are not “guarantors” of the safety and well being of children. They are not absolutely liable for every injury that occurs on their premises or in the course of their activities. Generally, they are responsible only for those injuries that result from their negligence. Victims of molestation who have sued a church often allege that the church was negligent in not adequately screening applicants or for not providing adequate supervision.

### 2. The Civil and Legal Liability of the Church

Increasingly and often more dramatically, the church and its personnel (i.e. staff, directors, officers and ministers) are being held accountable for the acts of individual abusers within the church even though neither the church, nor its leaders were aware of the abuse or condoned it. Churches are being sued in Civil Courts for damages sustained by victims and their families. Those victims and their families are attempting to hold churches accountable by alleging that:

- § the church is vicariously liable for the acts of its personnel, be they paid staff or volunteer staff, regardless of whether the church was itself negligent or even knew of the abuse,
- § the church was negligent in its hiring or accepting personnel, whether paid or volunteer, and
- § the church was negligent in the supervising or monitoring of its personnel or membership.

*(Church and the Law Update, June 1994)*

## **SECTION SIX: INCIDENT REPORTING PROCEDURES**

*“Any person who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe and believes that a child is in need of protective services shall forthwith report the matter to the local Police Authorities for intervention.*

*“Those of you who work with children are the front line in defending their right to grow up in a caring environment. Your early and supportive intervention can prevent child abuse and further family dysfunction.”*

### **Anticipated Abuse:**

Abuse or neglect need not have already occurred for a child to be in need of protection; it is not necessary to wait until a child has been harmed to intervene. When abuse or neglect can be reasonably anticipated and there are reasonable grounds to believe a child is in need of protection, the legal obligation to report applies.

### **Historical Abuse:**

Abuse or neglect that occurred in the not very recent past, must be reported wherever there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child may be in need of protection. If the alleged offender is in regular contact with a child or children, irrespective of whether it is the same child or children abused in the past, there may be grounds to believe that the child or children are at risk based on the offender's past behaviour. It is particularly vital to report these cases where the alleged abuser is in a position of trust concerning children, such as a teaching position.

## **1. Reporting of Concern**

- 1.1 If any person has any concerns regarding the safety of a child(ren) or it should be reported immediately to the ministry coordinator.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In these matters it is important to keep the information restricted to those who need to be advised. Suspicions of abuse should therefore only be reported to the designated Ministry Leader. It becomes that person's responsibility to contact the local Police Authorities, who are best equipped to handle such issues..

The only claim of confidentiality, which overrides the legal duty to report, is solicitor-client privilege. Thus physicians, clergymen and others who consider their professional relationships confidential for certain purposes are not exempt from the duty to report child abuse or neglect.



- 1.3 The ministry coordinator will work with the informant to document the concern, noting all efforts at handling the incident (see appendix I). This report will be forwarded to the chairman of the screening committee immediately (i.e. preferably within the hour).
- 1.3 The ministry coordinator and screening committee will assess the incident to determine if it requires reporting. A follow-up report (see appendix J) will be completed. Both this and the initial report will be required if the incident is reportable. Both are to be kept on the individual's screening file. *Note: Some conduct just deserves counsel and advice from a supervisor while other conduct requires reporting. (Err on the side of caution)*
- 1.4 Where a pastor is involved in the suspicious behavior or allegation, the board chairman is to be immediately advised.

## **2. When a Legitimate Allegations Occurs**

- 2.1 The screening committee chairman (or designate) will communicate the incident immediately to those who need to be informed within the church (i.e., the pastor and board chairman).
- 2.2 The screening committee chairman (or designate) is also responsible to contact and report the incident to the local Police Authority office; and to contact the church's lawyer - such an incident is not to be handled without outside professional assistance.
- 2.3 If the incident involves a church worker, either paid or volunteer, a team of three members to include two elders/pastor and the person with "reasonable grounds" shall interview the person suspected of child abuse. Immediate suspension of duties shall result when a church worker is suspected of child abuse and reasonable evidence exists as to his/her alleged involvement until a complete investigation and decision has been made. The Church Board will make a decision to maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated

Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.

Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. In some situations, churches have responded in a negative or non-supportive manner to the alleged victim. This can increase the anger and pain of the victim and the victim's family. Future reconciliation will be more difficult. The possibility of damaging litigation increases.

Treat the accused with dignity and support.

## **3. Response to the Child**

- 3.1 When the child (parent) first comes, be sure to take his or her word seriously. Do not deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to the child.
- 3.2 Give emotional support, reminding the child that he or she is not at fault. Tell the child that he or she was right in disclosing the problem.
- 3.3 Do not promise the child that no one will be told.
- 3.4 Workers should never interview the child in detail or suggest to the child that they have been abused.

## **4. The Child Welfare Report**

The Chairman of the Screening Committee is required to immediately report to the local Police Services Authority any suspected case of child abuse. It is not a breach of confidence between church personnel and the child involved. No person is personally liable for anything done or omitted in good faith in the exercise of this responsibility. Church leaders, at The Northern Collective Church, aware of their accountability to God, acknowledge their responsibility to defend and protect God's little ones. It is also the desire of The Northern Collective Church to protect the parents as much as legally possible from undue interference by outside authorities into their family. We want to follow the principles of submitting to governing authorities (Romans 13:1ff) while at the same time helping parents to exercise child discipline that is consistent with Scripture, and in the best interest of the children.

## CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

As part of a child protection investigation, social workers are required under the Child Welfare Act to assess:

- The child's current state of health;
- Their sense of safety and their views of abuse;
- Previous abuse, neglect or harm; and
- The ability of the parent(s) to care for and protect the child.

The social worker will talk to people who have contact with the child and family. They may request records or other types of information. They are entitled to whatever information is needed to complete an investigation. If denied access to a record, they can seek a court order.

- 4.1 Within the church, all requests for information regarding a child are to be referred to the screening committee chairperson. The following process should be followed at all times to assure the health and safety of the child.
  - 4.1.1 Contact the local Police Services Authority office to report that an incident has occurred.
  - 4.1.2 A worker will then contact the church.
  - 4.1.3 Any request from a child protection social worker should be in person and the protection worker should carry and show photo ID.
  - 4.1.4 If the request is urgent, and the child protection social worker is unable to visit the facility and show photo ID, the protection social worker may telephone from his/her office.

NOTE that:  
The social worker is to identify him/herself.  
She/he is to explain the information they are requesting and the process to be followed.  
They WILL NOT ask for information at this time. DO NOT give information at this time.  
Verify the social worker's identification by calling the agency, checking with the telephone directory for the agency office number, etc.  
Once identification has been established, provide whatever information is requested.  
Ask to be kept informed of future developments in the case.
  - 4.1.5 If identification of the social worker cannot be confirmed, the caregiver is NOT to give out any information. Request a personal meeting, and have the worker bring photo ID. (Be extra careful with calls by cell phone and do not respond to calls from a pay phone.)

Social workers designated to receive reports are trained to investigate and assess the need for intervention. Other professionals must not assume this function. A professional who does so and fails to report commits an offense. The Act protects an individual when a report is made. No action would be taken against a person making a report unless it is made maliciously or without grounds for the belief.

## 5. Church Follow-up and Discipline

- 5.1 If it is found that child abuse by a member of the church has taken place, the church will practice discipline according to Matthew 18:15-17.
- 5.2 The church should protect parents as much as legally possible from undue interference by outside authorities into their family life.
- 5.3 The church should ask the Police Services Authority if it could assist in helping the hurting family.
- 5.4 The church should 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.
- 5.5 This does not exclude the need for hurting individuals to receive professional counseling.

## 6. Public Relations

- 6.1 The Chairman of the Screening Committee (or designate) should serve as the ONLY spokesperson for any allegation.
- 6.2 Everyone involved in any part of the ministry of the church should be made aware of who this person is, and make no comment but refer all inquiries to the chairman of the Screening Committee. They will speak to the media and the congregation regarding the matter, if required, in a discreet, informed, truthful and diplomatic way.
- 6.3 The following statement will be used and any further comments will be decided with legal counsel. A "No Comment" statement is not to be made. This is an opportunity to influence public opinion positively by emphasizing an awareness of the problem of child abuse, a concern for victims, and the extensive steps taken by the church to reduce risk and provide a safe environment for children.

It is always tragic when children are abused or exploited. The Northern Collective Church is aware of the ever-growing nature of child abuse. We have taken careful precautions to protect the children entrusted to our care. We are distressed by any accusation of child abuse. We will do everything in our power to address any needs in this situation. For the welfare of those involved, all information has been directed to the appropriate agencies and authorities.

- 6.4 Often when confronted with an allegation of abuse, a church may be tempted to;
  - Deny that the incident occurred, despite clear evidence to the contrary;
  - Acknowledge that the incident occurred, but minimize it; ("It only happened once," or "It wasn't that serious.")
  - Blame the victim or the victim's family.

**All these responses are inappropriate and are to be avoided.**

## SECTION SEVEN: RECRUITING & TRAINING PROCEDURES

### 1. Recruitment of Paid Staff and Volunteers

- 1.1 To protect minors in our care and to be protected from liability, the church must take reasonable action in screening and supervising the workers involved in any children's work. (A court can find the church legally liable if it is less than systematic and therefore negligent in screening volunteers). By having everyone fill out an application form and keeping them on file, the church greatly reduces the potential for child abuse and the resultant liability. Our staffing and child protection policies and guidelines also serve to protect workers from accusation.
- 1.2 Ministry coordinator(s) should submit names of potential recruits to the Screening Committee prior to approaching them.
- 1.3 The Children's/Youth Ministry Application Form should be submitted by the worker before interim approval is considered as it is critical in protecting the church from legal action if a case of child abuse occurs in which a church worker is involved.
- 1.4 The ministry coordinator(s) should ensure the applicant has received interim approval from the Screening Committee prior to scheduling the individual to serve.
- 1.5 Each ministry should keep a list of workers approved to serve in their ministry.

### 2. Reference Check

- 2.1 Three personal references are requested on the application form. Please do not use relatives or employers (minors may use parents as 1 reference or teachers) Suggested references are:

Former pastor

Other individuals who have served with the individual in children's/youth work and who have sufficient strength of relationship to comment on the individual's personal habits and character

Try to include one reference from inside the church

- 2.2 At least two of these references will be contacted and asked to affirm the appointment of the volunteer. The person making the contact will use a suggested 'script', and the name of this individual, the date, and a summary of the reference's comments will all be recorded. (See Appendix B)

### 3. Interview

- 3.1 An interview provides the screening committee with the opportunity to review the important items from the application form in a personal setting. This allows them to ask follow-up questions and to enhance their knowledge of the applicant. The interview will also allow the potential worker the opportunity of asking questions about various children's ministries and the reasons behind our child protection procedures. The interview will be conducted by a minimum of one screening committee member and the ministry coordinator.

### 4. Criminal Record Check

- 4.1 Each approved worker will be provided with a criminal record check form(s), instructions for obtaining from the local Police Authority, and a Verification of Request form to immediately submit to the screening committee.
- 4.2 Any individual who will not submit to this procedure will be ineligible to be involved with children on behalf of the church.
- 4.3 The cost for any CRC's requested by The Northern Collective Church will be borne by the church.
- 4.5 Minors under 14 years of age are exempt from the CRC.
- 4.6 Criminal Record Checks are required, minimally, every two years. The worker will be notified by the screening committee when an update is required.

New workers may begin working for the church after the Verification of Request form has been submitted to the screening committee. This grace period will not exceed 120 days.

The CRC's are to be picked up from the local Police Authority by the individual and submitted to the church office in an envelope marked 'confidential' with their name on the outside, to the attention of the screening committee.

If there is no criminal record of any sort, the volunteer may be considered for ongoing service in the church.

If there is a record or information that raises some concern, a member of the screening committee and ministry coordinator will meet to discuss the matter.

If the offence is other than child or sexual abuse, the volunteer may proceed with ministry in the church provided both the member of the screening committee and the ministry coordinator involved agree. The following are criteria to consider when evaluating the information:

- the number and type of convictions the age and circumstances of the offender at the time of the offence
- the length of time between past criminal activity and the present
- the conduct and circumstances of the individual since the offence
- the likelihood of the individual repeating the offence

If the offence is related to abuse of minors or of a sexual nature, the worker may not be involved in ministry with minors on behalf of The Northern Collective Church.

## **5. Records**

- 5.1 All screening records, including the initial CRC, will be sealed in an envelope on completion of the screening process and placed in the individual's confidential screening file.
- 5.2 Information pertinent to the supervision or involvement with age groups other than that initially screened for should be recorded on a separate file memo and made privy only to those with a need to know, i.e. screening committee, ministry coordinator, or other appropriate senior staff (e.g. pastor).
- 5.3 Screening records will be maintained in a locked cupboard or cabinet in the church administration offices.
- 5.4 Only those listed in 5.2 above and the individual themselves will be permitted access to the screening file.
- 5.5 Two people should be present each time a record is accessed and the file access log must be completed.
- 5.6 Screening files should be kept for seventy-five (75) years.

## **6. Training**

- 6.1 All children's/youth ministry workers will be equipped with training regarding child safety and child abuse prevention. Each worker must sign a record indicating they have been trained or have read through this document. That record will be kept in the ministry worker's screening file (see appendix A).

### **What kinds of criminal convictions disqualify a person from serving in Children's/Youth Ministries at The Northern Collective Church?**

A criminal conviction for a sexual offence involving a minor would certainly disqualify an applicant. In the case of paedophilic behaviour (molestation of a pre-adolescent child) such a conviction should disqualify an individual no matter how long ago it occurred (because of the virtual impossibility that such a condition can be "cured"). Other automatic disqualifiers would include incest, rape, assaults involving minors, murder, kidnapping, child pornography, sodomy, and the physical abuse of a minor.

Some crimes would not be automatic disqualifiers, because they would not necessarily suggest a risk of child abuse or molestation. Some property offences would not be included in this list, particularly if the offence occurred long ago and the individual has a long history of impeccable behaviour.

**Should religious conversion make a difference for a worker who has been guilty of child molestation in the past?**

Occasionally, such persons freely admit to a prior incident, but insist that they have since had a conversion experience and that they now present no risk whatever. The safest course would be to encourage such an individual to work in the church, but in a position not involving access to children or youth. This is a reasonable accommodation of the individual's desire to serve The Northern Collective Church. Any church that permits such an individual to work with children or youth, on the basis of the professed religious conversion, will have a virtually indefensible position should another incident of molestation occur. A defence – that the molester claimed to have been converted – would likely be viewed with derision by a civil court. Putting a known child molester in a position involving access to children is taking a huge risk.

## **SECTION EIGHT: IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES**

The topic of child abuse and our prevention policies will create a variety of reactions among congregational members. Many will be in favour of the concept. Others will have questions and reservations. It is important for leadership to continually provide prospective workers and vested interest groups the need for such a policy then give them opportunities for providing feedback. The topic can be presented in worker's seminars and Sunday or mid-week adult classes. Our screening committee will be available to answer concerns and provide specific answers about this particular aspect of the church's policies.

### **1. Presenting this Policy**

- 1.1 The following key points should be made:
  - Child sexual abuse can happen in our church.
  - One incident can devastate a child, a family and the church.
  - The legal liabilities can be enormous.
  - Church leaders may be held liable.
  - Prevention program can reduce risk through relatively simple procedures.
- 1.2 It is important to periodically inform the congregation of the key issues pertaining to child sexual abuse and why a decision was made to establish a prevention plan. This will continue to nurture an emotional commitment within our membership to maintain a safe church environment for all children and youth.
- 1.3 The climate in these presentations should not be one of sober reflection but of hope. You want the people to realize that The Northern Collective Church is taking action to minister to this need. The focus should be upon the great responsibility God has given to us to care for the children/youth in our care.

### **2. Monitoring of Policy**

- 2.1 Ministry coordinators should thoroughly review these policies and procedures as part of their pre-fall program planning.
- 2.2 After the initial emphasis on the program wanes, workers may begin to ignore basic policies. For example, the Two Adult Rule may become routinely neglected. Attention must be given to periodic monitoring that examines the following:
  - Have all workers been trained regarding these policies?
  - Are workers following the required policies and guidelines?
  - What obstacles exist in complying with the policies?
  - What is the level of cooperation?
  - Do sufficient materials exist for training and information?
  - Are the policies printed and available?
- 2.3 Thoroughly discuss each policy and procedure with ministry coordinators. Work through all concerns. If problems exist in the policies, they should be brought to the attention of the Policy Review Committee. Consider revisions, but changes must not sacrifice the integrity of the program. Work at developing a sense of unity before educating workers. .

### **3. Educate Workers**

- 3.1 Routines must be established for the training of all new workers who serve the church.
- 3.2 Group training will occur at the start of each new program year.
- 3.3 Individuals who begin at a later date should meet with a designated person to review the policies and procedures and to complete the screening form. These workers should view the entire video presentation and read the Children's/Youth Ministries policies, procedures and guidelines.

#### 4. Screening Workers Already Serving

Those who are scheduled to serve in our Children's/Youth Ministries prior to the implementation of this policy, and who have served in Children's/Youth Ministries at The Northern Collective Church in the past for a minimum of one (ministry) year will not be routinely interviewed or references checked. Final decision to be made on review of application. They will be required to complete the screening application form and obtain a criminal records check.

### SECTION NINE: DEFINITIONS

- Abuse In relation to a child, means physical, mental, emotional, or sexual mistreatment of a child.
- Adult Means an individual aged 18 years or over.
- Baseline Data Means the basic information (name, address, AHC#, parent's and designated alternate's name and emergency contact numbers) placed on file for each minor when he/she first enters a church program and brought to the attention of those persons providing care or leadership for that individual.
- Minor Recognizing that the age of majority is 18 years, a minor is any person between 0 and 18 years. For the purposes of this policy or document the following terms apply:  
Infant Individual from birth to two years of age.  
Child Individual over 2 years and below 15 years.  
Youth Individual over 15 years and under 18 years.
- One-On-One Refers to situations where a leader or volunteer has the potential of being alone with a child during a church-offered program for children, including transportation within such a program, or between the child's home and place of meeting.
- Parent In relation to a child, this means the natural mother or father or legal guardian who has custody of the child.
- Program or Ministries for Minors Includes all programs offered under the auspices of our church for infants, children and youths as defined above.
- Two Adult Rule This rule provides that two adults will be present during any minors' activity in order to increase the safety of each minor, and protect the credibility of our workers and our youth programs.
- Visibility Rule Means that, when a minor(s) is/are in a room, if there is no corridor window into that room the door(s) or upper half of a split door will be kept completely open and all those in the room will be in a clearly visible location. All rooms used for Children's/Youth Ministries at The Northern Collective Church are to have corridor windows.