

# W H I T E H O R S E N A Z A R E N E . O R G

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## Abuse Prevention Handbook April 2016

This handbook is intended to provide basic information for Church volunteers working with children and youth, to protect children from potential abuse and protect volunteers from allegations of abuse. It includes three parts: application and approval process, operational procedures including incident reporting and, responding to allegations or complaints. A separate manual pertains to daycare staff conduct.

### A. APPLICATIONS AND APPROVALS

Volunteer Qualifications:

- Every worker involved with children or youth must: be at least eighteen years of age, be a professing Christian, exhibit Christ-like qualities in his or her life, and be in harmony with the doctrines, policy, and practices of the Church of the Nazarene.
- Assistants to workers must: be at least eighteen years of age, be persons of good repute and exhibit a cooperative attitude. Youth ages 12 to 17 may also serve as an assistant but will not be given responsibility of children on their own.
- No person is eligible to serve as a volunteer worker or assistant until he/ she has been a member or adherent of the church for at least six months or provide a reference contact from another church or former pastor.
- At no time shall a person who has been guilty of child abuse be involved in ministry with children and youth.

NB Every children's or youth worker, including established members, must complete the Ministry Worker Application Form found in Appendix 1 of this document, and undergo the related screening process.

#### Application Process:

There are three components to the application process, which must be completed in full:

1. Reference Check: References are required for previous church affiliation and ministry as well as personal references. Information provided by the Worker will be verified as well as any comments made about the suitability of the Worker to work with children or youth. The date and summary of this contact will all be filed with the pastor.
2. Interview: An interview is required and enables the ministry leader to review and clarify information in the Ministry Worker's completed Application Form. The interview will be conducted by the Pastor or his/her designate, and one ministry leader.
3. Criminal Record Check: A Criminal Record Check (CRC) will be made on all selected workers and are completed for the protection of workers, children and the church. The information contained in the CRC is strictly confidential. Only the pastor and appropriate ministry leader will be privy to the information and if there are any concerns the designated ministry leader and the pastor will meet to decide whether the volunteer may proceed with ministry in the church

Criteria considered when evaluating the information include: the number and type of convictions, age and circumstances of the offender, length of time passed since the activity, conduct of the person since the offence and the likelihood of re-offence.

**Approvals Process:** No person shall be eligible to serve as a worker or assistant until he or she has completed the application and screening process described above; however, subject to the approval of the pastor and the ministry leader, interim approval may be given to workers or assistants who are already serving with children or youth, pending completion of the screening process.

All workers and assistants must sign a statement indicating they have reviewed and understood this Handbook and provide their agreement to abide by it. These records will be kept in the pastor's office.

All workers must be approved by the pastor. Notwithstanding any of the above, the pastor shall have the right and authority to deny anyone the privilege of working with children or youth in the local church at his/her discretion.

Training: Provision shall be made for training of all workers with children and youth. Typical means of training include review of this handbook, formal abuse prevention training, educating workers to recognize signs of abuse and periodic refreshers.

## **B. OPERATING PROCEDURES INCLUDING INCIDENT REPORTING**

These procedures provide guidelines for workers associated with conduct of workers and washroom use. Refer to First Aid Protocols for specific emergency procedures.

### Classroom Guidelines

Workers should always conduct themselves in a godly manner, being an example of obedience, respect and honesty to those in their care. Adequate supervisory personnel will be provided until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

Wherever possible, the "Two Adult Rule" shall be observed meaning that two workers will be present with children and youth at all times during all meetings or activities, on or off church premises. Under no circumstances should a worker be alone with a child or youth of any age, especially one of the opposite sex. There may be occasional circumstances when a worker has legitimate reason to be alone with a child or youth. In such cases the worker must work in a room with the door left open or be in direct view from a window in the door.

All preschool rooms are to be staffed with at least one female adult worker to better facilitate observance of the washroom guidelines and supervisory staff should make regular visits to the classroom to make sure the class is properly staffed and supervised.

### 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.

A child five years of age and younger should not be sent to the washroom alone, rather should be accompanied by an adult worker or youth worker, and preferably with a second adult worker in visual contact with the first. The worker should stand outside the washroom or cubicle and call the child's name if he/she is taking longer than seems necessary.

When preschool-age children need assistance in the washroom, it would be best to find the parent or guardian of the child to provide any required assistance.

No worker shall ever enter into a washroom cubicle with a child or youth and shut the door.

### Age Expectation

It is desirable to have at least one worker at least 18 years of age. In some cases where workers and parents are known to each other, workers between the ages of 12 and 18 may work with children. When younger workers are used, the open door policy is to be enforced.

### Open Doors

When it is necessary that only one worker be in a closed room with children (e.g. leader leaves room to take children to the washroom; a small class where there is one teacher for a classroom of 3 children), the door of that room must remain open. It is recommended that the class rooms have windows or window doors that will allow ministry supervisors to look in occasionally without interrupting the teaching.

### Emergency Exit and First Aid

An emergency exit plan with maps and procedures must be visible in each area of the building and workers are to be familiar with the plan. Procedures will be reviewed semi-annually for fire emergencies.

A first-aid box is available in the daycare area. Contents are regularly monitored by the daycare. If any supplies are used from the first-aid box, the pastor or the daycare director must be notified so that supplies can be replenished.

Any first-aid training required should be brought to the attention of the pastor and/or ministry leaders, who will initiate any necessary action.

### Special Events and Overnight Policies

Ministry to children and youth often involves special activities in homes, social activities, field trips and service projects. The following shall apply to these activities.

1. Activities conducted away from the church property must be pre-approved by the church leadership.
2. Parents must be notified at least one week prior to the outing.
3. Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in field trips and special events
4. All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of two approved adult leaders.
5. All overnight activities must have a minimum ratio of one leader for every five children and a minimum of two leaders at all times. Each leader must have an assigned group of children for whom they will be responsible during the overnight event.
6. All supervising adults must be approved volunteers.
7. When transportation is involved in an activity, all drivers must be over age 21 with a history of at least two years without a serious driving offence, have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per vehicle must never exceed the number of seat belts.

### Proper Display of Affection

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing the lives of children. Workers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, culture, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. An example of appropriate touch is bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully.

Examples of inappropriate touch include extended hugging and tickling or touching a child to express power or control or in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child with toileting as outlined previously).

### Discipline and Classroom Management

We recognize there will be times when the children in our care may not be able to control their emotions and act in unacceptable ways toward others. Our strategy for minimizing the need for "discipline" is called preventative maintenance, (being aware of the environment/ scanning to intercept situations before they might arise into conflict). We also try to arrange the environment to best suit the needs of the children. We believe that by doing this, their interactions are enhanced with each other.

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 goal of discipline is not to punish but rather to help the child work through the situation in a positive and esteeming manner. It is to be used to help the child correct their original behavior in a positive manner and to teach them to look for better solutions in comparison to the behavior chosen previously by the child involved.

*NB Under no circumstances should volunteers use harsh or course language or raise their voices in anger. Yelling at children is not condoned and will not be tolerated in any form.*

Examples of preventative discipline include: creating a loving, caring environment, being fair and consistent with all children, focusing on positive actions, and communicating realistic expectations.

Examples of remedial discipline include: dealing with the problems individually where possible, explaining to the child why the behavior is unacceptable, redirecting the child to positive action and defining the correct way to behave. In the event of uncooperative behavior, the worker is to contact the appropriate church or daycare lead and not deal with the situation alone. if the parent is in the building contact the parent.

Examples of appropriate discipline in ministry include praising positive behavior such as good listening and patience, using a firm, gentle voice to redirect behavior ("walk please") or age appropriate "time outs" if necessary. Examples of inappropriate discipline within a ministry setting include any form of corporal punishment or words or tones that indicate the child is the problem rather than the behavior. We want to correct and guide a child's heart and not shame or blame.

### Incident reporting

1. Each person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has suffered abuse or is or may be in need of protection shall promptly report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to the Pastor or ministry leader. They will work together to report the occurrence to the local Child Protection Agency in compliance with Yukon requirements.

2. Prior to reporting the occurrence, no person shall, apart from complying with the preceding paragraph, conduct any investigation or question any individual unless specifically authorized by the senior pastor, or in his absence, an associate pastor.
3. No investigations or inquiry shall be conducted where a report has been made to the Child Protection Agency until the Agency or any Police investigation has been completed, unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate civil authorities.
4. Should a civil action be brought against a person who made a report, he/she will be protected unless he or she acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds for his/her belief or suspicion.
5. The accused church volunteer is to be treated with dignity and respect and should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished.
6. Information regarding an incident is to be restricted to those who need to be advised: all suspicions of abuse should be directed only to the pastor of that department or the senior pastor.

### **C. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OR COMPLAINTS**

Advance preparation is essential. Wrong actions can multiply the pain and liability inherent in an abuse case. An effective response strategy recognizes several key principles:

1. The senior pastor will normally be the spokesperson for the church.
2. All allegations are to be taken seriously, and must be handled promptly and with due respect for the privacy and confidentiality of all persons involved.
3. Workers and supervisors are not to engage in denial, minimization, or blame: Experience elsewhere has shown that this can increase the anger and pain of the victim and the victim's family.
4. Document all actions taken in handling and responding to the allegation, and keep these records up to date.
5. The senior pastor, or in his absence one of the associate pastors, will report the allegation or incident immediately to proper authorities following the guidance of the church's policies and leadership.
6. An in-depth investigation will be left to professionals familiar with such cases.
7. The accused will not be confronted until the safety of the child or youth is secured.

In Summary, all allegations will be treated seriously. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements will be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

**Reporting and Responding:** Procedures are in place to ensure consistent and timely reporting of incidents or concerns and to provide an appropriate response to allegations or complaints of misconduct or abuse. Procedures include :

- Utilizing the Church Board as the Abuse Incident Response Committee
- Keeping accurate records of all matters concerning the alleged incident.
- Satisfying statutory reporting obligations to police authorities and/or child protection agency
- Expressing our concern to the complainant and assuring them of our commitment to full investigation.
- Assuring the alleged victim and alleged offender of confidentiality
- Suspension of the alleged offender from duties, pending the outcome of the investigation
- Refraining from admitting liability or making public statements to the media or the congregation without obtaining appropriate counsel

### **Closing Thoughts**

In closing, thank you for becoming a member of our ministry team. You play a vital role in our team here at The Church of the Nazarene. It is our hope that your experience here with us will be a pleasurable one. We look forward to having you use your talents in your work with the children.

**FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS**

Name:

Date:

Address

Phone Number:

Email:

What areas of ministry are you interested in (circle all that apply):

Kids Club, Sunday School, Youth Ministry, Van Driver, Daycare Volunteer, Anything Needed

Why do you wish to be involved in ministry with children or youth?

Have you already applied for an RCMP Criminal Record Check?

If not, are you prepared to do so?

Have you read and understood the Abuse Prevention Handbook?

What is your previous church affiliation (if any)?

What is your previous ministry experience (if any)?

What are some personal references? Include name and phone number or email, and what your relationship was with the person (friend, co-worker, church member, etc).

Can you share a little about your personal Christian experience?

I have read, understood, and agree to comply with the policies of the Abuse Prevention Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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**FOR CURRENT VOLUNTEERS**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read, understood, and agree to comply with the policies of the Abuse Prevention Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date