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***Abuse Prevention Handbook***  
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This handbook is intended to provide basic information for those who work with children and youth, (both volunteers and employees) so as to not only protect children from potential abuse but also protect volunteers from allegations of abuse.

**Volunteer Qualifications:**

- Every worker involved with children or youth must be at least eighteen years of age or older, must be a professing Christian, must exhibit Christ-like qualities in his or her life, and must be in harmony with the doctrines, polity, and practices of the Church of the Nazarene.
- Assistants to workers must be at least eighteen years of age, must be persons of good repute within the community and must exhibit a cooperative attitude. Youth ages 13 to 17 may also serve as an assistant but must never be given responsibility of children on their own.
- No person is eligible to serve as a worker or assistant until he or she has been a member or adherent of the church for at least six months.
- At no time shall a person who has been guilty of child abuse be involved in ministry with children and youth.
- 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 important aspects of the application process, which must be observed:

- 1) Reference Check. References are requested for previous church affiliation and ministry as well as personal references (as indicated on the Ministry Worker Application Form). The person making the contacts will verify the information provided by the Worker 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 provides the ministry leaders with the opportunity to review the important items from the Ministry Worker Application Form in a personal setting. The interview will be conducted by the Pastor or his/her designate, and one ministry leader. This allows the pastor and ministry leader to ask follow-up questions and to enhance their knowledge of the applicant. It also allows the potential worker the opportunity of asking questions about the ministries and the reasons behind the prevention procedures.
- 3) Criminal Record Check: A Criminal Record Check (CRC) will be made on any selected workers. All paid staff will also submit to a CRC for their own protection and for the protection of the church. Any individual who will not submit to this procedure is ineligible to work with children and youth ministry.

The information contained in the CRC's is considered strictly confidential. Only the pastor and appropriate ministry leader shall be privy to the information. If there is a record or information which raises some concern, the designated ministry leader and the pastor 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 pastor and the ministry leader 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 offense
  - 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
- 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 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, in consultation with the District Superintendent, 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. Working as a volunteer in the church is a privilege and not a right. Protecting the children and youth of the church is a duty of the pastor. Any suspicion, cause for concern, or discomfort about using any person shall be thoughtfully reviewed by the pastor and his/her decision shall be binding and final. The pastor shall not be required to give any explanation for the decision.

**Training:** Provision shall be made for training of all workers with children and youth. Typical means of training are as follows:

- Review of this handbook with workers.
- Formal abuse prevention training through presentation of resource materials, videos, seminars etc, whenever possible.
- Educating workers to recognize and identify the signs and symptoms of abuse.
- Periodic refresher training and reassessment of the prevention plan, usually annually.

**Reporting and Responding:** Procedures shall be set up to ensure consistent and timely reporting of incidents or concerns. Procedures shall also be developed to provide an appropriate response to allegations or complaints of misconduct or abuse. Such procedures shall include the following:

- Establishing an Abuse Incident Response Committee
- Provision and completion of incident reporting forms
- Satisfying statutory reporting obligations to police authorities and/or child protection agency
- Expressing your organization's concern to the complainant and assuring them of your commitment to full investigation of the situation
- Assuring the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator of confidentiality
- Suspension of the alleged perpetrator from duties, pending the outcome of the investigation
- Refraining from admitting liability or making public statements to the media or the congregation without obtaining formal legal counsel
- Timely reporting of the incident to your insurance agent or broker in order to satisfy the statutory conditions of the liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage response.

## **Operating Procedures**

### 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.

#### Nursery Children

As a general rule, workers in the nursery will not be expected to change diapers.

#### Preschool Children

If just one child must go to the washroom, the adult worker must escort the child to the washroom and prop the outside door open. The worker should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom. The worker should call the child's name if he/she is taking longer than seems necessary.

Workers are never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and are never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.

When preschool-age children need assistance in the washroom, no worker shall enter the washroom cubicle to assist the child unless a second worker is within visual contact. If this is not possible, a female safety monitor should escort the child to the washroom to provide any required assistance

A second adult must be 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 statistical evidence establishes that most abusers are male, and for the protection of our male workers, only female workers should assist preschool-age children in the washrooms.

#### Grades 1-6 and Youth

A child five years of age and younger should not be sent to the washroom alone, but should be accompanied by an adult worker. For this reason, two workers are required whenever possible.

For children five years of age and under, the adult worker should escort the child to the washroom, and prop the door open to make sure that everything is in order. The worker should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom.

The worker should call the child's name if he/she is taking longer than seems necessary.

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

#### 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 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 first-aid kit).

Point to consider – do our volunteers need first aid training?

### Classroom Staffing and Supervision Guidelines

Workers should always conduct themselves in a Godly manner, being an example of obedience, respect and honesty to those in their care.

- a) Personnel: 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.
- b) Two Leaders: Wherever possible, the "Two Adult Rule" shall be observed. This requires that two workers be present with children and youth at all times during all meetings or activities on or off church premises. This may require that grade levels be combined. Smaller churches may consider the possibility of using teenaged assistants or having parents help out on a rotational basis. Under no circumstances should a worker be alone with a child or youth of any age, especially one of the opposite sex. A temporary alternative to the two adult rule is the open door policy.
- c) Special Circumstances: 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.
- d) All preschool rooms are to be staffed with at least one female adult worker to better facilitate observance of the washroom guidelines.
- e) The supervisory staff should make regular visits to the classroom to make sure the class is properly staffed and supervised.

### Age Expectation

In large churches, where parents may not know the workers, it is important to have at least one worker who is at least eighteen(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 these younger workers are used, the open door policy is to be enforced. (See also Para. 3.1.1, 3.1.2)

### 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 process.

### 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.

- a) Activities conducted away from the church property must be pre-approved by the church leadership.
- b) Parents must be notified at least one week prior to the outing.
- c) Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in field trips and special events (See appendices 5 and 6)
- d) All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of two approved, unrelated adult leaders.
- e) All overnight activities must have a minimum ratio of one leader for every five children. (minimum of two leaders at all times. When only two leaders are required, they must be unrelated). Each leader must have an assigned group of children for whom they will be responsible during the overnight event.
- f) All supervising adults must be approved volunteers.
- g) 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 lives. Workers 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:

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, 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 behaviour.
- Gently holding a child's chin to help him or her focus on what you are saying
- Holding a preschool child who is crying

Inappropriate Touch: The following actions must be avoided.

- 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.

### Incident Reporting Procedures

- a) 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 the appropriate provincial Child and Family Services Act or equivalent.
- b) 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 Church Board.
- c) 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.
- d) 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.
- e) Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- f) In these matters it is important to keep the information restricted to those who need to be advised, therefore, all suspicions of abuse should be directed only to the pastor of that department or the senior pastor.
- g) 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.

## 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, behaviour and values. Rather than seeking to merely maintain control or keep children quiet, our goal in managing children's behaviour should be to shape their character in such a way that they will become disciples."

### 1. 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.

### 2. Remedial Discipline

- Try to deal with the problems individually.
- Explain to the child why the behaviour is unacceptable.
- Redirect the child to positive action.
- Explain the consequences of unacceptable behaviour by defining the correct way to behave as well as the result of the wrong behaviour.
- Offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the child.
- In extreme circumstances involving uncooperative behaviour the worker is to contact the ministry leader to assist in dealing with the situation and not deal with the situation alone. If the parent of the child is in the building, the parent should be called to deal with the situation.

### 3. Classroom Rule Suggestions

- One voice talking at a time.
- Quiet hands get answered.
- Use inside 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. Some examples of *appropriate discipline* within the ministry setting are:

- Praising the specific behaviours 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.

### 5. 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 behaviour 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."

## **Equipment and Facility Requirements**

It is recognized that not all of the following items can be incorporated in existing buildings. However, where reasonably possible they shall be implemented, particularly when new building or renovations are planned.

### Windows/Doors:

- Rooms shall have large interior windows or doors with windows that allow for easy viewing by parents and supervisor. Sight lines through these windows should remain unobstructed at all times.
- Where windows are not provided, or sight lines are obstructed, doors must remain open when workers and children or youth are in the room.
- "Dutch doors", i.e. doors horizontally split into upper and lower sections, are a useful design in rooms for babies and toddlers. Use of these doors can facilitate the open-door policy without compromising the safety of the children.

### Emergency Exit

- An emergency exit plan with maps and procedures must be visible in each classroom.
- All workers must be familiar with the emergency exit plan.
- Procedures must be reviewed semi-annually for fire emergencies.

### First Aid Supplies/Training

- A first-aid box must be kept on hand and all workers are to view the location and contents regularly.
- It is recommended that there should be a certified first-aid worker for every 35 children in the program.
- Any first-aid training required should be brought to the attention of the pastor and/or ministry leaders, who will initiate any necessary action.

## **Responding to Allegations or Complaints**

### Advance Preparation

Advance preparation is essential. Realistically, no practical prevention strategy is 100 percent effective. An accusation of child sexual abuse may occur in any church. It is important to have a prepared plan or strategy to respond to sexual abuse allegations. Wrong actions can multiply the pain and liability inherent in an abuse case.

### Response Strategy

An effective response strategy will recognize the following underlying principles

- A. 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.
- B. Do not engage in denial, minimization, or blame. 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.
- C. Document all actions taken in handling and responding to the allegation, and keep these records up to date.
- D. Do not try to handle the allegation without professional outside assistance.
- E. Report the allegation or incident immediately to the local church's lawyer, the District Superintendent, and the insurance company.
- F. Contact the proper civil authorities following the guidance of the church's insurance company and lawyer.
- G. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. Leave this to professionals familiar with such cases.

- H. Obtain legal advice to determine how and when to notify parents.
- I. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or youth is secured.
- J. 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.
- K. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated. The suspension from duties and responsibilities shall not be seen as an indication of the "guilt" of the individual, but only as an indication of the priority given to protect all those involved pending the outcome of the investigation

### Appointment of Spokesperson

To avoid conflicting statements and responses which could create a negative impression of the church, it is prudent for the church to appoint a spokesperson. This individual will speak to the media and the congregation regarding the matter in a discreet, informed, truthful and diplomatic way. The appointment should be made proactively as part of the abuse prevention plan. The senior pastor will normally be the spokesperson for the church.

### Prepared Position Statement

To aid in providing a consistent and positive response by the church it is suggested that a prepared position statement be created, updated regularly and kept on file for the use of the spokesperson. Having a carefully prepared statement is far superior to making no comment. Avoid spelling out the details of an accusation in a public interview. The following is an example of a position statement that could be used in an initial response to an allegation of abuse, pending full investigation and review.

*"We are aware of the devastation which child abuse brings and we are concerned for its victims. Our church strongly desires to develop and maintain a safe environment for all children and youth, and for those who work with them. We have taken all reasonable precautions to create such an environment. We have since (date to be added) had in place Prevention Plan which addresses such issues as careful selection and screening of workers, responsible supervision of workers, detailed operating and reporting procedures.*

*As for the specific allegation at hand, 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 (insert name of appropriate agencies and authorities)."*

### Behaviour Management / Discipline

The original meaning of the word "discipline" is "to teach". 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.

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

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, the act of being aware of the environment and scanning to intercept situations before they might arise into conflict. We also endeavor 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.

### 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 area of ministry are you interested in (circle all that apply):

Caravans, 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