

Abuse Prevention Policy & Procedures

Christ Community Church

I. ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

A. Statement of Purpose

1. It is our responsibility as a Christian Church to do what we can to minimize the risk of abuse by persons in a position of trust who conduct church activities with our members and visitors of any age.
2. Society as a whole has begun to encourage greater openness and acknowledgment of the problem of abuse and the devastating effect it has on its victims.
3. The Christian community has recognized in recent years that the Church is not immune from instances of abuse.
4. While rules and policy will not prevent abuse, this policy aims to heighten the sensitivity and awareness of this issue.

B. Definition of Abuse

All abuse involves the **MISUSE** of **POWER**. Misuse of power takes place when people take advantage of the authority or power they have over vulnerable people. Abuse can be physical, neglect, emotional or sexual.

Physical Abuse - any non accidental human act that could result in or results in physical Pain or injury to a person - whether or not it leaves a cut or wound, or a mark or a bruise.

Physically abusive behavior ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking and biting to more severe forms i.e. choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object(s), burning, stabbing and shooting. It can sometimes be a single event, or may be a chronic pattern of behavior.

Neglect - a passive form of abuse by a person(s) in power which may include withholding food, clothing, education, medical care, and even affection and affirmation of the person's self-worth.

Emotional abuse - the deliberate, systematic or random, diminishment of another. It is a pattern of destructive behavior and or verbal attacks which result in the reduction of a person's self concept to the point where the victim considers him/herself unworthy of respect.

Sexual abuse - the exploitation of a person regardless of age, gender or circumstances for the sexual gratification or stimulation of another, and/or for the expression of power over another.

C. Definition of a "Person in a position of trust."

Any person carrying on a leadership function in the church.

(This would include, but is not limited to, the Pastor, Elders, Deacons, Sunday School Leaders & Helpers, Nursery Attendants, Boys' and Girls' Club leaders,

Vacation Bible School teachers and leaders, Youth Group leaders, older and more powerful youth helping/ leading the activities, etc.

II. GENERAL ABUSE PREVENTION PROCEDURES

A. Release Form

Before becoming a leader or helper in any church program involving children, youth or persons with disabilities, the **volunteer must** read and abide by all of the terms of this Abuse Prevention Policy. The volunteer must sign the: **Ministry Covenant** before commencing his/her duties and must agree to provide a **CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK**, and be prepared to provide letters of reference. Letters of reference should include two references with at least one being from a person outside of the Christ Community church.

Payment of costs is to be covered by the volunteer. Such costs may be reimbursed by church council if requested and if the volunteer meets the Church Council's terms regarding reimbursement of criminal record checks.

Criminal Record check supervision and safekeeping:

Where there is non-compliance with Abuse Prevention Policies, it will be reported to the Children's Ministry Director. The Director will inform the Ministry Elder who will be the "Abuse Prevention Officer". The Children's Ministry Director and Ministry Elder will have sole access to confidential Criminal Record check forms and will deal with any resulting ineligibility of volunteers.

B. Volunteer Code of Conduct

That the: **VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT** be read and respected by all volunteers and staff, as follows:

C. Volunteer Code of Conduct Inclusions

Every Volunteer Will:

1. Respect the dignity and spirit of children, youth and adults.
2. Avoid contact that may be interpreted to have sexual connotations.
3. Avoid being alone with a child or youth in a closed room. Whenever possible, two unrelated people should be present along with the child, youth, etc., or use a room with a window, or step away, but remain in sight of others. (The greatest risk of an incident or allegation of abuse occurs when leaders spend time alone with a member of their group. If there are no witnesses to corroborate what took place, neither is protected.)
4. Avoid social contacts with children or youth after work to prevent false allegations, unless the parent or legal guardian has given verbal or written permission or signed a waiver. Always notify a parent *before* a planned one-to-one contact with a minor and ask the permission of the parent(s).

C. Volunteer Code of Conduct Inclusions (continued)

5. Be cautious before showing physical affection to a child or youth.

a) Do not ask a child to hug you or touch him/her unless the child/youth has freely asked for a hug or a 'pat on the back'.

Any physical contact with the child/youth must only occur in areas of high visibility with others people present.

b) See RISK MANAGEMENT table, page 4.

6. Require two volunteers/staff to transport children or youth in a church vehicle or volunteer/staff vehicle (unless all the children or youth being transported are picked up and dropped off simultaneously).

Volunteers using their own vehicle need to check their vehicle insurance for adequate liability coverage - minimum \$2,000,000.00 if non-relatives are transported.

7. Not take part in or permit behavior that puts down, embarrasses or frightens children, volunteers or other staff. Similarly, if children or youth embarrass or threaten others, inform them that such behavior is unacceptable and that they must stop.

8. Treat aggressive actions seriously, especially in older children. If other children or youth are endangered by the behavior remove them from the room or area and leave an adult to supervise the errant child or youth.

WARNING: *Restraint can be considered an assault or abuse and may be done only by persons who have the required training in restraining technique. If aggressive behavior does not respond to verbal command, police need to be called.*

9. Not shout, swear or call children or youth demeaning names.

10. Not give, borrow from or lend money to children or youth. It may be seen as giving them control over you, or your giving payment for suspicious reasons. Special funds are available for legitimate purposes/ needs.

11. Exercise good judgment when sharing personal information about alcohol or drug use.

12. Dress appropriately for the situation/event.

RISK MANAGEMENT*

<u>Situation</u>	<u>Risk</u>	<u>Guidelines</u>
1. Holding a private conversation with a child or youth.	By placing yourself in a one-to-one situation out of sight or hearing range, you can leave yourself open to allegations of abuse.	Keep office/room door open. Use an office/room with a window.
2. Disciplining a child or youth away from the group.	By placing yourself in a one-to one situation out of sight or hearing range, you can leave yourself open to allegations of abuse.	Step away from group but remain visible. You may remove the child or youth from the group's view but the leader must remain visible to others.
3. Driving or walking a child or youth home.	By placing yourself in a One-to-one situation out of sight or hearing range, you can leave yourself open to allegations of abuse.	Take along a friend of the child's or another staff member. Call parents when you leave and tell them when to expect you. Tell a colleague where you're going and when you'll return.
4. Child runs up and hugs you.	People have different personal boundaries Hugging may seem intimate.	Discuss personal boundaries with children. Lower yourself so you are at the same height as the child. Use side-to side hugs.
5. Staff member wants to physically comfort a child in need	People have different personal boundaries Hugging may seem intimate.	Ask the child for permission to give hugs or pats on the back.
6. A child is injured and staff must remove clothing to treat injury.	You must decide between safety and modesty.	Get another staff member or a friend, preferably of the same sex as the injured child, to help.
7. Staff member behaves inappropriately, either physically or verbally, with child or youth.	Without proper training or judgment, staff members may find themselves in compromising situations.	Train staff in their responsibilities and ensure proper supervision and support.

Adapted from Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Greater Victoria, B.C. material.

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

1. Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, and pushing) is not permitted.
2. Abusive verbal discipline (yelling, hurling insults, threatening) is not permitted.
3. Parent(s) are to be informed and involved whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehavior increases.
4. Concerns about a child's inappropriate behavior should be reported to the program supervisor.
5. Concern about another leader/ adult's inappropriate response to child(ren) should be reported to program supervisor
6. An aide or a parent should be involved weekly in classrooms where misbehavior is an ongoing problem.
7. Expectations of children's/youth's behavior must reflect their age and level of comprehension. Similarly, discipline must reflect their age and level of comprehension.
8. Children are to be reminded of the kind of behavior that is acceptable for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.
9. Appropriate forms of discipline are to be reviewed with volunteers/staff before church-sponsored programs begin a new season. Then periodic reminders are to be given as needed.
10. Whenever possible, leaders should try to avoid having to discipline a child/youth by choosing one or more of the following options:
 - distract the child/youth with another activity.
 - help the child/youth focus on another more acceptable behavior.
 - isolate the child/youth from others if another volunteer/staff is available to assist.
11. For young children, time-outs should not last longer (in minutes) than the age of the child. For example, a three-year-old should not have to sit for a time-out any longer than three minutes.
12. When nothing seems to be working, leaders should get help before "losing their cool."

III. SPECIFIC PROGRAMS PROCEDURES

A. Nursery Programs

1. Minors (less than 19 years of age) may not care for child(ren) without adult supervision.
2. Attendants may take children from the nursery only for good reason, such as to use the bathroom or in case of illness. Any significant medical problem should be reported immediately to the child's parents. (Using the monitor in Nursery)
3. For children who do not require assistance in the bathroom, the attendant must remain outside the bathroom. For children who require assistance, the attendant must assist the child with the bathroom door ajar.
4. Whenever possible the diapering of an infant or toddler must be done by a parent. When this is not possible the diapering of an infant must take place in the nursery room with at least one other, unrelated attendant present.
5. Only one adult member of a family should serve in the nursery at a given time. A couple (husband and wife) should not serve in the nursery at the same time.
6. One attendant should be present for every four children.
7. Discipline Guidelines apply to nursery program.

B. Children's Worship and Church Sunday School / Kids for Christ (KFC)

(Any children's activities during any service.)

1. Children should not leave their worship centre, activity area, or classroom, except for illness, bathroom, or other compelling reason. If available, a designated individual will accompany the child to its destination.
2. Whenever any of these activities is in session, the worship centre, activity area, or classroom door should allow for an unobstructed view of the room either through the door window or an open door.
3. Only adults may assist children with bathroom needs. Bathroom assistance is conducted as in the nursery policy. Parents should encourage children to use the bathroom facilities before the service.
4. A supervisor should monitor the hall during KFC (program) time, making sure all children go to class rooms or go back under parent's care.

C. Vacation Bible School (VBS)

1. All VBS classes and summer activities will be conducted with at least one adult leader and one helper. No one should meet alone with a child without another leader or designated individual nearby to observe.
2. Leaders and helpers should not physically restrain a child in their care unless the child is perceived to be in danger to themselves or to others. If other children are in danger, remove them. (Errant child)

WARNING: *Restraint can be considered as assault or abuse and to restrain requires training in restraining techniques. If aggressive behavior does not respond to verbal command, police need to be called. If other children are in danger, remove them from the room/area and have another adult supervise errant child.*

3. Leaders and helpers transporting a child must have parental/custodial permission to do so and follow **RISK MANAGEMENT guidelines** on page 4.

D. Boys' and Girls' clubs (Cadets and G.E.M.S)

1. Each club function should be supervised by at least two persons; an adult leader and a helper. The leader and helper must be at least four years older than the oldest child/youth.
2. Where an activity is planned to occur away from the church facility, out of town, or overnight, parental attendance should be encouraged to provide additional supervision. Signed permission should always be obtained from parent or guardian.
3. Out of town re bedtime - safeguards need to listed, info coming.
(See Cubs, Scouts, Big Brothers Guidelines).
 - a) Medication can only be given to children under the following conditions:
 - A parent or guardian must complete a medical release/permission form.
 - If prescribed by a doctor, instructions must be clearly written regarding dosages and times for taking.
 - Medication must be in an original container which clearly states the child's name.
4. Ratio of adults to children must be no less than one adult to four children.

2010 Addendum Regarding Younger Leaders:

Youth (minors age 14-17) that have been a consistent, committed Leader-in-Training (Junior Leader) for at least one year may be a co-leader (with another youth with the same qualifications) of a children's ministry small group. All youth leaders who lead in

Children's Ministry must read and agree to follow the Abuse Prevention Policy, take provided leader and abuse prevention training, sign the ministry covenant and complete a Children's Ministry Application.

Youth need to apply and be approved by the Director of Children and Family Ministries before being placed on a team.

Parents need to agree to support their youth in their ministry by arranging transportation, trying to avoid family scheduling conflicts and walking along side them to prepare if necessary.

E. Transportation of Children and Youth

Driver's Policy (Transportation guidelines to /from program activities when arranged by Program Director/ Supervisor.

- Every designated driver must have a minimum of 2 million insurance coverage
- Drivers must be 19 years or older and hold a valid, current BC drivers license. They must not be 'L' or 'N' drivers.
- Drivers must not carry more passengers than the availability of seatbelts in the vehicle.
- Program Director must record make, model, color, license plate and owner's name of each vehicle transporting youth, as well as the name of each passenger.
- Driver must have at least two participants in each vehicle. If this is not possible, the driver must contact parent of child/teen to let them know when they are leaving or arriving in order to account for time driving alone with the child/teen.
- Children 80 pounds and under must be transported in a safety approved car seat.

Small Group Policy (youth group)

- Small groups with a student leader will be monitored by an appointed adult.
- Where possible, small groups will be in an area where there is clear visibility.
- Leaders are discouraged from interacting out of sight with a teen one on one.
- Adult leaders are discouraged from being with teen from youth group
- In the event that you can not avoid meeting one on one, meetings should take place in a visibly public area where there are other people nearby.
- Any volunteer, leader or staff person must report any suspected situations involving abuse of a child/teen to the appropriate authorities as required by law. (Read 'duty to report' on the last page)
- All leaders should report to the Youth Director or appointed Youth supervisor any instances of disclosure of abuse.
- All leaders will not use harsh verbal words for discipline nor can they use any sort of physical punishment. Behavior that results in a need for discipline must be reported to the Youth Director.
- Parents of an unruly child/ teen must be notified by the Youth Director or appointed Youth Supervisor to come and pick up their child as soon as possible.

IV. RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS OF ABUSE

All staff and leaders should be prepared to recognize and deal with signs of abuse and/or allegations of abuse.

SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

Signs that children are being ***physically abused*** may include injuries present over a period of time.

Signs to watch for include:

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- unexplained bruises and marks (not on the usual places like the knees, shins or elbows.)
 - cuts
 - repeated injuries over a period of time.
 - presence of several injuries (age 3+) that are in various stages of healing.
 - bald patches on child's head where hair may have been torn out
 - unexplained burns (*e.g. cigarettes, or e.g. rope burns on arms, legs, neck or body)
 - broken bones
 - stilted conversation, vacant stares or frozen watchfulness, no attempt to seek comfort when hurt.

Signs that children are being sexually abused may include:

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- sexually explicit play, drawings or knowledge
 - sexual aggression with others; sexualized expressions of love
 - itching, swelling or bleeding in the genital area
 - bloody underwear
 - fatigue due to sleep disturbance
 - sudden weight change- difficulty in walking or sitting
 - sexually transmitted disease(s)
 - cuts or sores made by child on the arm (self-mutilation)
 - pregnancy.

Should also be aware of unexpected changes in behavior patterns, including:

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- withdrawal from others
 - constant anxiety
 - rejection of friends
 - fear of adults or authority figures, lack of trust in others
 - sad, cries often, unduly anxious
 - inserts objects into the vagina or rectum
 - excessively dependent
 - fear of home or a specific place
 - excessive fear of men or women
 - bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge
 - refusal to go home
 - regressive communication patterns (e.g. speaking childishly)
 - sexual acting out in a variety of ways
 - poor personal hygiene
 - runaway attempts
 - dramatic behavioral changes, sudden non-participation in activities
 - excessive eagerness to please
 - self-mutilation, depression, suicide attempts
 - inappropriate dress (to cover injuries)
 - eating or sleep disturbances
 - fearful, startled or pulling away when touched unexpectedly.

Duty to report:

Any person who has reason to believe that a child needs protection **must report** the matter to a ministry director, police or use the phone number 310-1234 / local 741-5444 (or police @ 911)

This duty applies to *anyone* who is aware of circumstances that should be reported; even if you believe it has been reported already or know that a child protection worker is already involved.

Never contact alleged perpetrator; leave that to the protection worker and police.

WARNING: failure to report suspected abuse within 24 hours can result in a fine up to \$10,000.00.

With many thanks to;

- Members of the 2004 committee: *Joan Campbell, Ann Marie Hewer, Richard Duifhuis - scribe*
- Trish Turkstra for Nov. 2010 revision

