

# Abuse Prevention

Williamsburg Christian Reformed Church

2019

# Safe Church Team

## Purpose of the Safe Church Team:

- \* Minimize the opportunity for both abuse/misconduct and unfitting allegations to occur in church related activities by reviewing and implementing the current policy;
- \* Assist council in developing safe programs for the church family by screening volunteers, completing police checks, and having volunteers regularly review guidelines;
- \* Keep records of and promote ongoing training and education
- \* Deal with allegations of abuse/ misconduct in an appropriate manner.
- \* Permanently store all signed forms, documents, and personal records in a secured location.

# Abuse Prevention Policy

## Reasons for having an Abuse Prevention Policy

- \* To create a safe place in church
- \* To protect children
- \* To protect staff and volunteers
- \* To create an opportunity to talk about abuse
- \* To respond to situations of abuse
- \* To satisfy insurance company requirements

# Who is a 'Vulnerable Person?'

- \* The term 'vulnerable person' is used throughout our training and it is defined as:
  - \* All children who are less than 18yrs of age and/or persons who, because of their age, a disability, or other circumstance, whether temporary or permanent:
    - Are in a position of dependence on others; or
    - Are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by persons in a position of authority or trust relative to them

# Policies for all Church Programs

These guidelines apply to all church-related activities and ministries held at and supported by Williamsburg CRC

# Prevention Strategies

## **Access:**

- \* All rooms used for meetings will have windows in or near the doors. These windows should not be covered or obstructed at any time.
- \* All closets and private spaces are locked when not in use.
- \* All areas for vulnerable persons' activities will have adequate lighting.

# Prevention Strategies (continued)

## **Supervision:**

- \* Two or more screened, non-spousal adults should be present for all activities involving vulnerable persons.
- \* When only two adults are present for an activity involving only one or two participants, the activity should be done in a context that is visible to others.
  - \* If this is not possible, the program coordinator or council executive should be notified of the situation.

# Prevention Strategies (continued)

## **Meetings:**

- \* Adults will meet one on one with vulnerable persons only in public spaces or locations where they are clearly visible to others. If this is not possible, the council executive, program coordinator and/or parents should be notified. All leaders and volunteers are expected to exercise discretion and avoid situations that may lead to perceptions of indecency. If a one-on-one relationship leads to repeated visits, both parties will mutually decide on a third person to be informed for the purposes of support and mutual accountability.



# Disciplining in Church Programs

- \* Should be done in a loving manner
- \* Corporal or abusive verbal punishment is prohibited
- \* Concerning recurring behaviour issues are to be reported to the program coordinator and/or parents
- \* If behaviour is ongoing, an aide will be provided for the classroom/group

# Disciplining (continued)

- \* If a young person misbehaves, leaders should try to:
  - \* Distract them with another activity
  - \* Separate the person from the behavior
  - \* Help them focus on acceptable behaviors
  - \* Use active listening skills and not judge
  - \* Use positive reinforcement for good behaviors
  - \* Allow the children/youth to help develop a system for expectations of behavior with built-in consequences for not following the rules.

# Confidentiality

- \* Information shared in confidence to anyone in a position of authority must be respected and will be held in confidence; however, when personal safety, life, or the well-being of a vulnerable person is at risk, some information cannot morally or legally be held in confidence. The person giving the information will be advised that it cannot be maintained confidential for safety reasons.

# Screening Procedures

## **All volunteers:**

- \* Are accountable to the coordinator of the program with which they are involved.
- \* Must be in regular attendance at WCRC for at least 6 months.
- \* Every 5 years, volunteers working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults will review and sign the Abuse Prevention Policies and Guidelines for their respective programs.

# Screening Procedures (continued)

## \* **Police Checks**

- \* Pastors, all council members, leaders of youth, nursery, cadets, GEMS, Friendship and VBS volunteers, as well as, any paid staff will submit a copy of a completed police check to Lindsey DeVries.
- \* If a police check reveals past criminal activity which has no bearing on possible relationships with children and vulnerable adults, the Safe Church Team may approve that person for certain activities.

# Screening Procedures (continued)

- \* *Further screening includes the following (depending on the position):*
- \* **Committee discretion**
  - \* Each committee/program coordinator will be responsible for briefly interviewing new volunteers
  - \* New volunteers will have to provide 2 reference checks
- \* **Council approval**
  - \* Only the leader/coordinator of any group is to be approved by council
  - \* New or paid positions will be approved by council

# Transportation of Vulnerable Persons

- \* Volunteers who drive vulnerable persons to off-site related activities must have either 2 previously screened adults or 1 screened adult and at least 2 or more vulnerable persons.
- \* Activity leaders may deny someone permission to serve as chauffeur for any particular activity, and the leader's decision will be final.

# Transportation of Vulnerable Persons (continued)

- \* Where applicable, leaders must have written permission from parents for off-site outings.
  - \* If there are any unplanned extra stops, attempts will be made by the leaders to notify the parents.
- \* Volunteer chauffeurs transporting minors must have parental permission to do so, via a signed consent form.



# Training

- \* What we are doing right now!
- \* All members are asked to become familiar with this policy and to suggest improvements.
- \* You will read, sign, and confirm that you understand the respective code of conduct and policy forms.
  - \* These will remain on file indefinitely.
- \* Volunteers need to be educated about:
  - \* How to recognize and identify the signs and symptoms of abuse of vulnerable persons
  - \* Their legal obligation to report suspected abuse/ misconduct
  - \* Understand the reporting procedures that cooperate with the Classical Abuse Advisory Committee.

# Incident Reports

- \* Incident (also ‘accident’) reports must be filled out for any situations that involve injuries or suspected abuse, neglect, and/or misconduct. Forms will be available on the Safe Church bulletin board, located on the wall just outside of the nursery room.
- \* *The incident report should be filled out by the volunteer, signed by the parent/guardian, and then given to the program coordinator who will communicate with a member of the Safe Church Team in order to file the report*

# Code of Conduct for Pastoral Staff

- \* Pastoral staff is called by God and the congregation to serve WCRC as spiritual leaders and advisors. Members of the church, especially those who seek counsel, look to the pastors as trusted mentors, role models, and leaders.
- \* Abuse of that trust can have a devastating impact on the individuals and the ministry of the church. To help ensure trust is maintained, the pastoral staff will abide by the following guidelines (see the following 2 slides):

# Code of Conduct for Pastoral Staff

- \* **Boundaries:**

- \* Pastors, together with council, will develop and review boundaries for pastoral care and counselling relationships, including such matters as:
  - \* Counselling expertise
  - \* Time to be spent with counselees
  - \* Referrals to appropriate outside agencies

# Code of Conduct for Pastoral Staff (continued)

- \* **Meetings and Visits:**

- \* All visits or meetings with single persons at home when no one else is present shall only be conducted when necessary. Such visits shall be included in the pastoral contact log.

- \* **Pastoral Contact Log:**

- \* Pastors will maintain a confidential pastoral contact log, noting all persons with whom they meet in the course of their pastoral duties. This log is only to be shared with members of council.
- \* This record should be kept indefinitely.

# CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ELDERS, DEACONS, AND OTHER PASTORAL CARE WORKERS

## \* **Meetings and Visits:**

- \* All visits or meetings with single persons at home when no one else is present shall normally not be conducted.
- \* When such visits are necessary, they should be done with two or more elders/deacons together with the individual. If this is not possible, they should be reported to a fellow council member before the visit.

## \* **Reporting:**

- \* All visits shall be reported at the next respective elder or deacon meeting or to the head of the pastoral care team.

# Code of Conduct for Elders: Hall Monitor Description

- \* The hall monitor can choose to stay in the halls the whole church service or enter in and out of the back of the sanctuary during the church service every 15 to 20 minutes
- \* During the church service the hall monitor will be required to:
  - \* Circle from room to room to ensure that:
    - \* There is no suspicious activity going on
    - \* There are no strangers lingering in halls or washrooms
    - \* And to protect against any false allegations
  - \* The hall monitor may need to assist with bringing children to the bathroom if the nursery and/or Sunday school volunteers are not able to leave their rooms

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# **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH VULNERABLE PERSONS**



# General Conduct for Volunteers/Leaders

- \* Volunteers are to encourage faith development and demonstrate the teachings of Christ through loving, caring, and responsible ways.
- \* Try to offer comfort and help to participants who are distressed.
- \* Will try to avoid focusing on one child repeatedly for praise or special attention.
- \* Will answer participants' questions openly and honestly
- \* **Note:** Volunteers should avoid activities that could lead to abuse or harassment, for example: individual photography, unsupervised internet access, vehicle transportation by workers with unrelated youth, one on one meetings in private places.

- \* **Off-Premise Events:** A minimum of 2 screened, non-spousal adults may supervise off-site activities. The ratio of adults to minors is to be appropriate for the type of activity, as well as the number and ages of the participants.
- \* *Billeting:* When children and/or youth are billeted in private homes out of town, or WCRC arranges billeting here for out of town children and/or youth, no fewer than 2 children and/or youth per billet will be the rule.
- \* *Higher-risk off-site:* Signed parental consent should be acquired prior to the event (i.e. mission trips, sports, travel, concerts). Also, sleepovers, camping or other overnight events are only allowed when all supervisors and volunteers are fully screened.

- \* **Controlled access:** Sign-in/out sheets for all infants & children pre-grade 1 is required.
  - \* Caregivers/ Teachers should limit the access of who can come in and out of nursery and teaching rooms.
  - \* It is up to the leader or volunteers to keep parents/ guardians informed as to when the programs begin and end.
- \* **Team Teaching:** For ages 3 and 4 Sunday School classes, it is required to have at minimum 1 screened adult and 1 helper (ages 12-17). After hours groups (GEMS, Cadets, Youth Group & Friendship) should have 2 or more screened adults.

\* **Physical Contact:** Appropriate displays of affection conveying encouragement or support will be limited to actions such as: a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, a light touch to the forearm, an open-handed pat on the back, or a handclasp.

\*\*\*The right to refuse any display of affection will be respected.

\* **Medical Emergencies:** All medical emergencies should be documented in an incident report. Parents/guardians should be notified immediately.

# \*\*\*Washroom Guidelines\*\*\*

- \* When bringing a child to the washroom, always make sure another adult volunteer is present before leaving the room.
  - \* *Pre-grade one age children (less than 5 years old):* Should be taken to the washroom/ have diaper changed in the bathroom next to the infant nursery. The child should be accompanied by a screened volunteer (either male or female) and in the presence of at least one other (unrelated) screened volunteer.
  - \* *School-age children:* For minors who do not require assistance in the washroom, the volunteer (16 years old or older) must remain outside the washroom stall. For minors who do require assistance, the volunteer (16 years old or older) may assist the minor with the washroom stall door open.
- \* **Friendship:** If necessary, vulnerable adults should be assisted by someone of the same gender to ensure their privacy and safety. This may require more than one volunteer.

- \* **Social Media (General Information):** During regular meetings and most youth events, the youth will not be allowed access to their cell phones, unless otherwise requested by parents.
- \* Youth will not be allowed access to the internet during youth events, unless under the supervision of youth leaders.
- \* Social media viewed in any form will have age appropriate content.
- \* The use of blogs by leaders will not include any type of communication that is too revealing, casual, controversial, and inflammatory or that verge on gossip, libel or slander.

# Specific Policies for Individual Programs

# Nursery Guidelines

## \* **General Conduct:**

- \* Volunteers who are unable to make it on a morning that they are scheduled for, are required to switch with an individual who is the same gender as them.
  - \* If a youth or young helper needs to switch, they should do so with someone who is around the same age
- \* Volunteers may not take a child from the nursery area, to any other area of WCRC, except for the washrooms



# Nursery Guidelines (continued)

## \* **Registry:**

- \* Parents are to sign in their children at the beginning of the service and sign them out at the end
- \* Parents are to leave instructions to help the volunteers best care for their child
- \* Name tags are available for the children
- \* Parents/caregiver must pick up their child/ren as soon as the service is over. A volunteer must be informed if someone other than family is picking them up

# Sunday School/Catechism Guidelines

## \* **General Conduct:**

- \* Parents of children with special needs must provide instructions for feeding, discipline and toileting needs
- \* Children are not allowed to leave class except for illness, bathroom privileges, or other compelling reasons.
- \* Classrooms with good visibility, accessibility and with windows in the doors will be used.

# Cadets and GEMS Club Guidelines

## \* **General Conduct:**

- \* Cadets and GEMS participants should not arrive more than 10 minutes before the start of a scheduled meeting and should not remain more than 10 minutes after the end of that meeting
- \* Parents/drivers should ensure that the child/ren are not left alone or outside of locked doors before they leave

# Youth Group Guidelines

## \* **Communications/Interactions Conduct:**

- \* Emails will be sent to parents by the youth pastor on a regular basis to keep parents informed on the schedule, events, and topics of discussion for youth group
  - \* Any discussion that the youth leaders consider to have sensitive content will require advanced permission from the parents of the youth.
- \* All phone calls/ texts between leaders and young people are to be made during normal hours and before 10p.m
- \* Calls/ texts should be limited to arranging meetings, events, or transportation
- \* Parental consent must be given to text with a youth under the age of 16

# Friendship Guidelines

- \* **General Conduct:**

- \* Pay close attention to body language and facial expression when physical contact must be conducted with a vulnerable adult who is unable to speak
- \* Maintain healthy communication with the group homes
- \* Meeting attendance should be kept detailing all individuals in attendance, as well as, transportation arrangements indicating which volunteer transported which individual(s)

# Vacation Bible School Guidelines

## \* **General Conduct:**

- \* VBS participants should not arrive more than 10 minutes before the start of a scheduled meeting and should not remain more than 10 minutes after the end of that meeting
- \* Parents/ drivers should ensure that the child/ren are not left alone or outside of locked doors before they leave
- \* Parents of children with special needs must provide instructions for feeding, discipline and toileting needs
- \* Children should not be allowed to leave during class time except for illness, bathroom privileges, or other compelling reasons
- \* Classrooms with good visibility, accessibility and with windows in the doors will be used

# Reporting Procedures

# *For ALL situations of reported/ alleged/suspected abuse or misconduct*

- \* An incident/ accident report must be completed as soon as possible
- \* Safe Church Team should be notified in the instance of any suspicion or disclosure of abuse
- \* We will consult a lawyer and inform our insurance company
  - \* No public statements will be made before speaking with a lawyer
- \* All cases of abuse or suspicion of abuse/ misconduct will be handled with extreme care



# *For ALL situations of reported/ alleged/suspected abuse or misconduct (continued)*

- \* Confidentiality will be maintained for both the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator
  - \* We will not assume an alleged abuser is guilty before conviction or admission
- \* Pending the outcome of the church's investigation, the alleged perpetrator may be suspended
- \* Spiritual support, pastoral help, and other forms of appropriate engagement by the church will be provided, whether or not legal action is taken in a particular case

## *In the case of alleged or suspected abuse of a child (is or appears to be less than 16 years old):*

- \* Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection **must** promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society (CAS)
  - \* The person should not rely on anyone else to report on his or her behalf
- \* Even if you know a report has already been made about a child, you must make a further report to the CAS if there are additional reasonable grounds to suspect that the child is or may be in need of protection

# *In the case of alleged or suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult/adult (16 years or older):*

- \* If the situation involves a vulnerable adult who may be subject to provincial trusteeship, Safe Church Team will determine the need to notify civil authorities
- \* Safe Church Team will, in consultation with the victim, as appropriate, determine what course of action will be taken, including:
  - \* Referral to the appropriate pastoral team member as a matter requiring pastoral counselling
  - \* Notify and make a recommendation to Council Executive (within 24 hours) for a request that the Safe Church Team of Classis provide advice
  - \* Option available for Safe Church Advisory Panel
  - \* Notify civil authorities, if required under the provisions of provincial law
- \* The Safe Church Team will stay in contact with Council regarding the progress of the investigation and hopeful resolution

## *In the case of alleged or suspected abuse involving church leaders or pastors:*

- \* The Safe Church Team operates in an advisory capacity to the designated authorities in the church. Any pastoral and/or disciplinary action will be taken by the designated authorities, operating under the established rules of order of the CRC
- \* If the situation involves a church leader, matters such as notification, temporary suspension from office, and disciplinary measures will be handled in accordance with the process adopted by the Synod of the CRC
  - \* Depending on circumstances and severity, there may be suspension from position to allow for further investigation. Suspension should take place without prejudice and it may include:
    - \* Limited contact with children or church members
    - \* A permanent ban on holding pastoral office in the CRC

# Important Contact Information

- \* Robertson Hall Insurance

- \* 800-640-0933

- \* Lawyer (Eric Pietersma)

- \* 613-543-2946

- \* Ottawa Christian Counseling Elizabeth Reynolds

- \* 613-729-8454

- \* Children's Aid Society

- \* Cornwall      613-933-2292

- \* Ottawa        613-747-7800

# Thank you!

- \* Thank you for taking the time to read through this training on abuse prevention
- \* For further information or for a copy of the Abuse Prevention Policy, see the Safe Church bulletin board on the wall just outside of the nursery room, as well as the church's website
- \* If at any time you have any questions, please contact one of the Safe Church Team members:
  - \* Crystal Byers, Harold Douma, Kristin Groeneveld, and Derrick Noort