

Smithers Christian Reformed Church

SAFE CHURCH POLICY - MINISTRY TO MINORS

SECTION 1: SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

PREAMBLE

The Smithers Christian Reformed Church of Smithers, BC ("the Church") has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a safe and secure environment for all who participate in its ministries to minors.

This policy is intended to assist in:

- making the Smithers Christian Reformed Church a safe place to be involved;
- protecting the vulnerable person from abuse;
- protecting the staff, volunteers and helpers from false accusation, litigation, and/or possible loss of ministry/career;
- protecting the Church from litigation and loss of testimony.

General Policies: Ministries Involving Minors

A. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. "Adults" are individuals 19 years of age or older.
2. "Minors" are individuals under the age of 19 years (as per law in British Columbia)
3. "Volunteers" are non-paid adult individuals (age 19 years of age or older) who serve in a ministry and/or who have direct contact with minors in their care or supervision.
4. "Helpers" are minors ages 12-18 who assist volunteers.
5. "Staff" are individuals paid by the church who serve in a ministry and/or who have direct contact with minors in their care or supervision.
6. "Child, Family and Community Services Act" is the legislated law of British Columbia that speaks to Child Protection.

B. DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

1. "Physical abuse" is any non-accidental human act that 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 behaviour ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, and biting to more severe forms like choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing and shooting. In other words, physical abuse is any intentional means of inflicting pain or injury to another person. It is sometimes a single event, but can also be a chronic pattern of behaviour.
2. "Physical neglect" is not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care. Neglect interferes with or prevents a person's normal development.

3. "Sexual abuse" is the exploitation of a person or any sexual intimacy forced on a person for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a person who is not capable of understanding sexual acts or resisting coercion such as threats or offers of gifts. Sexual abuse may or may not involve physical contact.

Examples of non-physical sexual abuse include people exposing themselves, displaying pornographic material, photographing a person for pornographic materials, obscene telephone calls, "peeping Toms," and requests to engage in sexual activity (where no physical contact occurs). Examples of sexual abuse involving physical contact include: fondling of body parts such as breasts, crotch, buttocks, or sexual organs; intercourse; oral and anal sex.

4. "Emotional abuse" is attempting to control a person's life through words, threats and fear, destroying a person's self-worth through harassment, threats, humiliation and deprivation. Emotional abuse weakens a person's mental and physical ability to resist, cuts off his or her contact with others, and causes a gradual loss of self-esteem all of which reinforce a sense of helplessness and dependence on the abuser.
5. "Spiritual abuse" is any use of someone's spiritual (religious) position to control or dominate another person. For example, spiritual abuse occurs when shame is used in an attempt to get someone to support a belief or....to fend off legitimate questions. Spiritual abuse also occurs when a misplaced sense of loyalty to a religious leader is fostered and even demanded. Misusing Scripture to maintain a position of dominance or hiding behind "secrecy" are forms of spiritual abuse.
6. "Verbal abuse" is any use of language that causes someone harm. Criticism, cursing, recounting past offenses, expressing negative expectations, yelling, expressing distrust, all are forms of verbal abuse. The level of abuse can be gauged by the frequency, volume and emotional weight given to the words.

C. MINISTRY VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES Involving Minors

1. **All staff and volunteers who work on a regular basis with minors shall complete a Criminal Record Check to be renewed every 2 years.**
2. All staff and volunteers must agree to comply with the church's Safe Church policy and, if non-compliant, the individual will be required to relinquish his/her responsibility in the ministry.
3. Anyone with a history of allegations or convictions of child abuse/neglect shall be prohibited from leadership and any involvement in ministries in which this person could pose a risk.
4. Any volunteer may withdraw their services at any time without prejudice.
5. The church reserves the right to deny any volunteer for any reason.
6. Volunteers must be members or adherents for a minimum of 12 months prior to serving in ministry with minors.

D. REDUCING RISKS

1. The Church will reduce the risks of one-to-one contact by:
 - a) Ensuring that no minor will be alone with anyone volunteer.
 - b) Having volunteers contact a parent before a planned one-to-one visit in a public place with a minor.

- c) Requiring two volunteers/staff to transport minors. (See Transportation Policy).
- d) Having a volunteer monitor the facility and observe staff/volunteer activities during ministries that involve minors.

E. EDUCATION

- 1. All staff, volunteers and helpers shall participate in Safe Church training from time to time.
- 2. All staff, volunteers and helpers are required to read Safe Church resource material.

F. DISCIPLINE POLICY (Applicable to all ministries involving minors)

- 1. Any abusive forms of punishment are not permitted.
- 2. Parent(s)/legal guardians are to be informed when a minor misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehaviour continues.
- 3. A parent/legal guardian or suitable volunteer/helper should be regularly involved where disruptive behaviour and/or misbehaviour is an ongoing issue.
- 4. Discipline must reflect the minor's age and level of comprehension.
- 5. Minors are to be reminded of the kinds of behaviour that is unacceptable for the given ministry setting.
- 6. This Discipline Policy is to be reviewed annually by the volunteers.

G. TRANSPORTATION POLICY.

- 1. Drivers must have a current valid BC driver's license that has not been suspended or revoked for any reason.
- 2. Drivers are required to have a background check (driver's abstract).
- 3. Drivers and passengers, regardless of age, must at all times wear a seatbelt.
- 4. Child passengers must be properly secured in a child seat that is appropriate for their age and size. (4' 9" or 9 years of age)
- 5. All passengers must remain seated while the vehicle is in transit
- 6. All passengers must obey the driver and other volunteers in transit
- 7. Drivers are expected to use their good judgment to drive at a safe speed with the flow of traffic.
- 8. Drivers who are minors must adhere to the provincial licensing requirements when transporting other minors.
- 9. Proof of insurance is required in each vehicle.

10. No staff member or volunteer may travel one-on-one with a minor unless parental/legal guardian permission is granted.
11. In case of breakdowns or emergency, the parent/legal guardian ought to be notified.
12. In case of emergencies the ministry leader will have a copy of all medical release forms which will be kept in an accessible location and readily available.

POLICIES FOR SPECIFIC MINISTRIES INVOLVING MINORS.

A. NURSERY MINISTRY

1. At least one volunteer and one helper must be in the infant nursery with no more than five infants before an additional volunteer or helper is required. At least one volunteer and one helper must be in the toddler nursery with no more than five children before an additional volunteer or helper is required.
2. Volunteer adults (19 years and older) must only be females
3. Helpers (younger than 19 years old) may be either females or males
4. Two adult family members may serve in the nursery as volunteers at the same time, provided that a 3rd non-related volunteer/helper is also present.
5. Only scheduled volunteers/helpers are permitted in the nursery area during nursery hours.
6. A child remains in the nursery until they are picked up by the person who brought the child and signed him/her in. [Note: see Smithers CRC nursery guidelines for more details]
7. Bathroom Policy: For children who do not require assistance in the bathroom, the volunteer or helper must remain outside the bathroom stall. For children who require assistance, the volunteer or helper must assist the child with the bathroom stall door open.
8. If a minor needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/legal guardian should be notified immediately.

B. SUNDAY SCHOOL (educational program for children who are 3-6 year olds)

1. People who are teaching and supervising a group need to be 15 years or older. At least 2 non-related people must be present when teaching and supervising a group. For example:
 - a) Two people non-related who are aged 15 years or older
 - b) One person aged 15 or older, and a non-related person who is a helper
 - c) A husband and wife couple, and a non-related person who is a helper
2. Children must remain in the Sunday School classrooms until a parent/guardian picks them up and signs the child out.
3. Bathroom Policy: For children who do not require assistance in the bathroom, the volunteer or helper must remain outside the bathroom stall or in the hallway. For children who require assistance, the volunteer or helper must assist the child with the bathroom stall door open.

4. If a child needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/legal guardian should be notified immediately.
5. In order to ensure good supervision, children must remain indoors.

C. Living Room (educational program for ages 7-10)

1. People who are teaching and supervising a group need to be 19 years or older.

At least 2 non-related people must be present when teaching and supervising a group. For example:

- a) Two people non-related who are aged 19 years or older
- b) One person aged 19 or older, and a non-related person who is a helper
- c) A husband and wife couple, and a non-related person who is a helper

2. Children must remain in the *Living Room* classroom until a parent/guardian picks them up and signs the child out.

3. In order to ensure good supervision, children must remain indoors.

4. If a child needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/legal guardian should be notified immediately.

D. GEMS AND CADETS

1. Each GEM and Cadet activity should be supervised by at least one volunteer **provided that a volunteer monitors the facility and observes all activities during the ministry.**
2. At least two GEM or Cadet volunteers must be at the ministry location 10 minutes prior to the ministry start time and must remain at the location until all minors are picked up.
3. Cadet and GEMS activities planned away from the church facility/property, out of town, or overnight should be supervised by at least two volunteers.
4. Volunteers or staff transporting a minor for purposes of this ministry must have parental/legal guardian permission to do so.
5. Each volunteer and each child has the right to refuse any displays of affection and their decision will be respected.
6. At the end of any ministry activity, volunteers/staff may only release a minor into the care of the designated parent/legal guardian or a person designated by the parent/legal guardian.
7. If a minor needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/legal guardian should be notified immediately.

E. YOUTH MINISTRIES

1. Each Youth Ministry activity should be supervised by at least one volunteer provided that an additional volunteer/staff monitors the facility and observes all activities during the ministry.
2. Youth Ministry activities planned away from the church facility/property, out of town, or overnight should be supervised by at least two volunteers/staff.
3. Volunteers or staff transporting a minor for purposes of this ministry must have parental/legal guardian permission to do so.
4. Each volunteer/staff, and youth has the right to refuse any displays of affection and their decision will be respected.
5. At the end of any ministry activity, volunteers/staff may only release a minor into the care of the designated parent/legal guardian or a person designated by the parent/legal guardian.

Note: This clause does not apply when a youth, aged 16-19, has a valid driver's licence and his/her parent/legal guardian's permission to drive him/herself to and from a ministry activity.

6. If a minor needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/legal guardian should be notified immediately.

F. COFFEE BREAK/STORY HOUR AND OTHER MINISTRIES INVOLVING MINORS

1. Each activity should be supervised by at least one volunteer provided that a volunteer monitors the facility and observes all activities during the ministry.
2. Volunteers or helpers may not remove a minor from the ministry area without parental/legal guardian permission.
3. Activities planned away from the church facility/property should be supervised by at least two volunteers.
4. At the end of any ministry activity, volunteers/staff may only release a minor into the care of the designated parent/legal guardian or a person designated by the parent/legal guardian.
5. If a minor needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/legal guardians should be notified immediately.
6. Ordinarily, ministry activities take place in the church with all the appropriate Safe Church Policies enforced. However, in the event that a ministry activity takes place in a home, it is the homeowner's responsibility to ensure that adequate supervision is provided for any minors on the premises.

F. NEW MINISTRIES

Any new church ministry that is developed to benefit minors will be subjected to this policy.

SECTION 2: REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE

A. REPORTING PROCEDURES OVERVIEW

Signs and symptoms of abuse and reports of abuse by a minor must be taken seriously. When required, an investigation of said symptoms and reports must only be conducted by local police and the Ministry for Children and Families (MCF), people trained to investigate child abuse complaints.

When signs and symptoms of abuse or reports of abuse arise from a minor served in a church program, volunteers/staff in that program may be the ones to notice the signs or symptoms, or to whom the child reports complaints of abuse. A volunteer/staff person should not conduct an investigation of the matter. Instead, volunteers and staff should follow the established reporting procedure.

As per Section 14.1 of the *Child, Family and Community Services Act* of British Columbia, an individual is legally required to report child abuse.

B. RESPONDING TO SIGNS SYMPTOMS AND REPORTS OF ABUSE

Volunteers/staff who work in child/youth programs may become aware of suspected child abuse in a number of ways. A volunteer/staff person may actually witness an abusive incident or have an alleged incident reported to him/her by the victim or by another child. Some children will not report an abusive incident because of their fear of the abuser or because they believe they deserved the abuse. Other children are threatened by the abuser not to tell anyone of their experience, but volunteers/staff may observe signs and symptoms that may lead them to suspect abuse.

The reporting procedures outlined below will assist volunteers/staff to respond to reported incidents of abuse or to respond to observable signs and symptoms of abuse.

Reporting procedures:

1. a) Each person who has reason to believe that a child (under age 19) is or may be in need of protection shall forthwith report the belief and the information upon which it is based to the local Ministry for Children and Families (MCF) in compliance with the *Child, Family and Community Services Act*.

b) If the alleged abuse is at the hands of a church volunteer or helper then, in conjunction with the report to the MCF, the person shall also inform the senior pastor and/or Council's President of the occurrence. It may be wise for the person to consult with the senior pastor and/or Council President before reporting, but without being coerced as to whether or not to report.
2. A person who has a "feeling" but is quite hesitant that a child is or has suffered abuse should discuss the feeling and the information on which it is based with the senior pastor and/or the Council's President and/or other sources for information i.e.: Abuse Response Coordinator or MCF is very willing to walk through the situation while remaining anonymous.
3. Prior to reporting the occurrence, if necessary, and pursuant to the *Child, Family and Community Services Act*, no staff or volunteers, shall, apart from complying with paragraphs 1 and 2 herein, conduct any investigation or question any individual(s). Any information obtained and any report pursuant to paragraphs 1 and 2 herein shall be considered and treated as CONFIDENTIAL information by the church.

4. After a report has been made to the MCF, no investigation or inquiry shall be conducted until the MCF or police investigation has been completed, unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate civil authorities.

C. IF STAFF/VOLUNTEERS ARE ALLEGED TO HAVE ABUSED A PERSON

1. If there is an allegation that any volunteer personnel has abused or threatened to abuse a person, or if the senior pastor received information about any volunteer personnel that might indicate that a person may be at risk, such volunteer personnel shall immediately be suspended from ALL duties or responsibilities by Council pending the outcome of the investigation and subject to any disciplinary action as per church policy.
2. If there is an allegation that a staff person has abused or threatened to abuse another person, such employee shall be suspended from any duties or responsibilities in all ministries, with pay, pending the outcome of such investigation, until otherwise notified by the Council of the church.
3. Any notice of suspension shall be given in such a way that no investigation by the MCF or police will be put in jeopardy and shall be done in consultation with the civil authorities. The suspension from duties and responsibilities is not and shall not be seen or accepted as the "guilt" of the individual, but only as an indication of the priority given to the need to protect our children.
4. Any personnel, volunteer or employee, found to have abused a person (in other words has confessed to, or been found guilty of abuse) or placed a person at risk of abuse shall, apart from any other discipline process, be prohibited from leadership and any involvement in ministries in which this person could pose a risk.

D. INSURANCE

Council should periodically review its insurance policies to determine if any upgrading of the scope of coverage is necessary. Remember, individual council members could face personal liability in the event of a claim and therefore council members should be personally interested in ensuring that the church has the best liability policy available.

E. REFERENCES

1. Child Abuse Prevention Program, Beth Swagman, CRC Publications
2. "How to Avoid Claims for Sexual Abuse and Harassment", David G. Thwaites, CCCC
3. Child, Family and Community Services Act, Ministry for Children and Families, BC Government

Section 3: SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CHILD ABUSE

Note - Children rarely exhibit just one sign that they are the victims of abuse. Some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes or the *after-effect* of traumas in their lives other than abuse. Conversely, it is possible for abuse to be taking place without the appearance of noticeable symptoms because of the child's ability to mask or deny what would otherwise be very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, several signs observed over a period of time suggest that a child may be suffering from abuse. This highlights the need for training among volunteers, staff, and program leaders.

A. INFANTS AND PRESCHOOL CHILDREN (0-4)

1. Regression to an earlier stage of behavioural development such as baby talk, thumb sucking, or bed-wetting.
2. Change in social behaviour (excessive crying or changing, or becoming aggressive or withdrawn) that is not associated with normal developmental stages.
3. Physical manifestations such as loss of bowel control, bed wetting, frequent urination, headaches, stomach aches, breathing difficulties, sore throats accompanied by gagging, stains in the child's underclothes.
4. Exhibiting signs of fear around a family member or a familiar person, or fear of a familiar place or object.
5. Fear of being touched, shying away from physical contact. Resistance to being diapered or assisted in the bathroom.
6. Use of explicit language or sexual behaviour that is beyond the child's comprehension or life experience.
7. Attempting sexual behaviour with other children or attending adults.
8. Unexplained injuries and/or bruises, repeated injuries blamed on the child's carelessness, multiple bruises sustained in one event, or bruises to child's midsection, back, head, or back of thighs, signs of scalding, burning, or distinctive bruising, such as in the shape of a belt buckle; multiple bruises in various stages of healing.
9. Name-calling toward other children, bullying behaviour, sulking/brooding.
10. Fascination with fires; playing with matches, lighters.

B. SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN (5-12)

1. Physical manifestations as above with addition of complaints of pain, irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom, smearing feces on walls or objects.
2. Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck; failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort.
3. Unusual fears of a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences.
4. Poor concentration in classroom.

5. Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviours, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing.
6. Engaging in self-injury; engaging in excessive masturbation or masturbation in public settings.
7. Acting enraged and out of control, expressing anger through destruction.
8. Shyness about physical touch.
9. Exhibiting sexual behaviour beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in sexual manner with other children or adults.
10. Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations, bullying others.
11. Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions.
12. Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting.
13. Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events either because of being punished or to hide bruises.
14. Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism.
15. Hyper-vigilance (excessive and suspicious watching of other people), is easily startled.
16. Preoccupation with fire and setting fires.

C. ADOLESCENTS (13-19)

1. Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight.
2. Change in sleep patterns, including excessive sleeping, sleeping during the day, and insomnia.
3. Performance in school plunges.
4. Perfectionist behaviour, excessive self-criticism, attempting to please adults, overreacting to any criticism or complaint.
5. Sexual provocative or asexual behaviour, denial of body changes and sexual development; for females, seeking affection from older adult males.
6. Experimentation with drugs and alcohol.
7. Self-abusive behaviour including cutting self, preoccupation with danger and weapons, suicide attempts.
8. Truancy from school.
9. Cruelty to animals, bullying younger children.
10. Emotional numbness, inability to be emotionally supportive to others.
11. Having few friends, changing friends often.

12. Depression and other signs of withdrawal and avoidance.
13. Pregnancy.
14. Refusing to attend to basic hygiene.
15. Rectal and vaginal infections.
16. Hyper-vigilance (excessive and suspicious watching of other people), is easily startled.

D. NEGLECT

1. Appearing to be underfed, constantly hungry, underweight for size and age.
2. Begging for food, stealing food, hoarding food.
3. Lack of supervision, underage child supervising another child/children.
4. Chronic absenteeism from school, unattended education needs.
5. Unattended medical, dental needs.
6. Consistent or frequent lack of hygiene, poor hygiene, or lack of cleanliness resulting in odours.
7. For infants, failure to thrive.

E. PARENTAL BEHAVIOURS AND HOME LIFE

1. Not attending meetings about the child, not showing an interest in the child, critical of child, uncomplimentary.
2. Constantly "putting child down", using harsh words to describe child, using threats and unflattering language.
3. Describing child as underachiever, complaining that he/she "lets people down", is unmotivated, achieves less than brothers and sisters.
4. Speaking of child in a way that sounds romantic, too grown-up, too "sugary", and too perfect.
5. Hostile, closed-minded, overprotective, isolating, doesn't let others in the house, won't participate in activities with other parents, makes excuses about failing to do tasks, talks about things not being good at home.
6. Reports of past/other suspicious behaviour, reports that an older brother or sister may have been mistreated.
7. Chemical dependency by one or both parents.
8. Sudden and dramatic changes in family's financial security.

Section 4: RESPONDING TO A CHILD'S REPORT OF ABUSE

1. Take the child seriously when he/she tells the story.
2. Avoid judgmental statements such as, "I think you just had a bad dream."
3. Do not appear frightened or disgusted by the child's story, since this may cause the child to stop talking or to believe you are upset with the child.
4. Do not try to convince the child that the story isn't true or that it did not happen the way the child reports it did.
5. Do not make promises to the child that you will not tell anyone what has been shared with you!
6. Remind the child that whatever happened was not his/her fault.
7. Remind the child that it was a good decision to tell someone what happened to him/her.
8. Tell the child that you want to find help so the incident can be prevented from happening again.
9. Do not offer a child a reward for telling the story or promise a gift if the child tells another adult.
10. Reassure the child that he/she does not deserve to be hurt by anyone.
11. Do not frighten the child by talking about police involvement or medical examinations to verify the complaint; instead, share with the child that other people need to know about what happened, and they will talk to the child later.
12. Do not ask the child to show you any bruises that are beneath the child's underwear or clothing: only observe those bruises that are accessible. In some communities, removing a child's clothing even to confirm a report of abuse is a violation of the law.
13. Do not investigate the child's story; rather, listen to the story and take notes immediately afterward while it is still fresh in your memory.
14. Do not tell the child he/she has been abused.
15. Offer to support the child and remind the child that you care about him/her.
16. Follow through in consecutive weeks and months by speaking to the child and offering support.

Section 5: REPORTING ABUSE

If the victim is a child under the age of nineteen, notify the Ministry for Children and Families:

1. if the child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed by the child's parent;
2. if the child has been, or is likely to be, sexually abused or exploited by the child's parent;
3. if the child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed, sexually abused or sexually exploited by another person and if the child's parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child;
4. if the child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed because of neglect by the child's parent;
5. if the child is emotionally harmed by the parent's conduct.
6. if the child is deprived of necessary health care;
7. if the child's development is likely to be seriously impaired by a treatable condition and the child's parent refuses to provide or consent to treatment;
8. if the child's parent is unable or unwilling to care for the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care;
9. if the child is or has been absent from home in circumstances that endanger the child's safety or well-being;
10. if the child's parent is dead and adequate provision has not been made for the child's care;
11. if the child has been abandoned and adequate provision has not been made for the child's care;
12. if the child is in the care of a director or another person by agreement and the child's parent is unwilling or unable to resume care when the agreement is no longer in force.

For the purpose of this section, a child is emotionally harmed if the child demonstrates severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or self-destructive or aggressive behaviour.

Section 6: RESPONDING TO PARENT(S) WHO ARE NOTIFIED OF AN ABUSE REPORT

1. Remain calm and non-judgmental.
2. Anyone who makes a report to the police or child protection authorities is usually granted anonymity; do not identify the reporter unless you are given permission to do so.
3. ** Do not share any statement made by the child with a parent or relative who is implicated by the child as an abuser. It is advisable not to share the child's statement with anyone other than the authorities until the identity of the abuser can be determined and authorities have determined whether or not the child can be protected from contact with that person.
4. Do not attempt to convince a parent that the alleged abuse happened or did not happen; do not attempt to discredit the child nor cast suspicion on the alleged abuser.
5. Do not investigate with a parent what may be happening in the home; and do not share information with a parent that has not been shared with the authorities.
6. Do not make promises to a parent about the outcome of the investigation.
7. Listen to any information a parent may offer about the incident and record it immediately after the conversation; report additional information to authorities through the reporting procedure outlined in the church's policy.
8. Offer parent(s) support.
9. Suggest resources for parent(s) including books or literature that may be helpful to the child.
10. Allow parent(s) to express their disbelief, anger, and grief [parent(s) may be in shock or denial at the mention of abuse allegations].
11. Do not minimize the type of abuse, its impact on the child, or its harm to the child.
12. Assure parent(s) of the confidential nature of the report and the need to maintain confidentiality unless disclosure is necessary to protect the well being of other children.

This policy was updated from a previous one (May 26 2010) on August 12, 2016. Safe Church Team: Teena Nicolai, Alicia Moleski and Nancy Horlings