

Smithers Christian Reformed Church

ABUSE AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY

SECTION 1: SAFE CHURCH POLICIES

PREAMBLE

The Smithers Christian Reformed Church of Smithers, BC ("the Church") is committed to making our church a safe environment to grow in faith, gather for worship, and participate in faith-forming activities. The church recognizes that it has a spiritual, moral, and legal obligation to provide a safe and secure environment for all who participate in its ministries, and also recognizes that even with best practices, regrettably, people can still suffer harm.

This Safe Church Practices policy is intended to assist in making the Smithers Christian Reformed Church a safe place to be involved: protecting/ reducing the risk of abuse to vulnerable persons; protecting the staff, ministry leaders and ministry leaders and reducing the risk of false accusation, litigation, and/or possible loss of ministry/career; protecting the Church from litigation and prudently guarding the reputation of our congregation.

General Policies

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. "Ministry leaders" 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 Ministry Leaders.
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.
7. "SMT" is the Safe Ministry Team, whose members are appointed by the church council
8. "APRC" is the Abuse Prevention and Response Coordinator of the classis BCSE.

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 child/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 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.
7. "Grooming" is befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child or vulnerable person, and sometimes the family, to lower their inhibitions with the objective of sexual abuse. Child grooming is also regularly used to lure minors into

various illicit businesses such as child trafficking, child prostitution, cybersex trafficking, or the production of child pornography. In Canada, Criminal Code section 172.1 makes it an offence to communicate with a child through a computer system for the purpose of committing a sexual offence (termed "luring a child").

C. Church Safe Ministry Practices Team (SMT)

A member of the Council, and at least two members of the congregation, shall form the SMT. All members of the SMT shall be trained in abuse awareness and response. The Pastor will be a resource to the Committee as required.

Responsibilities of the SMT are:

1. Update Safe Church policies on a regular basis. (*recommend an annual review*)
2. Support the implementation of the church's safe church policy.
3. Screen and arrange training for church volunteers who work with children, youth & vulnerable people.
4. Immediately respond to allegations of abuse, contacting the Abuse Prevention and Response Coordinator (APRC) of the classis BCSE when there are concerns (early and often).
5. Liaise between and communicate with church members and Council, as well as classis and the APRC on matters relating to safe church.
6. Implement and participate in the educational and training opportunities provided by the APRC and classis Safe Church Team.
7. Acquire knowledge of the BC ACT pertaining to child abuse reporting.
8. Maintain records on history of child abuse allegations reported at Smithers CRC. Committee files including reports and responses will be kept in the church office at an appropriate level of confidentiality.

The Safe Ministries Team reports to the local Church Council and is supported by the Classis Safe Church Team. They have the authority to:

1. Work with and support the leaders & ministries of their church through the implementation of policies & procedures as well as situations & questions as they arise.
2. Request support from the APRC regarding specific issues or needs arising in the local congregation.
3. Maintain strict confidentiality.

Accountability:

1. A member of the Safe Ministries Team will be a member of the broader classis Safe Church Team.

2. The Safe Ministries Team will report to its local Council on a regular basis, (i.e. twice yearly). *it is recommended one member of this team is a council member
3. The APRC will be a resource for education and support through any situations that may arise.
4. One member of the Committee shall be designated as the Clerk and shall be responsible for maintaining the records of those who have been trained.

D. MINISTRY LEADER PROCEDURES Involving Minors

1. In order to serve, all staff and ministry leaders, paid or unpaid, who work on a regular basis with minors shall complete a Criminal Record Check to be renewed every 3 years.

2. In order to serve, all staff and ministry leaders must agree to comply with the church's Safe Ministry 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 ministry leader may withdraw their services at any time without prejudice.
5. The church reserves the right to deny a ministry position to any volunteer for any reason.
6. Ministry leaders must be members or attenders of Smithers CRC for a minimum of 12 months prior to serving in ministry with minors.

E. 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 ministry leader.
 - b) Having ministry leaders contact a parent before a planned one-to-one visit to obtain written permission prior to a planned one to one visit with a minor which must take place in a public place.
 - c) If the meeting is to take place virtually, permission must be granted well in advance, and the meeting must take place in a location where an adult caregiver/parent can see or hear the conversation as it takes place. Reduce time to avoid intimate situations.
 - d) Requiring two ministry leaders/staff to transport minors. (See Transportation Policy).
 - e) Having a "floating" monitor oversee the facility and observe staff/ministry leader activities during ministries that involve minors.

F. TRAINING

1. All staff, ministry leaders, helpers, teachers, and volunteers working with minors or developmentally disabled adults shall participate in yearly Safe Church training occurring at the beginning of the church program year, which includes yearly review of the Safe Ministry Policies and a yearly review of the the Code of Ethics and Compliance forms. This training will include a review of the church's Abuse Awareness, Prevention, and Response Policy, reporting procedures, and how to recognize inappropriate behavior and signs of mistreatment or abuse.

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

Ministry leaders will support a child or minor that is behaving inappropriately by redirecting and guiding the child/minor to the correct behaviors. Guidance and support in appropriate behaviors replace the need for "discipline" in many cases. It is normal for children/youth to misbehave from time to time. Responses to misbehaviour and communication must reflect the minor's age and level of comprehension.

1. Any abusive forms of punishment are not permitted. (See *Definitions of Abuse*, above)
2. Supportive/collaborative discussion with child/minor will focus on and outline appropriate behaviours first and may include some information around what needs to be avoided.
3. Parent(s)/legal guardians are to be informed when a minor misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehaviour continues. A parent/legal guardian or suitable ministry leader/helper should be regularly involved where disruptive behaviour and/or misbehaviour is an ongoing issue.
4. Training, discussion, and ministry leader input to the handling of challenging situations needs to be reviewed on a yearly basis.

H. 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 provide a driver's abstract.
3. Drivers and passengers, regardless of age, must always 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 and must obey the driver and other ministry leaders while the vehicle is in transit.

6. Drivers are expected to use their good judgment to drive at a safe speed with the flow of traffic.
7. Drivers who are minors must adhere to the provincial licensing requirements when transporting other minors.
8. Proof of insurance is required in each vehicle.
9. No staff member or ministry leader may travel one-on-one with a minor unless parental/legal guardian permission is granted. When minors MUST be transported there must be 2 adults in the vehicle and minors ride in the back seat. In the event there is only 1 adult, there needs to be at least 2 minors together.
10. In case of breakdowns or emergency, the parent/legal guardian and ministry leader/staff must be notified.
11. In case of emergencies the ministry leader will have a copy of all medical release forms (Appendix D) which will be kept in an accessible location and readily available. If a minor needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/legal guardian should be notified immediately and an incident report form (Appendix F) must be filled out.

POLICIES FOR SPECIFIC MINISTRIES INVOLVING MINORS

GENERAL - All children and youth participating in any church sponsored program must fill out the Registration Form as outlined in Appendix B.

A. NURSERY MINISTRY

1. At least one attendant and one unrelated helper must be in the infant nursery with no more than five infants before an additional attendant or helper is required. At least one attendant and one unrelated helper must be in the toddler nursery with no more than five children before an additional attendant or helper is required.
2. Helpers (younger than 19 years old) may be either females or males
3. Two adult family members may serve in the nursery as attendants at the same time, provided that a 3rd non-related attendant/helper is also present.
4. Only scheduled attendants/helpers are permitted in the nursery area during nursery hours. However, if a child is not transitioning easily into the nursery a parent/guardian is welcome to stay for a short amount of time to help settle their child before going into the service.
5. 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]

6. Diaper Changing will be done by parents/legal guardians only. If a child's diaper needs to be changed, the parent/legal guardian will be called to the nursery using the number system.

Bathroom Policy: For children who do not require assistance in the bathroom, the ministry leader or helper must remain outside the bathroom stall. For children who require assistance, the ministry leader or helper must assist the child with the bathroom stall door open. Written permission from the parent/guardian must be obtained beforehand.

7. If a minor needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/legal guardian should be notified immediately and an incident report form (Appendix F) must be filled out.

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 ministry leaders 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 ministry leader or helper must remain outside the bathroom stall or in the hallway. For children who require assistance, the ministry leader 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, and an incident report (Appendix F) must be filled out.
5. To ensure good supervision, children must remain indoors.

D. GEMS, CADETS and VBS

1. Each activity should be supervised by at least one ministry leader. If only one leader is present in a group, a floating monitor must be available to monitor the facility and observe all activities during the ministry.
2. At least two ministry leaders 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. If not picked up within 10 minutes their parents are to be called to ensure someone is coming. Members must wait in the presence of a leader. At the end of any ministry activity, ministry

leaders/staff may only release a minor into the care of the designated parent/legal guardian, or a person designated by the parent/legal guardian.

3. Activities planned away from the church facility/property, out of town, or overnight should be supervised by at least two adult ministry leaders.
4. Ministry leaders or staff transporting a minor for purposes of this ministry must have written parental/legal guardian permission to do so. Transportation as part of these programs shall be consistent with Transportation policy, see above.
5. Affection between leaders and group members is often an expression of encouragement and support. It is important this contact remains within the bounds of what is appropriate. Displays of affection will normally be limited to a brief shoulder-to-shoulder hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-hand pat on the back, clasping one another's hand or a light touch to the forearm. Physical contact between a leader and person of the opposite sex is discouraged. An open handed pat or high five could be appropriate. Each ministry leader and each child has the right to refuse any displays of affection and their decision will be respected.
6. A group leader may not meet privately with a group member except with the prior consent of the parent(s) or legal guardian and the knowledge of the Program Supervisor. This meeting will take place where they are visible to others (i.e., Tim Horton's, at the Church premises with the door open when others are present) and be documented on an attendance sheet (date, time, purpose).
7. No inappropriate gifts, phone calls, emails or letters will be exchanged between a group member and a leader ("inappropriate" means that it would normally lead to embarrassment if seen or known about by any third party).
8. If a minor needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/legal guardian and ministry leader/staff should be notified immediately and an incident report (Appendix F) must be filled out.

E. YOUTH MINISTRY AND MENTORSHIP MINISTRY

1. Each Youth Group activity should be supervised by at least one ministry leader. If only one leader is present in a group, a floating monitor must be available to monitor the facility and observe 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 adult ministry leaders/staff.
3. Ministry leaders or staff transporting a minor for purposes of Youth or Mentorship ministry must have written parental/legal guardian permission to do so. Transportation as part of these programs shall be consistent with Transportation policy, see above.

4. A Mentor or group leader may not meet privately with a group member or "Mentee" except with the prior consent of the parent(s) or legal guardian and the knowledge of the Program Supervisor. This meeting will take place where they are visible to others (i.e., Tim Horton's, at the Church premises with the door open when others are present) and be documented on an attendance sheet (date, time, purpose).
5. Affection between leaders and group members is often an expression of encouragement and support. It is important this contact remains within the bounds of what is appropriate. Displays of affection should be handled with caution and will be limited to a brief shoulder-to-shoulder hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-hand pat on the back, clasping one another's hand or a light touch to the forearm. Physical contact between a leader and person of the opposite sex is discouraged. An open handed pat or high five could be appropriate. Each ministry leader and each participant has the right to refuse any displays of affection and their decision will be respected.
6. Regardless of their relative ages, it is never appropriate for a youth program volunteer (who is an adult) and a youth group member to date each other. Similarly, a youth program adult leader should not date the close friend of a member of the youth group.
7. No inappropriate gifts, phone calls, emails or letters will be exchanged between a group member and a leader ("inappropriate" means that it would normally lead to embarrassment if seen or known about by any third party). If such a personal message is directed to an adult leader from a youth group member, the adult leader must inform the Children/Youth Director/Pastor immediately. Ministry related correspondence, however, is encouraged.
8. At the end of any ministry activity, ministry leaders/staff may only release a minor into the care of the designated parent/legal guardian, or a person designated by the parent/legal guardian, unless the 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.
9. If a minor needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/legal guardian and ministry leader/staff should be notified immediately, and an incident report (Appendix F) filled out.

SOCIAL MEDIA/ COMMUNICATIONS

Social Networking sites and media are a reality in the lives of our youth and adults. It is essential for the Church to engage in this area and ensure it is done with integrity and respect to provide as much protection for each other's privacy. The following principles provide guidelines for healthy boundaries for digital networking and communication. They are intended to raise awareness of issues and open doors with ministry teams. All ministry teams are encouraged to discern which guidelines apply to their ministry.

1. Electronic Communication may start when youth enter grade 8. In the beginning of each program (ordinarily the fall) all parents must sign a permission form as they

register. Any platform or app must have the ability to save the conversation; under no circumstances can a ministry leader use Snap Chat or other app that deletes messages. Use prudent judgment in contacting youth through social media. The “home phone rule” is a basic rule to use. Normally do not text, chat, e-mail back and forth with youth when you would not normally call their home phone line (before 8 AM or after 9 PM).

2. Implement privacy settings and personal boundaries.
 - a. Create separate private and professional profiles on sites.
 - b. Apply privacy settings that are consistent with all youth, across all platforms.
 - c. Review accessible content and photos frequently.
 - d. If a youth texts leaders after hours and it is not urgent, wait until morning to reply.
3. If social networking is used to communicate with youth, at least two ministry leaders have full access to profiles and correspondence is copied.
 - a. Parents should be aware of how the leader utilizes social network platforms.
 - b. When possible, communication should be sent to entire groups, in public areas.
 - c. When ongoing pastoral communication is private, disclose the person’s name and the frequency of contact with the parents and the ministry leader. Written permission from parents to contact youth privately is required.
4. Principles should be implemented to govern digital groups, addressing:
 - a. Appropriate and inappropriate language and behaviour.
 - b. Who may join and view group activity, when someone should leave the group.
 - c. Content that can be posted/published on the site.
 - d. How and when are photos tagged (parental permission, signed consent form).

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

1. Each activity should be supervised by at least one ministry leader provided that a ministry leader monitors the facility and observes all activities during the event/activity.
2. Ministry leaders 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 adults

4. At the end of any ministry activity, ministry leaders/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 and ministry leaders/staff should be notified immediately and an incident report (Appendix D) filled out.
6. Ordinarily, ministry activities take place in the church with all the appropriate Safe Church Policies enforced. In the event that a ministry activity takes place in a home, the same Safe Church policies will apply.

G. NEW MINISTRIES

Any new church ministry that is developed to benefit vulnerable persons 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 Family Development (MCFD), 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, ministry leaders/staff in that program may be the ones to notice the signs or symptoms, or to whom the child reports complaints of abuse. A ministry leader/staff person should not conduct an investigation of the matter. Instead, ministry leaders 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

Ministry leaders/staff who work in child/youth programs may become aware of suspected child abuse in several ways. A ministry leader/staff person may 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 ministry leaders/staff may observe signs and symptoms that may lead them to suspect abuse. SEE SECTION 4: Responding to a Child's Report of Abuse.

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

Reporting procedures:

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

b) If the alleged abuse is at the hands of a church ministry leader or helper then, in conjunction with the report to the MCFD, the person shall also inform the senior pastor and/or Council Chair of the occurrence. It may be wise for the person to consult with the senior pastor and/or Council Chair before reporting, but without being coerced as to whether or not to report.
2. A person who has reason to believe that a vulnerable adult may need protection from abuse will discuss the information on which it is based with the senior pastor and/or the Council Chair and/or Abuse Response Coordinator and/or other sources for information.
3. Prior to reporting the occurrence, if necessary, and pursuant to the *Child, Family and Community Services Act*, no staff or ministry leaders, 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 MCFD, no investigation or inquiry shall be conducted until the MCFD or police investigation has been completed, unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate civil authorities. Smithers CRC will cooperate with and follow the guidance of the civil authorities responsible for handling reported incidents of abuse.

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

1. If there is an allegation that any ministry leader personnel has abused or threatened to abuse a person, or if the senior pastor received information about any ministry leader personnel that might indicate that a person may be at risk, such ministry leader 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.
If the allegations are made by an adult against a church leader (office bearer, or appointed volunteer) of Smithers CRC, the SMT shall consult with the Classis Safe Church Team Abuse Prevention & Response Coordinator and determine the appropriate response and course of action using the principles and guidelines outlined in this policy. This will include the use of the Advisory Panel process when appropriate, as the CRC recommended process for the handling of allegations of abuse or

misconduct by an adult against a church leader. This advisory panel process is facilitated by the trained members of the Classis Safe Church Team. After receiving the Classical Safe Church Team's Report, the Response Team in consultation with Council shall convene to discuss the allegations and the Classical SCT Report and determine the appropriate course of action.

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. The Council will immediately contact the Church's insurance provider to report the incident to satisfy all the conditions of the Church's liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage. In addition, the Council should seek advice from the police, ministry, legal counsel, Classis Safe Church representatives, Abuse Prevention & Response Coordinator and/or other experts, in terms of how to handle the situation. If the Chair of Council is believed to have a conflict of interest, the Vice All of Council should be notified to take the action prescribed above.
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, ministry leader 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.

Throughout the process, accuracy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance in that wrongful or inaccurate circulation of allegations of abuse can potentially lead to adverse legal consequences.

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 ministry leaders, 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) or 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) or 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/caregiver;
2. if the child has been, or is likely to be, sexually abused or exploited by the child's parent/caregiver;
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/caregiver 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/caregiver;
5. if the child is emotionally harmed by the parent/caregiver'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/caregiver refuses to provide or consent to treatment;
8. if the child's parent/caregiver 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/caregiver 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)/CAREGIVER(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/caregiver or relative who is implicated by the child as an abuser. Do not 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 the child can be protected.
4. Do not attempt to convince a parent/caregiver 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/caregiver that has not been shared with the authorities.
6. Do not make promises to a parent/caregiver about the outcome of the investigation.
7. Listen to any information a parent/caregiver 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)/caregiver(s) support.
9. Suggest resources for parent(s)/caregiver(s) including books or literature that may be helpful to the child.
10. Allow parent(s)/caregiver(s) to express their disbelief, anger, and grief [parent(s)/caregiver(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)/caregiver(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.

Throughout the process, accuracy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance in that wrongful or inaccurate circulation of allegations of abuse can potentially lead to adverse legal consequences.

**Code of Ethics & Compliance for Volunteers and Staff
In Child and Youth Programs**

Believing that God has called me to serve children or youth in this congregation:

1. My first priority in volunteering/teaching and/or supervising with children or youth will be to seek their spiritual, emotional, social, and physical welfare.
2. I will respect the child or youth's cultural and ethnic background.
3. I will give the parent(s) full information about the program in which I am leading/supervising or volunteering.
4. I will not harm children or youth in (name of program i.e. GEMS) and will protect them from any and all types of abuse.
5. As required by BC Law, if I have any reason to believe that a child or youth needs protection, I will promptly report the matter to BC Ministry of Children and Family Development and will inform the church ministry leader according to church policy.
6. If I need to talk to a child or youth privately, it will be within the sight and sound of another non-related adult.
7. I will answer a child or youth's questions openly and honestly.
8. I will work with the children or youth to set guidelines for acceptable behavior within the group. I will expect the children or youth to act based on those guidelines. If a child or youth consistently breaks them, I will seek help from parents and others to assist me in responding to the child or youth.
9. If a child or youth indicates distress, I will offer comfort and support and will follow up with the ministry leader.
10. I will regularly pray for each child or youth.
11. I understand that my position as leader/volunteer is one of privilege and service to the ministry. Therefore I will participate fully in the training the church offers to help/empower me to work effectively in my role.
12. I have read, understood and commit to follow and act according to Smithers CRC's policies as outlined in the *Child Safety Policy*.

Signature

Date

Volunteer or Staff Position

Supervisor

VOLUNTEER PROFILE FORM

This form must be completed by all volunteers and staff. This form is being used by Smithers CRC to provide a safe and secure environment for everyone. It is available to be filled out online.

1. Email address:

2. Name:

3. Address:

4. Phone Number:

5. Do you currently have a driver’s license?

6. Volunteer History: Tell us about any places you have volunteered that may be applicable to your volunteer role at Smithers CRC.

8. God in his grace has given each believer spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by Christ through the Holy Spirit to empower believers for the ministries of the body. What are your strongest gifts? Check 3-5. If interested, here is a link to a quiz to find out your Spiritual Gifts: <https://form.jotform.us/71223564145148>

Administration	Hospitality	Shepherding (pastoring)
Creative Ability	Intercession/Prayer	Teaching
Discernment	Knowledge	Tongues (speaking and interpretation)
Encouragement	Leadership	Wisdom
Evangelism	Mercy	
Faith	Miracles	
Giving	Prophecy	
Healing	Service (helping)	

9. Below is a list of some ministries and committees we have at Smithers CRC. Please check the boxes below in which areas you are gifted in. Check all that apply.

Nursery	Sunday School	GEMS	Cadets	Youth	Coffee Break
Prayer Group	Friendship Ministry	Library	Sound	Projection	Worship Com
Safe Church	Kitchen Com.	Décor Com.	Sunday School Com.		

10. What do you do to de-stress?

11. How can the Safe Church Committee/church support you?

12. References may be requested. Do you have at least two reliable references we may contact, if necessary?

Yes/No

The information contained in this form is correct to the best of my knowledge. If needed, I authorize my references to give you any information (including opinions) they have regarding my character and fitness for volunteer work.

Signature

Date

Volunteer Approval Form

1. Email address: _____

2. Name of Volunteer: _____

3. Name of Ministry: _____

4. Your name: _____

5. I certify that I trust this person to volunteer in their position.

Yes/No

Smithers Christian Reformed Church

Registration/Consent/Medical Release Form

NAME OF MINISTRY/PROGRAM _____

PARENT/PARTICIPANT'S INFORMATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____

Primary Daytime Phone _____ Other _____

E-mail _____

CAREGIVER INFORMATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Relationship _____

Address _____

Primary Daytime Phone _____ Other _____

PARTICIPANT'S INFORMATION

Name (First & Last) _____ M F Age, D of B: _____

Allergies/Medical Alerts _____

BC Care Card Number: _____

Name (First & Last) _____ M F Age, D of B: _____

Allergies/Medical Alerts _____

BC Care Card Number: _____

Name (First & Last) _____ M F Age, D of B: _____

Allergies/Medical Alerts _____

BC Care Card Number: _____

Living Situation: Independent Group Home Your Family Caregiver Family

EMERGENCY CONTACT

Name _____ Phone _____

Do you currently attend a church? If yes, where? _____

CONSENT/MEDICAL RELEASE FORM

Functions and Activities

I understand that participating in the programs and activities at Smithers Christian Reformed Church (Smithers CRC) is a privilege. Prior to participation in such activities, I acknowledge that there are certain risks associated with the activities, including, for example, physical injury due to activity related accidents, and illness, or even death. In addition, I acknowledge and assume the responsibility for any other risks inherent in these activities of which we may not be presently aware. It is understood that the parent and/or caregiver may be expected (if required) to be present to care for the participants under their control.

Release of Liability

By signing this Consent/Medical Release Form, I expressly warrant that each participant named above is capable of withstanding both the physical and mental demands of the activities. I also expressly assume all risks of my child/adult participating in the activities, whether such risks are known or unknown at this time. I further release Smithers CRC and its administrators, leaders, employees and volunteers from any claim that we or our child/adult participants might have against them as a result of an injury or illness incurred during the course of participation in the activities. This release of liability shall include (but not limited to) any claims of negligence or breach of warranty.

First Aid and Emergency Medical Treatment

I recognize that there may be occasions where any participant named above may need first aid or emergency medical treatment as a result of accident, illness, or other health condition or injury. I do hereby give consent for representatives of Smithers CRC or designated representatives to seek and secure any needed medical attention or treatment for each person named above including hospitalization, if in the representative's opinion such need arises. I also agree to pay all fees and costs arising from this action to obtain medical treatment. I give consent for attending physician(s) and other medical personnel to administer any needed medical treatment, including surgery and agree to pay for the medical treatment.

Behavior Management

I understand that any participant named above may be refused the privilege of participation in these activities should inappropriate behavior become an issue.

_____ Date _____

Signature of Parent/Caregiver

Printed Name

TRANSPORTATION DURING CHURCH FUNCTIONS

I give permission that the child/ren or participant named may be transported, as the activities require, by the approved staff or volunteers of Smithers Christian Reformed Church/parent/guardian as reflected in the Abuse Awareness, Prevention and Response Policy Section G.

In an emergency, a church volunteer/parent/guardian may transport my child alone.

Yes____ No____

_____ Date _____

Signature of Parent/Caregiver

PERMISSION TO PUBLISH PHOTOS

Occasionally, participants may be photographed or taped during activities at Smithers CRC. These images are kept ONLY for historical value of the event and/or for publication in print of church information articles and/or on the church website.

I give permission to Smithers CRC to photograph and publish photos of the participant:

Yes ____ No ____

_____ Date _____

Signature of Parent/Caregiver

COMMUNICATION (for youth in grade 8 or older)

I give permission for my child to be contacted by Smithers CRC Youth leaders/staff using the following forms of communication:

- Telephone (home /cell) Social Media Networks
- Text messages Email

INCIDENT OF SUSPECTED ABUSE REPORT - CONFIDENTIAL

This report form is for the purpose of recording any incident of suspected abuse reported to the Safe Ministry Team.

Name of person making report: _____

Position: _____

Date of Report: _____

Phone Number: _____

Date of Incident: _____

Description of incident: (time of occurrence, what occurred, who was involved, location, etc.)

Name(s) of any other potential witnesses:

Action taken: (note dates)

Signature of person making report: _____

Abuse Prevention and Response Team member receiving this report:

Name: _____

Date received: _____

Smithers Christian Reformed Church

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Ministry: _____

Date of report: _____

Name/s of the person or people involved in the incident: _____

Nature of the incident: _____

Date incident occurred: _____

Time incident occurred: _____

Location incident occurred: _____

Description of incident: _____

Summary of events: _____

Immediate action taken: _____

Future action to be taken (if any): _____

Name of person completing form: _____

Contact phone number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name and position of person report submitted to:
