

# **BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

## **“Safeguarding Our Children”**

### **Preventing Child Abuse, and Responding to Allegations of Abuse**

#### **Policies and Procedures**

**June 2023**

**Dunnville, Ontario**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Each time a child is baptized we are reminded of these words of Jesus Christ: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Mark 10:14) As the congregation of Bethel Christian Reformed Church we respond to the following question: “Do you, the people of the Lord, promise to receive these children in love, pray for them, help instruct them in the faith, and encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers?” by answering: “We do, God helping us.” (Form for BSCTism of Children)

“Child abuse, it’s a sensitive issue; an emotional issue. It’s an issue that we would rather not think about; or, at least not believe that we would have to face in a Christian organization. Unfortunately, we must. Society – even the church – has become tainted by the presence of child abuse, and most of us have heard stories or experienced first hand what happens to a congregation when abuse is discovered in the church. Worse, children’s lives have been severely and permanently damaged as a result of this abuse.

That reason alone compels us to be on guard at all times, working to prevent child abuse before it occurs, and to respond to it properly if it does” (Child Abuse Handbook, The Calvinist Cadet Corps)

The protection of children is a matter of fundamental concern, and any abuse of these children, seniors, and the members of the Friendship Club under the supervision of church volunteers, staff, and leaders will not be tolerated.

## II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to reduce the risk of neglect or abuse (be it physical, sexual or emotional) in the church by creating an awareness of it and providing insights and tools for the prevention of it for volunteers, staff, and leaders in child, youth, and senior programs of the church. The necessary procedures for reporting it are also included.

### III. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are given to further assist the church in understanding the types of behaviours which might constitute ungodly conduct, misuse of power, sexually inappropriate behaviour, and so forth:

1. **Physical Abuse:** is any act or omission which results in a non-accidental trauma or physical injury being inflicted on another person. It is sometimes a single event but more often a chronic pattern of behaviour. It may result from severe punishment. Physically abusive acts include slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, biting, choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing, and shooting.
2. **Physical Neglect** is not doing what one is supposed to do to meet the physical needs of those (especially children) in his or her care.
3. **Sexual Abuse** is exploitation of a person regardless of age or circumstances for the sexual gratification of another. Child sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a child 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 sexual contact. Examples of non-physical sexual abuse include people exposing themselves, displaying pornographic material, photographing a child 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 includes fondling of body parts such as breasts, crotch, buttocks, penis or vagina; intercourse, and oral and anal sex.
4. **Emotional Abuse** is harm or threatened harm to a person's welfare or well being; a chronic or intentional pattern of deprivation; manipulative threats, words or action; harassment; or unnecessary and excessive attempts to control a person's behaviour or thoughts.

Emotional abuse includes belittling, humiliating, and ridiculing a child. This weakens a child's mental and physical ability to stand up for him or herself, cuts off his or her contacts with others, and causes a gradual loss of self-esteem - all of which reinforce a sense of helplessness and dependence on the abuser.

5. **Emotional Neglect** is the consistent failure of a parent or caregiver to provide appropriate support, attention and affection.

#### IV. VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

1. All volunteers, staff, and leaders involved in child, youth programs, Friendship or seniors will be screened.
2. All volunteers, staff, and leaders involved in child and youth programs are expected to be aware of and comply with the discipline guidelines for church youth programs (Appendix C) and the guidelines for the age groups in their care (Appendix D).
3. The church will maintain an Abuse Prevention Team (see Section V) that will provide orientation and regular training to all child and youth volunteers, staff, and leaders.
4. All volunteers, staff, and leaders are expected to complete the required training and sign the “Declaration of Agreement and Understanding” (Appendix E). The Abuse Prevention Team is responsible for holding on file annually signed forms. Each program director is responsible for ensuring that all volunteers, staff and leaders in the program have signed the form.
5. The church seeks to maintain the physical structure of the facilities to reduce the risk of child abuse in the church building (Appendix F)
6. The Council Executive will ensure that there is a review of the abuse policy at least every other year and/or when they become aware of a change in provincial legislation that affects the policy.
7. A person must be a member of Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Dunnville for a period of six months before they can begin volunteering.
8. If a person is a **known sex offender**, then never will he/she be able to volunteer with any of the child or youth programs in the church.
9. If a person is suspected of child abuse, then he/she must take a leave of absence from their role until an investigation has been completed. If, after an investigation has been concluded, it is determined that the person has been involved in abuse of a child, the person will be immediately dismissed from his/her current role.
10. A volunteer or church leader removed or dismissed from their position or office should not be considered for re-entry or reinstatement without the advice of legal counsel (ties in with 8 and 9).
11. Sexual, physical or emotional abuse of a parishioner by a volunteer or church leader will not be tolerated.  
*(NOTE: Definition of an Adult: someone who has reached the age of 18 years)*

## V. SAFE CHURCH TEAM (SCT)

### A. Accountability

The Abuse Prevention team (SCT) is directly accountable to the Council of Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Dunnville and shall provide regular reports to Council.

### B. Membership

The SCT consists of three members (male and female) appointed by Council to a three-year renewable term. A chairperson will be designated by team members. One member shall be a Council member. The terms of the first team should be staggered, so that there is not an entirely new SCT every three years.

### C. Mandate

1. To facilitate ongoing mandatory education and training regarding abuse, abuse prevention, and best practices for volunteers, staff and leaders involved in child and youth programs, Friendship and seniors in Bethel Christian Reformed Church (CRC)
2. To be the designated representatives of Bethel CRC with the Haldimand County Police Services for the purpose of facilitating the police record check procedure.
3. To assist and be available as a resource to child and youth group leaders in the screening procedure.
4. To determine on an annual basis, those persons for whom documentation (police record checks, and signed Declarations of Agreement and Understanding) is required, and to maintain the documentation in a confidential manner.
5. To provide direction and support in abuse situations.
6. To ensure that reference materials concerning abuse issues are available in the church. They should be Christian in content, and Canadian if such is available. These should include copies of our Abuse Prevention Policy, our Handbook for Leaders, and a copy of Beth Swagman's Preventing Child Abuse: A Guide for Churches. The booklet Adult Protection will be available in late 2003 from CRC Publications in Grand Rapids and should also be included.
7. To work toward ensuring that relationships be carefully and prayerfully restored if allegations of abuse are found to be groundless.
8. To ensure that the information being handled is maintained with extreme confidentiality.

## **VI. VOLUNTEERS/STAFF LEADERS SCREENING PROCEDURE**

The church will rely on personal information forms, interviews, references, and police record checks in the screening process for volunteers, staff, and leaders (hereafter referred to as the applicants) that will be working as leaders in child and youth programs, Friendship Club, seniors, or with persons under 18 years of age in a supervisory or leadership position, and who conduct frequent or lengthy one-to-one meetings with children. This includes directors of children and youth programs, pastors, ordained staff, and professional staff.

Such procedures assist the church in attempting to maintain the safety and well being of the individuals entrusted to its care. These procedures will be implemented once an applicant has been approved in principle by the Council Executive.

### **A. Personal Interview**

An interview shall be conducted with all applicants to assist in assessing the applicant's supervisory and/or leadership skills. Whenever possible, the individual who will supervise the applicant should conduct the interview. The interviewer will recommend the names of suitable applicants to the Executive or the Abuse Prevention Team.

### **B. Personal Information Form**

All applicants will be required to complete and submit the approved Personal Information form (Appendix A) to the SCT.

### **C. References**

First-time applicants are required to provide names of three references. References can be obtained from previous employers, friends, and colleagues. All three references will be contacted by the SCT.

### **D. Police Record Check Process**

1. *Purpose of the police record check (PRC):* to help ensure that those who are responsible for teaching and leading those under 18 years of age and the Friendship Group or church seniors, do not have a previous history of abuse.

***[Note: this does not “ensure” there is no previous history of abuse. Rather, it will help discharge the church’s obligation to make its best efforts to protect the children in its care]***

2. *All applicants, at 18 and over,* will be informed by the program leader at the time of inquiry, that it is the policy of the church to receive a police record check prior to approving appointment, and thereafter, every five years. For a complete list of positions requiring a police check, see Appendix I

***(Note: A police record check will not be requested of the applicant until such time as the church is satisfied that the applicant is otherwise acceptable to the position.)***

3. The Abuse Prevention Team (SCT) for the church is responsible for facilitating the police record check process and ensuring that the applicant understands the type of information being requested and the process to be followed.
4. The SCT will be responsible for safeguarding the information received. It will only be used for the purpose of screening volunteers and employees who work with the child and youth ministry programs, and with the Friendship Program, and will not be disseminated to any other person or agency save and except with the written consent of the applicant to the church Council.

***[Note: The information in the check should not be disclosed to anyone other than the applicant because it will contain information from the Pardoned Sexual Offender Database. That information is only legally available to certain individuals. It should only be disclosed to third parties under court order or after consultation with legal counsel]***

5. The SCT will advise each applicant that the presence of information provided by the police service may not necessarily mean a disqualification from the position, but that the SCT will decide on the acceptability of the applicant based on the impact of the information.
6. The applicant will be requested to sign the approved police service page Consents to Disclosure of Personal Information form, which will be witnessed by an SCT representative of the church.
7. First time applicants will be provided with the information to completing an OPP Vulnerable Sector Clearance Request.

**[Volunteers or employees who have been continuously working within our church since the original Vulnerable Sector Search was done will only require a Police Clearance providing that any gap in service or membership does not exceed 5 years)**

8. Police records check must be completed online. Go to [opp.ca/recordchecks](http://opp.ca/recordchecks).

9. After receiving the completed PRC, the applicant **must personally** deliver it to the church office who will notify a member of the SCT. The applicant has the right to withhold the information; however, this will be appropriate grounds for refusing the applicant's request for a volunteer, staff, or leadership position in the child, youth, and senior programs.

***[Note: By having the individual obtain the PRC by himself (or herself), will help protect the church from any allegations that information was inappropriately disclosed and/or lost]***

10. The SCT will review each PRC and decide if it discloses any information which will make the Applicant inappropriate for the position. The names of successful applicants are forwarded to Council Executive. It is recommended that volunteers/staff/leaders in child and youth groups, as well as Friendship Group, and seniors who have already been approved in principle by Council, and who have submitted a clear Police Check to the SCT may begin serving as leaders in their programs.
11. If the record check is not clear, the circumstances of the information may be discussed with the applicant. If SCT decides that the applicant is not successful, the applicant is informed and the process ends.
12. If the SCT decides that the applicant is not appropriate, the PRC will be returned to the applicant, and the expense incurred will be reimbursed by the church (for paid employees only). The SCT will keep a copy of this record check on file as proof the PRC was done and also as backup should anyone question the suitability of an applicant. If the applicant is approved, the member of the SCT who receives the PRC shall be responsible for making sure that the PRC be kept confidential and in perpetuity and stored in a locked file with limited access.

***[Since a major part of the reason that an organization is collecting screening information is in order to demonstrate due diligence in hiring and appointing children's, youth and senior's ministry workers and since there is no statute of limitations with respect to individuals who may seek civil action in the future as the result of actual or alleged abuse they may have suffered as children, it is kept confidential and in perpetuity, in order to provide a legal defense for the organization and its directors and other leaders.]***

13. SCT will review the list of volunteers, staff and leaders in child and youth, senior program on a yearly basis to see who is up for their **five year renewal** police record check.

## VII. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

1. It is essential to take allegations of child abuse seriously. This section applies in cases where there are reasonable grounds to suspect child abuse.
2. Volunteers, staff, and leaders in child and youth programs of the church shall be trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse (see Appendix J on “Warning Signs”). Training will also include learning how to respond to abusive situations.
3. Volunteers, staff, and leaders aware of possible child abuse (whether it be in a church program or outside of church), or knowing about abuse by any church volunteer, staff, leader, or any other person, must report the matter to their immediate supervisor or leader unless that person is the suspected abuser or close relative. In that case only, they will report to another supervisor or church leader. This should be done within 24 hours.
4. When volunteers, staff, or leaders observe signs and symptoms of abuse or have an incidence of abuse reported to them, they shall report this to the police or Children’s Aid Society. Any member of a church community is subject to the civic duty to report under the Child and Family Services Act, Section 72 (1) which states that if a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, the person must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a children’s aid society.

The full text of Section 72 (1) of the Child and Family Services Act regarding the responsibility to report is attached in Appendix K.

There are special responsibilities imposed on professionals and officials by Section 72 (1), (6.2) which states that professional persons and officials have the same duty as any member of the public to report suspicion that a child is in need of protection. The Act recognizes, however, that persons working closely with children have a special awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect, and a particular responsibility to report their suspicions, and so makes it an offence to fail to report.

Phone Numbers: Haldimand Police Services 905-772-3322

Children’s Aid Society: 1-888-227-5437 (24 hours)

5. Volunteers, staff, or leaders should never interview the concerned child in detail about any signs or symptoms and must never suggest to the child that they have been abused.
6. The person who made the report to the police or CAS should also inform the Abuse Prevention Team as soon as possible. The reporter must keep the information confidential. An incident report will be filled out and kept on file. (Appendix L).

## **VIII. HANDLING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AGAINST A VOLUNTEER, STAFF OR LEADER**

When an allegation of child abuse has been reported to the CAS or police (see Section VII, Item 4) or a criminal charge of child abuse has been laid, the church also needs to act. This section describes the procedures to be followed by the church.

### **Unordained Volunteer, Staff or Leader**

1. Allegations: When the SCT becomes aware that the police/CAS are investigating an allegation of child abuse against an unordained volunteer, staff, or leader, the SCT will notify the Chair of Council, who will then call a meeting of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will consider the allegation and may suspend the person from their position. Suspension is carried out with pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice. In addition, Executive Committee should seek advice from the police, CAS, legal counsel and/or other experts, and depending on the circumstances, the Executive Committee may inform Consistory and/or Council of the allegations. The insurance company should also be informed.
2. Criminal charges: If a criminal charge of child abuse has been filed against an unordained volunteer, staff, or leader, the SCT will notify the Chair of Council who will then call a meeting of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will consider the case and suspend the person from their position. Suspension is carried out with pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice. In addition, Executive Committee should seek advice from the police, CAS, legal counsel and/or other experts. Executive Committee will inform the Consistory and/or Council of the criminal charges, and depending on the circumstances, the Executive Committee may refer the matter to the Consistory and/or Council for a decision on the course of any other action to be taken. Keep the insurance company informed.
3. Allegations which do not result in charges or charges dropped or no conviction: If the allegations do not result in a criminal charge, or the criminal charges of child abuse against the unordained person are dropped, or if there is no conviction on the charges, the Executive Committee will meet to decide if the suspension, if there is one, should be lifted. A suspension may be lifted when the Executive Committee in consultation with the police, CAS, legal counsel, and/or other experts deem it safe and proper to do so.
4. Conviction: If the criminal charges of the child abuse do result in a conviction, the suspended volunteer, staff or leader will be thereafter permanently precluded from occupying the position in question.

## **Ordained Volunteer, Staff or Leader**

*Note: Ordained means ordained to any office for which ordination is required, including minister, evangelist, elder, or deacon.*

1. Allegations: When the SCT becomes aware that the police/CAS are investigating an allegation of child abuse against an ordained volunteer, staff or leader the SCT will notify the Chair of Council who will then call a meeting of the Executive Committee. Executive Committee will meet and consider the allegation and will determine if a meeting of Council is warranted, and if so, Council will meet and consider the allegation and may suspend the person from their position. Suspension is carried out with pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice. Suspension of an office bearer is carried out in agreement with Church Order, Articles 78-84 and their Supplements. In addition, Executive Committee and/or Council should seek advice from the police, CAS, legal counsel and/or other experts. Notify the insurance company.
2. Criminal charges: If a criminal charge of child abuse has been filed against an ordained volunteer, staff or leader, the SCT will notify the Chair of Council. The Executive Committee will call a meeting of Council. The Council will consider the case and suspend the person from their position. Suspension is carried out with pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice. Suspension of an office bearer is carried out in agreement with Church Order, Articles 78-84 and their Supplements. In addition, Council should seek advice from the police, CAS, legal counsel and/or other experts. Keep the insurance company informed.
3. Allegations which do not result in charges, or charges dropped, or no conviction: If the allegations do not result in a criminal charge, or the criminal charges of child abuse against the ordained person are dropped, or if there is no conviction on the charges, the Council will meet to decide if the suspension, if there is one, should be lifted. A suspension may be lifted when the Council, in consultation with the police, CAS, legal counsel, and/or other experts deem it safe and proper to do so.
4. Conviction: If the criminal charges of child abuse do result in a conviction, the suspended volunteer, staff, or leader will be thereafter permanently precluded from occupying the position in question. Office-bearers are to be deposed according to the Church Order, Articles 78-84 and their Supplements.

## IX. CHURCH RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

1. Be Prepared in advance. Realistically, no practical prevention strategy is 100% effective. An accusation of child sexual abuse may occur in any church. We should have a plan to respond to sexual abuse allegations. The church should not try to navigate a crisis situation without a compass to guide it. Wrong actions can multiply the pain and liability inherent in an abuse case. The church's lawyer should be involved in all responses to accusations of child abuse.
2. An effective response strategy recognizes the following underlying principles:
  - all allegations are to be taken seriously
  - situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality
  - full cooperation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of our church lawyer.
  - adequate care must be shown for the well-being of victims
  - the victim should not be held responsible in any way
3. Records: Always have adequate records of church staff and volunteer's personal information forms, references, dates of when last police checks were made and declarations of understanding. They should be up-to-date and accessible.
4. Spokesperson: The pastor or the chairman of council will be the spokesperson for the church. He will speak to the media and the congregation regarding the matter in a discreet, informed, truthful, and diplomatic way. (Often, the media will interview several church leaders who have never given any consideration in responding to such inquiries. In such cases, conflicting and contradictory statements can abound, and the public will develop a negative impression of the church. This is avoided when only one person is designated to speak for the church in such cases.)
5. Position Statement: In an allegation of abuse, the statement below (or similar) should be used for a public response until all the facts are uncovered and the case reviewed:

*"It is always tragic when children are abused or exploited. Bethel CRC is aware of the ever-growing nature of child abuse. We have taken careful precautions to protect the children entrusted to our care. We are distressed by any accusations of child abuse. We will do everything in our power to address any needs in this situation. For the welfare of those involved, all information has been directed to the (insert names of appropriate agencies and authorities)."*

This is a clear position statement of Bethel CRC, Dunnville regarding our awareness of the problem of abuse of children and other vulnerable persons, a concern for victims, and the steps we have taken to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for those persons in our care. It lets the media know that we take the risk of abuse seriously, and that we have acted responsibly. This is not the time for silence or "no comment".

## **Appendix A**

### **LIST OF CHILD AND YOUTH PROGRAMS AT BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

1. Nursery
2. Sunday School
3. Gems
4. Cadets
5. Catechism
6. Vacation Bible School
7. Teen Group
8. Young People
9. Youth Elders, Deacons
10. Mission Trips
11. Coffee Break
  - nursery
  - story hour
  - little lambs
12. Sonnet Seniors

## **Appendix B**

### **TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

This policy applies to **adults**, while serving in ministry to youth, who may transport non-related youth in the course of church-sponsored programs.

1. At least two of the following procedures must be in place:
  - a. Two adults are present and seated in the front of the vehicle when transporting youth.
  - b. At least two youths are present in the vehicle.
  - c. Youth are seated in the back seats of the vehicle.
  - d. The program supervisor is aware of both the driver and the passengers and the event.
2. Adults must have a valid driver's licence and proof of insurance before transporting youth; drivers who routinely transport youth will have their driving record reviewed prior to the beginning of each church year.
3. Drivers need to abide by state and provincial requirements for car seat use, seatbelt use and airbag safety.
  - a. Youth are to wear seat belts whenever the vehicle is in service. Drivers may not transport more youths than available seat belts.
  - b. Where required by law, car seats must be available for younger children.
  - c. For safety, youth under the age of 12 may not sit in the front seat if there is a passenger side airbag.

Adults or minors who transport **related** youth to church-sponsored events are not subject to this policy.

The transportation policy does not extend to parents or guardians who request or give permission for a minor with a valid driver's license to transport non-related youth.

**Appendix C**  
**DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH PROGRAMS**

1. Corporal punishment is not permitted. Corporal punishment includes, but is not limited to slapping, hitting, pushing, and touching in an aggressive manner.
2. Abusive verbal discipline (yelling, hurling insults, threatening) is not permitted.
3. Each program supervisor will review the appropriate consequences for inappropriate behaviors of children/youth with volunteers, staff, and leaders before church-sponsored programs begin a new season.

Inappropriate behaviors may be minimized by choosing one or more of the following options:

- a. distract the child/youth with another activity;
  - b. help the child/youth focus on another more acceptable behavior
  - c. isolate the child/youth from others if another volunteer, staff or leader is available to assist.
4. Behavior expectations of children/youth must reflect their age and level of development. Similarly, discipline for children/youth must also reflect their age and level of development. (For young children, time-outs should not last longer (in minutes) than the age of the child. For example, a three-year-old should not have to sit for a time out any longer than three minutes.)
  5. Leaders will inform the children/youth of the kind of behavior that is acceptable for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.
  6. When nothing seems to be working, volunteers, staff, and leaders should get help before “losing their cool.”
  7. When a child’s misbehavior proves uncontrollable or a leader is at a loss as to how to respond, it should be reported to the program supervisor. The SCT should be notified.
  8. Parent(s) are to be informed and involved whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehavior increases after consultation with the program supervisor.
  9. An aide or parent should be involved weekly in classrooms where misbehavior is an ongoing problem.
  10. All volunteers/staff must sign a ministry covenant confirming they have read, understand and are willing to comply with policies and procedures.

## Appendix D GUIDELINES FOR VARIOUS AGE GROUPS

### D.1 LITTLE LAMBS AND NURSERY

#### The Nursery:

1. The windows to the nurseries and the washroom window should be unobstructed from view. The diaper change table should be in full view.

#### The Nursery Volunteers:

1. All nursery volunteers must have approval from the Nursery Committee, and those 18 of age and older must sign the “Declaration of Agreement and Understanding.” Only the Director of the nursery will require a police check.
2. All volunteers must have been members of Bethel CRC for at least six months. This gives the Nursery Committee time to evaluate volunteers and prevent access to children by persons not well known. In the case of “Little Lambs”, all volunteers who are not from Bethel CRC, Dunnville must be members of Coffee Break for at least one year.
3. A **minimum** of two adult attendants must be in the infant and toddler nursery with no more than ten infants or toddlers before an additional attendant is required (**ratio of 2-10**). In any case, the ratio of adults to children must never exceed the above. **If this occurs or is expected to occur, steps must be immediately taken by the attendant(s) on duty to bring in additional help. If additional help is required, only persons who have been formally approved by the church may be utilized. It is the responsibility of the scheduled attendant(s) to make a written note of the names and times of attendance of additional help on a sign-in sheet/record sheet.** The “Two Adult Rule” will apply whenever nursery is scheduled.
4. Only one adult member of a family should serve in nursery at any given time. A couple (husband and wife) should **not** serve in the nursery at the same time.

*[Note: it is important to have a record of who was in attendance should an allegation of abuse be filed at a later date].*

**The Children:**

1. An adult or minor who is not scheduled as a nursery attendant for that particular service may **not** spend time in the nursery room(s) during or after the service. The only exception would be a nursery attendant mom called in to assist with unexpected children or a nursing mom, and keeping the ratio of at **least two adults to ten children and their attendance is recorded.**
2. Each child should wear a nametag (token system) and should be signed in by the parent/guardian, noting any special instructions.
3. Use only the washroom by the nursery to toilet children. Report to another volunteer that you will be toileting a child. Leave the washroom door ajar when the washroom is in use. Babies' diapers should be changed on the change table in full view of other volunteers.
4. Volunteers may not take children out of the nursery to any other part of the church, except the washroom located directly opposite the nursery.
5. If a child cries uncontrollably for more than 10 minutes and cannot be comforted, then call the parent.
6. Children may not be released to anyone during or after the service other than the person who signed them in and has the token for the child.
7. Report any reasonable suspicion of abuse to the Nursery Coordinator (for reporting procedures see Section VII of the policy.)
8. Two volunteers should remain in the nursery until all children have been picked up.
9. The Discipline Policy applies to nursery programs.
10. The parent(s) of any child requiring medical attention must be notified as soon as possible.
11. Completed attendance records for nursery attendants and children must be turned in to the church office by the end of each Sunday.

## **D.2 STORY HOUR, SUNDAY SCHOOL, VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL GUIDELINES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN**

### **The Classroom:**

1. The windows to the rooms must be unobstructed from view.

### **Staff and Volunteers:**

1. All leaders and volunteers must have the necessary approval and must sign the “Declaration of Agreement and Understanding.” (See Appendix I for those who need a police check.)

### **The Children:**

1. If a child in your care needs to use the washroom, report to another volunteer that you will be toileting the child. Leave the washroom door ajar when the washroom is in use. A female adult should assist children to the washroom and return with them to the classroom.
2. Children should remain with their leader and should not leave to go to any other part of the church unattended.
3. If a child cries uncontrollably for more than 10 minutes and cannot be comforted then call the parent. If an older child becomes physically aggressive, the leader should ask for assistance if the child behaves in a manner that seems to require restraint. If the leader determines that restraint is needed, the child’s parent will be notified immediately and the child may be removed from the class until the parent arrives. Inform supervisor of the program of the incident.
4. In a classroom setting, a child will remain with the leader except for illness, washroom assistance or other compelling reason. A child may not be released to anyone other than a parent/guardian during class time.
5. Leaders and volunteers may not meet alone with a child without another adult nearby to observe.
6. Report any reasonable suspicion of abuse to the Supervisor of the program (For reporting procedures see Section VII of the policy.)
7. Volunteers must remain with children until they are all picked up after class is finished.
8. The Discipline Policy applies to Story Hour, Sunday School, and Vacation Bible School.
9. Completed attendance records for teachers/volunteers/children must be turned in to the office for filing at the end of each Sunday.

### **D.3 GEMS AND CADETS PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

1. All GEMS and Cadet leaders and volunteers must be at least 18 years of age.
2. All GEMS and Cadet leaders must have the necessary approval, sign the “Declaration of Agreement and Understanding” and get a police check where applicable.
3. Report any reasonable suspicion of abuse to the Program Leader. (For reporting procedures see Section VII of the policy.)
4. All GEMS and Cadet functions must be supervised by at least two leaders.
5. GEMS and Cadet leaders may meet with an individual GEM or Cadet once or twice and thereafter only with the permission of a parent of the GEM or Cadet. Any such meeting must be in a public place and another leader has been notified.
6. While the appropriate display of affection between GEMS and Cadets and their leaders is often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another, such displays can be misinterpreted. For this reason, displays of affections should be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, a handclasp, or a light touch to the forearm and only when consented to by the other person.
7. Parents shall be notified of all group functions held away from church facilities. A note will be sent home prior to the planned function. These functions require the approval of the program leader and must have at least two leaders present at all times.
8. For any overnight functions, a written consent form must be signed by a parent or guardian and returned prior to the function. The **Two Adult Rule** applies at all times.
9. Completed attendance records for supervisors/volunteers are to be turned over to the SCT for filing at the end of each season.

### **D.4 CATECHISM**

1. Leaders and volunteers for these groups must be at least 18 years of age.
2. Leaders and volunteers must have the necessary approval, sign the “Declaration of Agreement and Understanding” and get a police check if applicable.
3. Report any reasonable suspicion of abuse to the SCT (For reporting procedures, see Section VII of the policy.)

## **D.5 TEEN GROUP, YOUNG PEOPLE GUIDELINES FOR GROUPS OF OLDER ADOLESCENTS**

1. Leaders and volunteers for these groups must be at least 18 years of age.
2. Leaders and volunteers must have the necessary approval, sign the “Declaration of Agreement and Understanding” and get a police check if applicable.
3. Report any reasonable suspicion of abuse to the SCT. (For reporting procedures see Section VII of the policy.
4. Youth leaders and volunteers may meet with an individual youth group member once or twice and thereafter only with the permission of a parent/guardian. Any such meeting must be in a public place and another adult has been notified.
5. A youth group leader should not date a youth group member. This is not appropriate because of the difference in ages, authority, and power. Similarly, a leader must not direct gifts, phone calls, or letters of personal nature to a youth group member. (This does not apply to a young person voted in by their peers to serve as president, etc.)
6. All youth group meetings and events should have at least two leaders present.
7. While displays of affection may be appropriate means of conveying support and encouragement, they must be done only in public and must be brief and limited actions such as a short hug from the side, an arm around the shoulders, an open-handed pat on the back, a handclasp or handshake, or a light touch to the forearm. These actions must be done only when consented to by the recipient.
8. All group activities and related programs held outside the church facilities require the approval of the program leader, and at least two leaders must be present at all times.
9. A parent/guardian will be notified by note and/or bulletin announcement prior to an activity planned away from church facilities. For a group activity planned overnight, a written permission form must be signed by a parent/guardian (for youths under 18 years).

## **D.6 FRIENDSHIP GROUP GUIDELINES**

1. All volunteers, staff, and leaders 18 years of age and over must have a police check and must sign the “Declaration of Agreement and Understanding.”
2. Students’ homes must be informed about the place of an outside function, the name of the driver, time of pickup and the time of return.
3. All one-on-one sessions must take place in a group or at some place in the Fellowship Hall.
4. Hugs must only be given in the presence of others, be brief, appropriate, and only when consented to by the other person.
5. In the event of a violent act, restraint must be non-violent physical intervention. Should the victim fall to the ground, restraint must be released immediately. Call 911 if the situation is warranted.
6. If assistance is required in toileting, the washroom door should be kept slightly ajar or another leader should be informed.

## **D.7 MINISTER, COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Once a year, the minister and all council members shall review the Guidelines for Ministerial Personnel in Their Interpersonal Relationships, found in the Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1997

Each Minister and Council must sign a Covenant Statement annually.

## Appendix E

### DECLARATION OF AGREEMENT AND UNDERSTANDING Of Bethel Christian Reformed Church Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines

I have attended the required training or have received equivalent information on abuse awareness, and have read and understand Bethel Christian Reformed Church's Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines \*, and agree to abide by its mandates.

My signature acknowledges my understanding and agreement with these guidelines.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_(Please print)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\* The Required reading includes the following sections:

Introduction – Section I

Purpose – Section II

Definitions III

General Prevention Guidelines – Section IV

Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse – Section VII

Transportation Policy – Appendix B

Discipline Guidelines for Church Programs – Appendix C

Guidelines for the Age Group under your care – Appendix D

Warning Signs: What to look for when abuse is occurring – Appendix J

Responsibility to report, and Situations that must be reported – Appendix K

## Appendix F

### GUIDELINES FOR INCLUSION IN BUILDING AND FACILITIES POLICY

The Abuse Prevention Team recommends that the following guidelines be included in any Building and Facilities Policy. These guidelines are meant to help reduce the risk of child abuse happening in the church building. Note that some of these recommendations may already be in effect.

1. Bathroom facilities for toddlers should be located in the nursery section.
2. All nursery rooms should have windows and split doors, that is, doors that can be opened from the top only, leaving the bottom section closed, and an inside lock placed on the bottom section. A split door should also be placed between the baby and toddler nursery rooms, with a window on top, and a lock on both sides. Windows to the nurseries and between the nurseries should remain unobstructed.
3. Classroom and meeting room doors should have windows with an unobstructed view of the room.
4. Classroom and meeting room door windows should remain unobstructed (e.g., not to be paper over with posters, etc.)
5. Pastors' Offices: When meeting with children and youth, the windows in the pastors' offices should be unobstructed.
6. Rooms that do not have a window or half swinging door, but which are used for child and youth programs should have windows installed, or a half swinging door, or should remain open while programs are in progress.
7. Outside doors of the building should be kept locked as much as is feasibly possible during church, church programs, and other times when children and youth are in the building to reduce the risk of unknown persons entering the building without the knowledge of those supervising the children.

## **Appendix G**

### **SCREENING PROCEDURE FOR VOLUNTEERS, STAFF AND LEADERS**

- A. Program leaders will request more volunteers for their program. Applicant will contact program leader and will be interviewed by program leader.
  
- B. Names of applicants will be given to Executive to approve or disapprove subject to a successful application process.
  
- C. Church office will distribute Personal Information forms to first-time applicants (form includes request for three references). Information on obtaining a police check form from an SCT member will be included. All three of the references will be contacted by the SCT. All replies will go to the church office and be put into the applicant's file.
  
- D. SCT will review completed files and will report the names of successful applicants to Executive.
  
- E. Executive will implement names of successful applicants.

**Appendix H**  
**BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**  
**PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM**

This form must be completed by all applicants of any employment or volunteer position where that position involves working as a leader in the Friendship Club or with persons under 18 years of age in a supervisory or leadership position.

**A. PERSONAL DATA:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Business Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a valid driver's license? Yes  No

If no, please explain:

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**B. POSITION APPLYING FOR:**

Please indicate the type of program in which you are interested: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please indicate the date you would be available; \_\_\_\_\_

What is the minimum length of commitment you can make? \_\_\_\_\_

**C. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP:**

How long have you attended Bethel CRC, Dunnville? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you presently a member of Bethel CRC, Dunnville? Yes  No

List other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years:

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**D. CHURCH WORK HISTORY:**

Please list previous church work experience:

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**E. REFERENCES:**

It is the policy of this church to contact references. Please provide the names, positions, and phone numbers of three people we may contact as a reference. Examples include employers (past or present), friends, colleagues, and previous pastor – but not a relative.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

---

2. \_\_\_\_\_

---

3. \_\_\_\_\_

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The information I have provided is accurate and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Applicant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I

### LIST OF THOSE WHO REQUIRE A CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

<b>Program</b>	<b>Require a Police Check</b>	<b>Do not require</b>
Nursery	Director	Nursery Attendants
Sunday School	Director, Teachers	Helpers
GEMS	Director, Teachers	Helpers
Cadets	Director, Teachers	Helpers
Catechism	Director, Teachers	
Friendship	Director, Teachers	Helpers
VBS	Director, Church-appointed drivers Teachers, Helpers	Helpers
Teen Group	Director, Teachers	Helpers
Young People	Leaders, Teachers	Helpers
Mission Trips	Director, Teachers, Drivers	
Coffee Break	Nursery, Story Hour, Little Lambs Teachers, Paid Staff	
Church Staff	Pastors, Professional staff, ordained staff Custodians, Hall monitors	
Sonset Seniors	Directors, Leaders	

**Appendix J**  
**WARNING SIGNS:**  
**WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN ABUSE IS OCCURRING**

**Physical Abuse:**

Physical abuse often leaves marks, and can be easier to identify than sexual or emotional abuse or neglect.

Physical indicators:

Unexplained bruises and welts are the most frequent evidence found:

- Often of the face, torso, buttocks, back, or thighs;
- Can reflect shape of object used (electric cord, belt buckle);
- May be in various stages of healing.

Unexplained fractures/dislocations:

- Often involves facial structure, skull, and bones around joints.

Unexplained burns:

- Often on palms, soles, buttocks, and back;
- Can reflect patterns indicative of cigarette, cigar, electrical appliance, immersion or rope burn.

Other unexplained injuries:

- Lacerations, abrasions, human bite marks or pinch marks;
- Loss of hair/bald patches;
- Retinal hemorrhage;
- Abdominal injuries.

Behavioral Indicators:

Requests or feels deserving of physical punishment;

Afraid to go home and/or requests to stay in school, day care, etc.;

Overly shy, tends to avoid physical contact with adults, especially parents;

Displays behavioral extremes (withdrawal or aggression);

Suggests that other children be punished in a harsh manner;

Cries excessively and/or sits and stares;

Reports injury by parent;

Gives unbelievable explanations for injuries.

**Sexual Abuse:**

Unfortunately, many children do not report this form of abuse. They rely on adults to be aware of specific physical and behavioral indicators. A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing sexual abuse. Remember, the most reliable indicator of child sexual abuse is the child's verbal disclosure.

*Physical Indicators:*

- Somatic complaints, including pain and irritation of the genitals;
- Sexually transmitted disease;
- Pregnancy in young adolescents;
- Frequent unexplained sore throats, yeast infections, or urinary infections.

*Behavioral Indicators:*

- Excessive masturbation in young children;
- Sexual knowledge of behavior beyond that expected for the child's age;
- Depression, suicidal gesture;
- Chronic runaway;
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints, such as headaches and stomachaches;
- Drug or alcohol abuse;
- Avoidance of undressing or wearing excessive layers of clothing;
- Sudden avoidance of certain familiar adults or places;
- Marked decline in school performance.

**Emotional Abuse:**

The signs of emotional abuse may be less obvious than other forms of maltreatment. Emotional abuse is suspected when a child exhibits impaired development, destructive behavior, or chronic somatic complaints that cannot be explained medically or circumstantially. A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing emotional abuse.

*Physical Indicators*

- Eating disorders;
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares;
- Wetting or soiling by school-age children;
- Speech disorder, stuttering;
- Failure to thrive;
- Development lags;
- Asthma, severe allergies, or ulcers

*Behavioral Indicators*

- Habit disorders, such as biting, rocking, head banging, thumb sucking in an older child;
- Poor peer relationships;
- Behavioral extremes (overly compliant or demanding, withdrawn or aggressive);
- Self-destructive behavior, oblivious to hazards and risks;
- Irrational and persistent fears, dreads, or hatreds.

**Signs of Neglect:**

A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing neglect. Keep in mind; however, that cultural standards which differ from those prevailing in the community are not necessarily neglect.

*Physical Indicators:*

- Height and weight significantly below age level with no plausible explanation;
- Inappropriate clothing for weather;
- Poor hygiene, including lice, body odor, scaly skin;
- Child abandoned or left with inadequate supervision;
- Untreated illness or injury;
- Lack of safe, warm, sanitary shelter;
- Lack of necessary medical and dental care.

*Behavioral Indicators:*

- Begging or stealing food;
- Assumes adult responsibilities;
- Falling asleep in school, lethargic;
- Repeated acts of vandalism
- Poor school attendance, frequent tardiness;
- Chronic hunger
- Dull, apathetic appearance;
- Running away from home;
- Reports no caretaker in the home.

**Appendix K**  
**Responsibility to report a child in need of protection**  
**Child and Family Services Act, section 72(1)**

If a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, the person must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a children's aid society. The situations that must be reported are listed in detail below.

**Situations that must be reported,**  
**CFSA, s.72(1)**

Despite the provisions of any other Act, if a person, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, has reasonable grounds to suspect one of the following, the person shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a society:

1. The child has suffered physical harm, inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person's
  - i. failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child or
  - ii. pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child.
  
2. There is a risk that the child is likely to suffer physical harm inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person's
  - i. failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child, or
  - ii. pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child.
  
3. The child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited, by the person having charge of the child or by another person where the person having charge of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and fails to protect the child.
  
4. There is a risk that the child is likely to be sexually molested or sexually exploited as described in paragraph 3.
  
5. The child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent, or alleviate physical harm or suffering and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, the treatment.
  
6. The child has suffered emotional harm, demonstrated by serious,
  - i. anxiety,
  - ii. depression,
  - iii. withdrawal

- iv. self-destructive or aggressive behavior, or
  - v. delayed development, and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the emotional harm suffered by the child results from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child's parent or the person having charge of the child.
7. The child has suffered emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i, ii, iii, iv, or v of paragraph 6 and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable to or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm.
  8. There is a risk that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i, ii, iii, iv or v of paragraph 6 resulting from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child's parent or person having charge of the child
  9. There is a risk that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i, ii, iii, iv, or v of paragraph 6 and that the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to prevent the harm.
  10. The child suffers from a mental, emotional, or developmental condition that, if not remedied, could seriously impair the child's development and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, treatment to remedy or alleviate the condition.
  11. The child has been abandoned, the child's parent has died or is unavailable to exercise his or her custodial rights over the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care and custody, or the child is in a residential placement and the parent refuses or is unable or unwilling to resume the child's care and custody.
  12. The child is less than 12 years old and has killed or seriously injured another person or caused serious damage to another person's property, services, or treatment are necessary to prevent a recurrence and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, those services or treatment.
  13. The child is less than 12 years old and has on more than one occasion injured another person or caused loss or damage to another person's property, with the encouragement of the person having charge of the child or because of that person's failure or inability to supervise the child adequately.

**Appendix L**  
**CONFIDENTIAL**  
**Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Dunnville**  
**Abuse Prevention Team – Incident Report**

*This report form is for the purpose of recording any incident of suspected abuse reported to the Abuse Prevention Team (SCT).*

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.)

Names of any other potential witnesses:

Action taken (note dates):

Signature of person making report:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of SCT member receiving this report:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Action taken (note dates):

Signature of SCT team member:

\_\_\_\_\_