

Church Ministry Policy and Procedures Regarding Child Safety A Guide for Adaptation by CBOQ Churches



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This policy is designed to assist church leaders in recruiting volunteers and to provide guidelines for the safety of children and youth under the age of 18, as well as guidelines for the support of staff and volunteers.

I. Volunteer Recruitment Procedures

Volunteers will be recruited by the Christian Education Board, pastoral staff or volunteers helping to administer a particular program. All names of potential volunteers will be approved by the Christian Education Board and pastoral staff before they are approached regarding a ministry assignment. If the pastoral staff is aware of any reason why a person would not be suitable for a volunteer position, further investigation and discussion will take place and a final approval, or denial, of the name will be made. If there are medical reasons for a potential volunteer to not be suitable as a leader/helper, he/she will be paired with another volunteer.

In the case of a potential volunteer who is new to the church family, a confidential dialogue will take place to determine interest, experience, and the children/youth ministry readiness of the individual. This dialogue will be conducted by a member of the Christian Education Board or may be done by one of the pastoral staff. A confidential report will be given at the next Christian Education Board meeting to determine the suitability of the candidate. If required, further dialogues will take place. New potential leaders for any program will not be assigned to work alone, but will be paired with leaders who are familiar with the program.

From time to time, parent volunteers are needed to assist in a particular program's event. When a parent who is not an active participant in the church congregation volunteers, he/she is to be screened by the coordinator of the program and teamed up with a leader who has been approved by the Christian Education Board. Under no circumstances is a parent volunteer to be alone with a child or group of children and out of sight of other leaders.

In an effort to develop new young leaders, junior and senior high school students are encouraged to assist in the leadership of various children's ministries. These young leaders should be approved by the Christian Education Board as leaders-in-training. As such, they should be provided with opportunities to develop their unique gifts, abilities and interests. Leaders-in-training must be paired up with adult leaders who can assist in the development of their gifts.

The <Name of Church> *Children's Ministry Information Form* must be filled out by potential volunteers. It is a vital part of protecting the church from legal action if a case of an alleged wrongful act is filed against the church. This form must be completed by the volunteer prior to being approved by the Christian Education Board. The completed forms are confidential and will be kept on file at the church. (These forms are necessary to show the court(s) that the church has done a systematic screening of the volunteers prior to them being accepted for a ministry. If the screening is not completed and an alleged wrongful act is filed against a volunteer, the church could be liable for neglect in allowing a person who has had allegations of child abuse to be given a leadership role of trust over children.) By having all persons involved in children and youth programs fill out a Children's Ministry Information Form, we are working to protect our children, guarding the integrity of our leaders, and reducing the church's possible exposure to liability.

The Children's Ministry Information Form asks for two personal references. These references should be contacted by a member of the Christian Education Board or pastoral staff, and asked to comment on their knowledge of the volunteer. A careful record should be kept on file of the person making the contacts, the date of the calls and a summary of the reference's comments. All hired and volunteer staff of <Name of Church> may be asked to have a police check done at the expense of <Name of Church>.

2. Leadership Development Procedures

The methodology implemented in children's ministry must reflect the physical, social, mental, and spiritual development of children in the age grouping of a particular program. The curriculum content and program development must be familiar to the leaders in that program. The extent to which a leader is familiar with the developmental needs of the group and the goals of the curriculum will determine the effectiveness of the program.

We value the volunteers and make every effort to develop their skills as leaders and their knowledge of the developmental needs of the children they serve. Our efforts to develop a leader's skills and knowledge include, but are not limited to, seeking out appropriate workshops or providing in-house seminars on child/teen developmental issues, curriculum development, creative classroom control, children with special needs issues, and team teaching.

Mentors are an effective way to develop one-on-one the leadership skills needed in a position. Where possible leaders-in-training and new leaders should be paired with a veteran leader, who will pass on wisdom, experience and knowledge relevant to the leadership responsibilities of the position.

Good resource materials are published and an effort should be made by the Christian Education Board to purchase these materials have them placed in the Resource Centre or church library. Leaders are encouraged to read such resource material to keep current on trends in children's ministry.

3. Personal Safety Procedures

We are concerned about the safety of the children, families and volunteers we serve. In an effort to lessen the possibility of abuses occurring and to maintain conduct which is above reproach, we have developed the following standards for our children's ministry.

Supervision Ratios

Our goal in the classroom is to provide an environment of acceptance and love in which learning can take place. Room allocation is geared to the needs and size of a particular class/group.

For teaching classes: There will be a minimum of 1 adult teacher for every Sunday School class. When the class size goes above the registered size on a given Sunday, an extra volunteer will assist the teacher. These volunteers will be on the Sunday School supply helper list or will be a teacher who is not scheduled to teach on that particular Sunday.

For club programs: There will be no less than 2 adult leaders present in all club group meetings for children in grades 3 - 6. Because of the nature of club programs and the diversity in activities that may be happening at one time, it is suggested that in addition to the minimum of two adult volunteers there be additional adult volunteers for special activities where required. Club programs for junior and senior high school youth will have a minimum of 2 adult volunteers. Additional adult volunteers should be sought as the group grows to spread the needs of the youth program over a greater number of volunteers. Whenever there is only one adult leader in a classroom with children, the door will remain slightly open or there will be a window allowing anyone passing to look in without interrupting the teaching process.

Nursery

The church nursery is an important aspect of our children's ministry and as such we seek to provide the best care for our children. The following guidelines are in place to make the nursery a safe place for young children. There will be a minimum of two adults in the nursery when children are in the room. When there are more than 3 infants or 5 toddlers, additional helpers are to be recruited to assist in the care

of the children. When there is only one baby/toddler in the nursery on a Sunday morning, there will be two volunteers in the nursery, one of which must be an adult. The second nursery worker may be a teenager or an adult. When there are two nursery workers in the same family there must be another adult present in the nursery.

When toddlers require trips to the bathroom, a nursery worker must supervise the children in the washroom. To lessen the work of the nursery workers, parents of children who use the washroom are encouraged to take their child(ren) to the washroom prior to leaving them in the nursery. The change table must be located where the child being changed can be easily seen by another nursery worker, or two workers should be present in the room where the change table is located. Nursery workers are not to let children leave the nursery until a designated adult arrives to get their child(ren).

Nursery toys should be inspected and either be replaced or repaired if damaged. Toys should be cleaned at regular intervals. All toys in the nursery rooms must be appropriate for infants and toddlers. Those toys and activities that are appropriate only for toddlers must be kept out of reach from infants. All nursery furniture and toys must be appropriate for infants or toddlers. Furniture and bedding should be cleaned at regular intervals in addition to when they are dirty.

Occasionally, a nursery ministry is required for activities in the church other than the regular Sunday morning service. The following guidelines are for such events, in addition to the above procedures.

The nursery facilities are designed for children age 3 and under. Parents are requested not to send children over the age of 3 to the nursery rooms. This will allow the nursery to be kept clean and safe for younger children. There must be a minimum of 2 care givers with the children at all times, one of whom must be an adult. The nursery must be checked by the person responsible for booking the child care prior to the beginning of the event. If there are not enough care givers for the adult-to-child ratio, the person responsible for the booking must stay in the nursery department. Snacks will consist of food which is provided in the nursery cupboard or that food which is provided by the parent for their child only. Nursery workers for the event must note the names of children and any particular medical information that is needed for a particular child (i.e. food allergies, asthma, etc.). Reminder: Do not let children leave the nursery department until a designated adult arrives to pick them up.

Record Keeping

Complete records are to be kept for each Sunday School class, club program and nursery. These records are to include the names of children, addresses, phone numbers, parent name(s) and any allergy/medical information including health card numbers, that are important for leaders to know. The records are to be handed into the church office at the end of each class/club season. They will be filed in the office in their original form under the title of each class/group. The files will be kept for a period of 30 years. An accurate sign-in procedure will be maintained for each child in the nursery and preschool department(s), recording the child's name, parent's name(s) and parent location during the service or meeting. Special needs of a child should be noted on the sign-in sheet. Lists of classroom/club/nursery attendance are to be maintained each week. The names of leaders/volunteers are to be noted each week as well.

Restrooms

Parents are encouraged to take their children to the washroom prior to the beginning of the service. Should a child need to go to the washroom during the service, parents are encouraged to go with the child. No child should be sent to the washroom alone. If parents determine a child to be old enough to go to the washroom without an adult, it is recommended that they send two older children together. Parents/Guardians must take the responsibility to monitor their children. When this is not possible, it is recommended that the child use the washrooms located nearest to the sanctuary/meeting room. Sunday School teachers of children under the age of 10 are encouraged to have the whole class stop at the washrooms on the way to the classroom, remain at the washroom area until everyone is finished and then proceed to the classroom. Sunday School teachers of children over the age of 10 are asked to send children in pairs to the washroom, should it be required.

Sleepovers

Club programs occasionally will hold sleep-over events or camping weekends. These events require additional supervision considerations. Groups which are co-ed must have adequate adult supervisors of both genders. The supervisors should not all be members of the same family. Additional adults may be recruited for the event. A minimum of 2 female adult supervisors and 2 male adult supervisors is suggested. Groups where children are all of the same gender and the leadership is the same gender should provide the same number of adult supervisors as during a club meeting. Groups where children are all of the same gender, but the leadership is comprised of the opposite gender, should provide a minimum of two adult leaders of the same gender as the children.

Sick Children

Children who are not feeling well should not be received into the nursery department or classroom. Some signs of illness are unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhoea, inflamed mouth and throat, complaining of sore ears or throat, and rash (other than diaper rash). Children with these or similar symptoms should be returned to their parent(s) or guardian(s).

Emergencies

Workers are not to give or apply any medications to children except for bandages for minor cuts/abrasions, or ice packs for bumps. If a child needs medication, the parent must administer it. No medications will be left in the nursery department or any classroom with the following exception: children who carry inhalers for asthma or medication for serious allergies.

In the event that an older child who is a diabetic requires sugar, hard candies will be kept on hand in the classroom and when required one can be given to a diabetic child while parents/guardians are called. An older child is defined as over the age of 12.

Emergency procedures in the event of a fire will be reviewed semi-annually and when new volunteers are added. Workers will be trained in these procedures. Evacuation procedures are to be posted in each room. First Aid boxes will be kept on hand and all workers are to review their locations and contents in the early fall and early spring terms. Those workers for the summer activities will review the locations and contents as a part of their ministry preparation annually.

Parties and Field Trips

Children's programs are encouraged to provide opportunities for the group to go outside of the church building and into the community around. The community provides a variety of outing possibilities to enhance the curriculum being taught in a program and to serve the community. The following are procedures for outings and parties which are off the church property. There must be sufficient adult supervision at all outings. This would include the regular leaders within a program and parents of the children or approved volunteers. Parents helping with the outing do not need to fill out a <Church Name> *Children's Ministry Information Form*.

All outings must have a signed and dated parental waiver from each parent/guardian. The waiver must state the nature of the outing, the time of departure and return, the destination (including the name of the host, address and phone number) the mode of transportation and the cost to the child, if any. When an outing involves transportation, the leaders should leave a list of the drivers' names, licence numbers and children in particular vehicles. This list should be left in the church office on the bulletin board where it can easily be found. Once a child has been assigned to a particular vehicle, he/she is not to switch vehicles. Parties held in homes must provide additional non-related adult supervision when the children are present in the home.

Worker Behaviour

Workers must always be above reproach in their words and conduct. They are to behave in a godly manner demonstrating Christian conduct, respect, honesty and trustworthiness. All workers must fill out and keep up-to-date a <Church Name> *Children's Ministry Information Form*. This form is to be reviewed annually.

Workers must not in any way be involved in any of the following activities with older children: extended hugging, kissing, sitting on a lap, inappropriate touching or being alone with a child. In the event that a child approaches an adult leader with the intent to hug or kiss, or unexpectedly does so, the adult leader should accept the affection, but should as quickly as possible, in a non-rejecting manner, encourage a more appropriate form of physical contact. Appropriate expressions for ages 0 - 3 include picking up the child, comforting the child, holding the hand of child, changing diapers. Appropriate physical contact with children ages 4+ could include a handshake, pat on the back, quick hug of encouragement with hands located in shoulder area, and a 'high five'.

Workers who are not feeling well should not lead a group of children. Notification, if possible, to a team member(s) should happen as soon as possible so that other workers can step in and assist in the supervision of children. When notification is not possible until the last minute, adjustments should be made in the program to allow for doors to be open and the group meeting to take place in a higher traffic area where others can check on the group without interrupting the session.

4. Staff and Volunteer Support

It is our goal, not only to provide for the safety of our children and youth, but also to support and provide, to the best of our ability, a system of procedures that will protect the staff and volunteers from being falsely accused of wrongful acts. This is accomplished by:

- a) Screening potential leaders to determine where a volunteer would be best suited to use their gifts, abilities, interests and experiences.
- b) Providing leadership development that will further prepare the volunteer for leadership within a group/class/club.
- c) Adhere to the Procedures in section 3: Personal Safety Procedures.
- d) Maintaining the records of groups/classes/clubs for a period of 30 years in their original form.
- e) Providing coverage for all staff and volunteers under the <Church Name> Insurance Policy with periodic reviews to ensure that the Policy covers all the areas of our church ministry.

When a staff person or volunteer is accused of an alleged wrongful act, the church congregation will provide spiritual and moral support to the person(s) involved.

5. Child Abuse: Prevention and Procedures

Definitions

Physical Abuse: This is the use of physical force by the caretaker (parent/guardian, babysitters, or foster parent) of the child which results in any injury to the child. This injury is sometimes described as a non-accidental injury by health professionals.

Physical Neglect: This is the chronic or episodic withholding of necessary or essential physical care from the child with resulting injury or damage to the child. Necessary physical care can include food, nutrition, shelter, clothing, medical care, safety, supervision, sensory stimulation (particularly to young infants).

Emotional Abuse: This is the acting out by the parent or caretaker of the child of their negative or ambiguous feelings towards the child, resulting in some degree of emotional damage to the child. This kind of behaviour may consist of constant chastising, belittling, verbal tirades, ridicule, humiliation, or the out and out rejection of the child's sense of self-worth and dignity.

Emotional Neglect: This is the chronic or episodic withholding of necessary emotional care and support from the child which results in some degree of emotional damage to the child. This kind of neglect might consist of withholding affection and love from the child; it might also include the withholding of affirmations of the child's self-worth, trust and belongingness. In extreme forms, emotional neglect can involve the complete withdrawal of any verbal and/or non-verbal interactions with the child, manifesting the complete rejection of the child.

Sexual Abuse: This is the sexual exploitation of a child by a caretaker or other family member, or any adult, resulting in damage or injury to the child sexually, either psychologically or physically. Forms of sexual exploitation include behaviour of a sexual nature, touching of a sexual nature and sexual intercourse.

The Responsibility to Report

Public responsibility to report a child in need of protection CFSA s.72(2)

Every person who believes or suspects on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be in need of protection must report promptly the belief and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society.

Special responsibility imposed on professionals and officials to report abuse CFSA s.72(3)

A professional or official who in the course of his/her duties with respect to a child has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse shall report forthwith the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society even if he/she has already reported a previous incident.

What constitutes 'abuse' for the purpose of professional reporting? CFSA s.72(1)

A child suffers 'abuse' in any of the following circumstances:

- the child has or is at risk to likely suffer physical harm or there is a pattern of neglect either inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by the person's failure to adequately:
 - care and provide for the child, or
 - supervise and protect the child;
- the child has been or is at risk to likely be 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;
- 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 the treatment, or
 - refuses to provide the treatment, or
 - is unavailable to consent to treatment, or
 - is unable to consent to the treatment;
- the child has or is likely to suffer emotional harm or there is a pattern of neglect by the parent or the person having charge of the child, demonstrated through the actions of the child as:
 - serious anxiety, or
 - severe depression, or
 - serious withdrawal, or
 - serious self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, or
 - seriously delayed development
- and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child:
 - does not provide services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm,
 - refuses to provide such services or treatment,
 - is unavailable to consent to such services or treatment,
 - is unable to consent to such services or treatment;
- 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 treatment to remedy or alleviate the condition,
 - refuses to do so,
 - is unavailable to consent to treatment, or
 - is unable to consent to treatment.

- 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;
- the child is less than twelve 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;
- the child is less than twelve years of age 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.

Professional confidentiality CFSA s.72(3),(7),(8)

The professional's duty to report overrides the provisions of any other Provincial statute, specifically, those provisions that would otherwise prohibit disclosure by the professional or official. That is, the professional must report abuse even when the information is supposed to be confidential or privileged.

Protection from liability CFSA s.72(7)

Should civil action be brought against a person who made a report, he/she will be protected unless he/she acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds for his/her belief or suspicion.

How To Report

Reporting abuse: An alleged victim less than eighteen years of age, and alleged perpetrator not acting on behalf of the church.

Any report of abuse by a child to a Sunday School teacher, club leader, person on the pastoral staff or other member of the church will be reported to the local Children's Aid Society (CAS). The report will be made immediately by the person who was initially provided with the information. If there is doubt as to the validity of the information, the report will still be made to the CAS. The decision to investigate the report will be made by the CAS. When a Sunday School teacher, club leader, person on the pastoral staff or other member of the church has reasonable ground to suspect that a child may be suffering from abuse or is at risk to suffer abuse, the person who suspects the abuse will report to the CAS with the information immediately. The decision to investigate will be made by the CAS.

Reporting abuse: An alleged victim less than eighteen years of age, and alleged perpetrator acting on behalf of the church (Sunday School teacher, Nursery Worker, club leader, person on the pastoral staff, etc.).

Any report of abuse within the church will be reported directly to the Children's Aid Society immediately by the person who receives the information. If there is doubt as to the validity of the information the CAS will be notified and the decision to investigate will be left there. When someone in the church suspects that someone who is acting on behalf of the church in a leadership role is behaving abusively towards a child or children, the person with the suspicion will directly report it to the CAS. The CAS will make the decision for further investigation.

The individual who receives the information of abuse from a child or alleged victim, or suspects another person of abuse will then also contact either the chairperson of the Deacons/Elders, the chairperson of the Christian Education Board, or a member of the pastoral staff. The person who has been contacted will then arrange a meeting with the rest of the above mentioned people. If it is appropriate to the situation, the Sunday School superintendent will also be invited to the meeting. This group will meet to assess whether or not it is appropriate for the alleged perpetrator to continue in his/her role within the church at that time. Any further discussion with the parties involved will be done under the direction of the investigating body (CAS).

Reporting abuse: Alleged victim eighteen years of age or older.

The individual who receives the information will encourage the alleged victim to access counselling and protection through the local police and pastoral or counselling services. No one will be informed of the allegations without the consent of the alleged victim. The church will listen to and support the alleged victim but will not take action outside of the church on his/her behalf; that is, the alleged victim must be the individual to lay charges with the police, but the church will provide physical and emotional support during this time if requested.

If the incident involves an alleged perpetrator acting on behalf of the church (Sunday School teachers, club leaders, pastors, etc.), the alleged victim will be informed of the church policy to assess the appropriateness of the alleged perpetrator continuing in his/her role in the church. This assessment will be made at a meeting of the Chair of the Deacons/Elders, the chair of the Christian Education Board, and the pastoral staff. With the knowledge of the alleged victim, one of the above people will be informed for the purpose of contacting the remaining people and coordinating a meeting.

Reporting Accidents/Injuries

Occasionally during the course of regular program activities injury occurs. These may be minor or major in nature. After appropriate support and assistance is given to the injured child or leader, a written Incident Investigation Report should be filled out by the program co-ordinator or appropriate person on the pastoral staff. A description of the incident, contributing factors and the treatment given should be noted. Witnesses to the incident should be listed with addresses and phone numbers for follow-up purposes. The Incident Investigation Reports should be reviewed by the Christian Education Board. A member of the Board should be appointed to investigate the incident and bring recommendations back to the Board to prevent a recurrence of the accident. These Reports are to be kept in the church office for future reference.

DISCLAIMER:

This guide is provided for information purposes only and is not intended as advice to the local church. Information is current only as of the date that the guide was prepared. Readers are advised to seek professional advice for their particular situation.

<Church Name> Incident Investigation Report

Organization: _____

Claimant: Name: _____ **Age:** _____

Date of Incident: _____ **Time:** _____

Description of Incident: _____

Contributing Factors : _____

Medical Treatment: _____

Location of Treatment: _____

Witness: _____ **Age :** _____

Address: _____ **Telephone Number:** _____ **Witness:**

_____ **Age:** _____

Address: _____ **Telephone Number:** _____

Action Taken to Prevent Recurrence:

Legal Counsel: Yes. ____ No. ____

Name of Counsel:

Address:

Investigated by: (Name) _____ **Title :** _____

Signature : _____ **Date:** _____

Review by: (Name) _____ **Date:** _____

Further Comments:

<Church Name> Children's Ministry Information Form

A. Basic Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: Home: _____ Work: _____

Best time to call: Home: _____ Work: _____

B. Ministry

What area(s) would you like to volunteer to become involved? (Check all that apply.)

Teaching Helping Other

Preschool Babysitting Music - instrument

Grades 1 - 3 Nursery Music - vocal

Grades 4 - 6 Preschool Storytelling

Grades 6 - 8 Grades 1 - 6 Crafts

Highschool Grades 6 - 8 Games/Activities

Girl's Club Highschool Other (specify)

Boy's Club Girl's Club Other (specify)

Teen's Group Boy's Club Teen's Group

Why do you want to volunteer in this area? _____

Are you open to attend relevant seminars or workshops and resource materials that our Christian Education Board will be offering on working with the children and program materials? yes / no

C. Experience

What previous experience have you in children/youth ministry? (Be specific.)

D. Personal Data

Are there any conditions or personal circumstances which would hinder you from performing certain types of activities in the position(s) for which you are volunteering? (e.g. allergies, asthma, diabetes, fainting, seizures, unable to lift children, etc.)

Please read and sign the following statement.

I have read and agree to adhere to the best of my ability, the Policy and Procedures Regarding Child Safety.

Date Signature

References:

List two persons not related to you who can comment on your suitability for this ministry.

Name Address Telephone How long?

For: _____ Position: _____

Reference: _____ Phone: _____

My name is (reference checker). I am phoning to obtain a reference for (volunteer's name) who has expressed an interest in the volunteer position of _____ at (Name of Church).

He/she has given us your name as someone who would be familiar with his/her qualifications for this position.

1. What is your relationship to this person (work, social, volunteer, etc.)? _____

2. How long have you known him/her _____

3. What knowledge do you have of this person's commitment to Jesus Christ?

4. Have you ever worked with this person in ministry? Please specify in what area(s).

5. What characteristics would enable this person to fulfill this position?

6. Do you have any concerns relating to this person being involved in this ministry?

7. Additional comments regarding suitability for ministry:

8. Do you affirm this person for ministry? _____

Reference Checker Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____