



# Safe Church Policy



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This policy reflects the mission of Safe Church Ministry:  
To build communities where the value of each person is honored; where people are free to worship and grow free from abuse; and when abuse has occurred, the response is compassion and justice that foster healing.

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## 1. Introduction

### A. Vision:

Worship God – Mirror Christ – Embrace All is the mission statement of the Terrace Christian Reformed Church and this SAFE Church policy's vision flows from this statement in that we condemn all forms of abuse. The church is responsible for being a safe community that confronts sin, particularly the sin of abuse and this policy reflects the commitment to take positive steps to make this congregation safe for all persons.

### B. Scope:

This policy is intended to increase our awareness and understanding of all forms of abuse and therefore implement steps for prevention. Additionally, to outline the procedures by which to promote safety in all ministry programs and to also respond appropriately to any suspicions or allegations of abuse, including responding in love to all parties involved.

### C. Purpose of this Policy:

The Church has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure and safe environment for adults and children participating in its programs and initiatives. This policy is intended to assist our church staff and volunteer staff in:

1. protecting the vulnerable person from abuse
2. protecting staff and volunteers from false accusations, litigation, loss of ministry/career
3. protecting the Church from litigation and loss of testimony
4. to educate its members, adherents and others around the issue of safety and abuse to recognize the signs, responds appropriately, support the survivor and remain accountable to each other for our actions.
5. To ensure if a report of abuse involves criminal charges that the victim be protected and that the perpetrator be brought to justice

Although implementation of every item will not guarantee that abuse will be prevented in our church programs, it is hoped that these policies will further the reality of our Church as a "sanctuary" and a place of ministry. Abuse of anyone must be condemned and eradicated from the Church's organization.

Living with neglect and abuse is a reality for many people, young and old. Studies and statistics today show that the incidence of abuse within the church is equal to that of the general population.

**This policy will be reviewed annually and any necessary changes will be made at the recommendation of the local Safe Church Team.**

## 2. Definitions:

### A. Misconduct

As a church, we are committed to holding our leaders and volunteers to the highest standard of behavior. Therefore, the following definitions of abuse<sup>1</sup> go beyond legal definitions to include any form of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, misuse of spiritual authority, sexually inappropriate behavior, neglect, and abuse of office. These are behaviors that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers, and they taint the office held by the offender.

#### 1. Physical Misconduct is:

- a. Threatened harm or non-accidental injury inflicted on a minor or vulnerable adult, or
- b. Offensive or harmful contact with an adult;
- c. Physical misconduct is sometimes a single event, but more often a chronic pattern of interacting with a minor or an adult.

#### 2. Sexual Misconduct is:

- a. Exploiting or grooming (preparing) a minor or an adult – regardless of consent or circumstances – for the purpose of sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy with the result of either sexual gratification or power and control over the minor and/or adult;
- b. Unwelcome touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between co-workers, co-volunteers, or
- c. Sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between a supervisor and a subordinate who serve together in a church program or church ministry.
- d. The development of or the attempt of a ministry leader to develop a sexual or emotional relationship with a participant in the ministries of the church.

#### 3. Emotional Misconduct is:

A pattern of behavior in which a person insults, humiliates, and manipulates an individual or group in order to establish or maintain control over them. Emotional

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<sup>1</sup> The following definitions are taken from the guidelines approved by CRCNA's Synod 2010 and the COD 2022. A church may also want to include provincial definitions of abuse in their policy. In this policy, we have included them in **Appendix A**.

misconduct includes:

- Threatening a person's safety, property, or loved ones;
- Isolating a person from family, friends, and acquaintances;
- Demeaning, bullying, belittling, shaming, or humiliating a person;
- Delivering constant criticism; or
- Emotionally blackmailing or harassing a person.

#### 4. Spiritual Misconduct is:

A form of emotional and psychological abuse, characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behavior in a religious context. Spiritual misconduct may include:

- manipulation and exploitation by appeal to religious convictions and beliefs,
- censorship of decision making,
- requirements for secrecy and silence,
- coercion to conform [inability to ask questions]
- requirement of obedience to the abuser
- the suggestion that the abuser holds a 'divine' position
- isolation as a means of punishment.

## B. Concepts of Abuse of Power

**Power:**Power is the ability to influence or affect an outcome. We all have power as human beings; some of us are given more power as a result of our role or our status within a community. When power is stewarded well, it brings flourishing to all people as an expression of the shalom of the kingdom of God.

**Abuse of power: Abuse of power is misusing power to harm another person, or using power and influence for personal gain at the expense of another person. Power can be used to harm another person intentionally or through ignorance, subtly or overtly, to advance one's own desires without regard for the needs or desires of others in ways that disturb the flourishing of others. At the core of all types of abuse are behaviors related to acquiring,** spiritual authority over other volunteers or members of the church.

maintaining, and misusing power and control. The same power dynamics show up in all types of abuse, whether it be sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, or spiritual abuse.

## C. Position Titles

**Ministry Staff Leader/Pastor:** Any paid staff, pastor, or director who has a position of spiritual authority over other volunteers or members of the church.

**Ministry Leader:** Any person, paid or volunteer, ordained or unordained, in a position of leadership over an area or aspect of ministry in the Terrace CRC SAFE Policy (This could include elders, deacons, Sunday School leaders, youth leaders, Community Co-ordinator etc.)

**Adult Volunteers** are any adults contributing to any of the youth and children's ministries, programs, committees or initiatives under the umbrella of TCRC

**Minors** A youth between the ages of 13-18 who assists a helper in a program

**Helpers** are minors or adults volunteering in the children and youth ministries, programs, committees or initiatives under the umbrella of TCRC and assist under the supervision of someone else

**Hall Monitor:** A volunteer specifically tasked with monitoring the fellowship hall while the nursery and Sunday School are running during the entire worship service.

Full duties listed in appendix I.

**Child:** Children 0 - 10 years of age.

**Youth:** Children from 11 to 18 years of age.

**Vulnerable Adult:** A person over the age of 18 who is unable to protect himself or herself from abuse, neglect, or exploitation because of a mental or physical impairment or advanced age.

**TCRC** refers to the Terrace Christian Reformed Church

**SCT** refers to the Safe Church Team

### 3. General Guidelines and Expectations of Ministry Leaders

- A. **Volunteers must be members or adherents of the church having demonstrated a commitment to the church for at least six (6) months before being called into service and who have agreed to be subject to the authority of the church as set out in this policy of the TCRC. Volunteers who can provide a satisfactory reference from their former church pastor or church council may be considered for immediate service.**
- B. All volunteers and staff must comply with the TCRC's Abuse Prevention Policy. A volunteer or staff person who refuses to follow these policies may be required to relinquish his or her responsibility in church programs or initiatives. **A history of a perpetrator of abuse or unsuitable personality characteristics will restrict them from working with children and youth at the discretion of TCRC council and the local SCT.**

- C. All volunteers and staff involved in children and youth ministries, and where possible other volunteers, will be required to attend a yearly, educational seminar conducted by the local SCT. This seminar will include a review of the TCRC'S Abuse Prevention Policies.
- D. Each ministry leader shall sign and commit to conducting themselves according to the Code of Conduct (see [Appendix E](#)). The SCT will keep a signed copy of the Code of Conduct for each ministry leader on file.
- E. Each ministry volunteer and helper shall sign and commit to conducting themselves according to the Code of Ethics & Compliance for Volunteers (see [Appendix F](#)). The SCT will keep a signed copy of the Code of Ethics for each volunteer on file.
- F. All ministry staff leaders/pastors shall commit to participating in abuse of power training within 12 months of being hired as well as a refresher course every 3 years (see Safe Church Ministry for abuse of power training opportunities).
- G. All ministry staff leaders/pastors and adult volunteers will agree to a criminal background check, and Central Registry/Child Abuse registry check at the beginning of their time of service. Background checks will be refreshed every 5 years as per the Government of British Columbia's Ministry of Justice criminal records division process
- H. Any Ministry leaders and adult volunteers who have a criminal history disclosed will have that history reviewed by the SCT and will be brought to the Terrace CRC council for consideration and determination of conditions to be set for the individual to be approved as a volunteer.
- I. All ministry leaders, adult volunteers, and helpers must attend a yearly training session on the Safe Church Policy. Training sessions will be held at the beginning of each church program year and thereafter as needed.
- J. Topics related to abuse prevention, healthy boundaries, and support for survivors will be addressed at least annually in Sunday school classes, sermons, newsletters, prayers, and other areas of church life.
- K. All ministry leaders and volunteer leaders are required to report any suspected abuse of a minor (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect) to the civil authorities. For more guidance, see "Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse from a Child" in [Appendix C](#).
- L. All ministry leaders and volunteer leaders are required to use their access to the church internet and technologies belonging to the church (computers, laptops, cell phones, etc.) in ways that are legal, reflect godly conduct, and conform to network etiquette, laws and courtesies.
- M. Information about domestic violence and about where to get help in situations of domestic violence is posted in the bathrooms.



- N. The name and contact information of the person to whom to report abuse or suspected abuse will be posted in public and visible places. This may include on a bulletin board, in the church newsletter, on the church website, and/or in the church office.

#### **4. General Guidelines Pertaining To Criteria For Safe Supervision of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

##### **A. Two-Adult Rule & The Rule of Three:**

At all church-sponsored functions involving the supervision of children, youth, or vulnerable adults, either the *Two Adult Rule* or the *Rule of Three* will be practiced. No staff or volunteers should be alone with a single child, youth, or vulnerable adult in locations where they cannot be clearly observed by others.

1. **The *Two-Adult Rule*:** At least two, unrelated, screened adults must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
  
2. **The *Rule of Three*:**
  - a. When there is not a capacity to abide by the *Two-Adult Rule*, it may be acceptable to use *The Rule of Three*: At least three individuals must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. One of the three must be a screened adult. If the child is under 6 years of age, the second individual must be at least 13 years of age.
  - b. When the *Rule of Three* is used there must be another unrelated screened adult volunteer nearby or in proximity monitoring the group. Additionally, there should be a clear and unobstructed view into the room/space where the supervision is taking place.
  - c. The hall monitor will be required to assist children attending Sunday School who need help with the bathroom, (if the hall monitor is not comfortable with assisting a child in the restroom, please let the Sunday School Teacher or nursery attendant know); to help children attending Sunday School to locate their guardian and; to ensure that children do not leave the building unattended during the worship service. The hall monitor will also offer aid to any disabled or elderly person as requested if they are in the fellowship hall during the worship service. Please see appendix I for a full description of the duties of the hall monitor.

## **B. One-to-One Meetings:**

In children and youth ministry, there are times when a ministry leader or volunteer leader seeks to meet one-to-one with a youth or child. Because the imbalance of power is particularly pronounced when a child or youth is alone with an adult, it is crucial that ministry leaders and volunteer leaders follow safe protocols.

1. When possible, the meeting should only take place between a student and ministry leader/volunteer of the same gender.
2. The meeting should take place in a public place (i.e. restaurant, coffee shop, bookstore, etc.) with the permission and knowledge of the parents.
3. The ministry leader or volunteer should notify the director of the ministry or another designated church leader and also record the meeting in a log that is reviewed monthly by the director or supervisor of the ministry.

## **C. Transportation:**

1. Any person who transports a child or youth for any church sponsored event must be 19 or older, have signed the Code of Ethics (see appendix F) and a copy of current insurance and driver's license on file.
2. To transport children or youth, there must be an adequate safety belt for each passenger and they will be worn any time the car is moving.
3. Transportation by one adult leader of one minor should be avoided. In the event that it is unavoidable, the following provisions must take place:
  - a. A clear consent from the parents/guardians of the child or youth is received;
  - b. A clear communication with the youth director or designated volunteer leader when the adult leader leaves with the child or youth;
  - c. A clear communication notifying the staff that the child/youth arrived safely and is no longer under their care or supervision.

## **D. Discipline:**

When children or youth act out during church events, ministry leaders and volunteers will take care to address the misbehavior in ways that are consistent with the following guidelines:

1. Corporal punishment is not permitted (spanking, pinching, and hitting).
2. Parents are to be informed whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehavior develops.
3. An aide or parent should be involved in classrooms where misbehavior is an ongoing problem.
4. Appropriate types of discipline are to be reviewed with volunteers/staff annually.
5. Whenever possible, leaders should address disruptive behavior by:
  - redirecting the child/youth to another activity

- helping the child/youth focus on a more acceptable behavior
- taking the child/youth aside if another adult volunteer/staff person is available to assist

**E. Guidelines for Using Electronic Communication (Social Media Messaging, Email, or Texting):**

Electronic communication (email and texts) and use of social media has become the preferred means for communication for many people, especially youth. While seeking to use technology to encourage good connections between ministry leaders/volunteers and youth, it is also important to provide guidelines that safeguard youth from potential abuse. To that end, all ministry staff leaders and volunteers will abide by the following Electronic Communication and Social Media Usage policy in their interactions with youth and children.

1. Communication should not take place with young people between the hours of 9:00 pm and 7:00 am or on staff members' days off, unless in an emergency.
2. Once permission is given via the annual media release/consent form (see Appendix H), staff and volunteers (small group leaders, mentors, coaches and children's group leaders) can hold email addresses for young people in their care.
3. Emails, messages, texts, or phone calls should be short and should usually be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event.
4. Ongoing conversations or lengthy personal communications should not be done through email or text.
5. If a digital communication raises any child protection concerns, the staff or volunteer will inform their Supervisor.
6. When a volunteer leaves a ministry involving youth due to misconduct of any kind, staff should request that this volunteer not contact any youth - and that all youth contact information must be removed from that adult volunteer's devices.

**F. Guidelines for Social Media Groups:**

Each ministry group/class may have a Social Media (Facebook/Instagram) group provided they follow the guidelines below:

1. The group must be "closed" or "private" so that it is not public information. Privacy settings on photographs should be set to ensure that only members of the group see them.

2. Ministry staff/volunteers may not use any image of a child or youth without written consent of the parents and only in ways that protect the value and dignity of those pictured.
3. The group must be monitored by at least two staff/volunteers that have admin rights.
4. Young people, staff, and volunteers may become a member of this group provided they are 13 or over.
5. While direct 1:1 messages should be avoided between youth and volunteer leaders, communication can occur openly through comments and posts on the page.
6. Church events can be posted on the page.
7. Church volunteers are forbidden to post or distribute personal identifiable information of any child under the age of eighteen. Personal identifiable information includes but is not limited to: full name, home address, email address, telephone number or any information that would allow someone to identify or contact a child or that would jeopardize their safety or well-being in any way.
8. As an exception to this policy, a child whose parent or other legally responsible adult has signed a media release/consent form (See Appendix G) may be identified by name in photographs or videos posted to an official social media account.

## **5. Program-specific Guidelines for Abuse Prevention of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

### **A. Nursery Guidelines Pertaining To Child Abuse Prevention**

These nursery guidelines are designed to protect children from harm while they are placed in the care of nursery volunteers during church-related events.

1. Only adults who are screened and have completed the Safe Church policy training sessions will be able to serve as the adult volunteer in the nursery. On a particular Sunday, the assigned adult nursery volunteers will be unrelated.
2. No child should be left unattended in the nursery at any time.
3. Nursery volunteers will sign in each child on the designated form when they arrive in the nursery.
4. Posted diaper changing procedures should be followed for infants. Youth helpers are

not to change diapers. When changing a diaper, it should be done at the diapering station and within eyesight of other caregivers. An adult supervisor should provide minimal assistance for a child who is able to use the bathroom. Only one child should use the bathroom at a time.

5. Accidents or illnesses must be reported immediately to the child's parent/guardian. An Accident or Incident Report (Appendix H) should be filled out in case of accident or injury, one copy for the child's parents, and one for the Nursery Coordinator.
6. Children in infant or toddler nurseries are to be picked up only by their parents, or by the person who brought them unless prior arrangements have been made. They will be dismissed after proper identification is made, either because the Nursery Supervisor knows the parent or upon return of the coordinating numbered token.

## **B. Guidelines For Children's Worship And Church School On Sundays**

1. The Circle of Grace or a similar program teaching body safety will be provided for one to four Sundays every 2<sup>nd</sup> year for all children and youth. This training will be appropriate to the child's age group.
2. Bathroom Procedures:
  - a. Nursery: Children under the age of 3 years must be accompanied to the bathroom, preferably by an adult nursery volunteer. The bathroom door must be left ajar. If the child requires assistance in the bathroom stall, the stall door must be left ajar as well. In order to ensure the rule of three, the hall monitor will act as the second adult monitor for the nursery when one adult volunteer is absent from the nursery to assist a child in the bathroom.
  - b. Sunday School: Children under the age of 5 years must be accompanied to the bathroom, preferably by an adult volunteer. The bathroom door must be left ajar. If the child requires assistance in the bathroom stall, the stall door must be left ajar as well. Children 5 years or older may go to the bathroom unaccompanied. The hall monitor will again provide the additional adult monitoring if a Sunday School volunteer is teaching alone or has only a minor helper, to ensure the rule of three/two adult rule is being observed and to ensure children move from the Sunday School classroom to the bathroom safely.
3. Dismissal Policy:
  - a. Children under the age of 5 years must be picked up by a parent or other previously authorized adult. Children 5 years or older may be dismissed at the end of the class.

b. No child shall be removed or allowed to leave a supervised area except for illness of other compelling reason. When leaving, the child must be accompanied by an approved adult.

### **C. Guidelines for Middle and High School Programs.**

1. Parents/guardians must return the Participation/Release Form (Appendix G) to the director of youth programming at the beginning of each church program year. Program leaders will inform parents of relevant policies either via a letter or a parent meeting.
2. For scheduled classes and events:
  - a. At programs and functions involving the supervision of youth, at least three individuals must be present in each separate classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area. In each such case, at least one of the three individuals must be a screened adult.
  - b. During scheduled classes or events, group leaders should know where the youth are at all times.
  - c. If a young person leaves an event without permission, the parents/guardian will be called immediately.

## **6. Guidelines for Pastoral Visitation**

Formal pastoral care is care carried out by church representatives - ministers, elders, deacons, or a pastoral care team, on behalf of the church community. Such care is an important ministry of the church, reflecting the love, compassion, and presence of Christ to those who participate in the ministries of the church.

Some forms of pastoral care involve one-on-one visitation, such as with those who are experiencing a time of suffering or grief, with those who are housebound, or with those in the hospital. In these cases, pastoral visits are made to offer spiritual friendship, help, support, and contact with the community of faith. These visits may include practical help, giving information, and/or supporting people as they make difficult decisions. Listening well is fundamental to all good pastoral care.

The following guidelines are provided to ensure safe and healthy practices of pastoral visitation:

1. All pastoral care visitors must have taken the annual Safe Church Policy Training and have signed the Code of Conduct.
2. Pastoral care visits should be conducted in the morning, afternoon, or early evening.
3. Ordinarily, two unrelated pastoral care visitors will meet with a congregant when the visit is in a private location.
4. If a pastoral care visitor meets alone 1:1 with a congregant, they must log their visit in an active registry or text or call the Pastoral Care Team Leader (or designated person) before and after the visit.
5. In the interest of confidentiality, all records of pastoral care visits should be kept securely on the church premises. Records should be minimal, including the name of the person visited, the date, and a brief indication of the reason for the visit.
6. When a pastoral care visitor believes the person being visited may have a 'dementia-like' condition, a pastoral care card (with the name of the visitor(s), address of church, and contact info) must be left at the residence.
7. All pastoral care visitors will honor the limits of their role in giving care, referring congregants as the situation requires to the services of counselors, spiritual directors, and others who are better trained and resourced to meet a congregant's needs.
8. The Pastoral Care Team Leader, Safe Church Team Leader, or Council chair is responsible for overseeing that risk is being assessed and these pastoral care guidelines are properly adhered to.

## 7. Responding to Abuse

### A. Reporting/Responding to Disclosures and Allegations of Abuse of Minors or Vulnerable Adults

The following steps are to be followed in cases of suspected abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult. See also [Appendix C](#): Responding to Disclosure of Abuse from a Child and the Safe Church Ministry *Responding to Abuse Toolkit*.

1. All ministry leaders/volunteers who have a reasonable suspicion of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult are responsible to report it within 24 hours to the Child Protective Services 24-hour hotline: 1(800)663-9122. If you are uncertain of whether what you heard or saw constitutes evidence of abuse, consult with a member of SCT. (see [Appendix B](#): Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse for

guidance).

2. If a minor or vulnerable adult is in immediate physical danger (either on church property or off the property) then the police (911) should be notified immediately.
3. The ministry leader/volunteer who suspects abuse should also contact the Safe Church Team leader to fill out an incident report (see [Appendix G: Accident or Incident Report](#)) in order to record their observations and follow-up actions. This documentation will be kept in a confidential, locked location in the church office.
4. Neither the ministry leader/volunteer nor the Safe Church Team leader will try to investigate the abuse concerns. Additionally, they will not seek to notify the alleged offender of the allegations against him or her. These tasks should be left to the police and/or MCFD Child Protection staff.
5. Neither the ministry leader/volunteer nor the Safe Church Team leader will try to investigate the abuse concerns. Additionally, they will not seek to notify the alleged offender of the allegations against him or her. These tasks should be left to the police and/or CPS/CAS.
6. The Safe Church Team leader should inform the pastor and chair of council of the concerns or allegations of abuse. Note that confidentiality is important in all cases of abuse but especially when a minor is involved (see [Appendix D: Confidentiality for protecting confidentiality and need-to-know reporting](#)).
7. If the abuse happened during a church/ministry-sponsored activity or by a ministry leader/volunteer, in addition to ensuring that the police and/or CPS/CAS have been contacted, the Safe Church Team leader shall notify the church's insurance agent and legal counsel.
8. Together with the pastor and the chair of council, the Safe Church Team leader will develop a plan for responding to the abuse in ways that provide care for the one who has been victimized by abuse and respects the dignity of all involved. The plan will include:
  - a. Putting the ministry leader on administrative leave with or without pay (or



suspending a volunteer) for up to 90 days or until the conclusion of the investigation, whichever is sooner.

- b. Providing support and care for the minor and their family. This should be done in a way that puts the needs of the minor and his/her family first.
  - c. Determining who will be the primary contact with the police and/or CPS/CAS.
  - d. Determining how to deal with media inquiries.
  - e. Contacting the classical Safe Church Coordinator and/or the denominational Safe Church Ministry ([safechurchministry@crcna.org](mailto:safechurchministry@crcna.org)) for further counsel.
9. After the accused has been contacted by the authorities and the investigation is underway, the elders will provide an opportunity for the accused to respond to the allegations.
10. If the accused is found guilty or admits guilt, the elders may (1) subject a determined abuser (hereafter abuser) to further suspension, deposition, or termination of employment, or (2) take such other action against the abuser as the circumstances may dictate.
11. Should the determined abuser be an office bearer, the elders will follow the specifications for admonition and discipline in **the Church Order, Articles 82-84**.
12. Subject to the best interest of the person victimized by abuse, the governing body should notify the congregation in writing if they conclude that a church leader has perpetrated abuse. This notice should protect the identity and confidentiality of any innocent parties, including the person who was victimized by abuse. This written communication should be pastoral, succinct, and objectively factual. Referencing public police reports, charges, or court verdicts may be used.
13. If law enforcement decides not to investigate or charge an adult leader of the congregation who has been accused of abusing a child or vulnerable adult, an independent investigation should be considered in consultation with legal counsel and Safe Church Ministry.

## **B. Responding to Allegations of Abuse of Adults:**

If an adult (the claimant) reports abuse to a member of a Safe Church Team, the pastor, or a member of the council, the Safe Church team leader, the pastor, and the elders (or a few

members of the council) will do the following<sup>2</sup>:

1. Assign the claimant an advocate who can walk alongside, support, and represent the claimant throughout the reporting and investigation process.
2. Meet with the claimant and/or the advocate to hear the complaint, the impact it has had on the complainant and what the claimant feels needs to happen for them to feel safe at Terrace CRC again. The claimant may present their testimony orally but should also submit their statement in writing or alternatively, an incident report can be filled out at the meeting and signed by the claimant. The written statement or incident report will be kept in a confidential, locked location in the church office.
3. Suspend the accused from their duties without prejudice until the allegations have been investigated.
4. Based on the information gathered, develop a plan for assessing the veracity of the allegations. Ordinarily, the plan will involve at least one of the following processes:
  - a. An informal response led by a designated investigation team who meets with the accused to follow up on the allegations.<sup>3</sup> The conversation shall include:
    - i. A report of the event as the claimant experienced it
    - ii. An account of how the claimant was impacted by the accused's actions
    - iii. An opportunity for the accused to respond to the allegations
    - iv. A request that the accused not contact the claimant directly until further notice.
    - v. A report of the conversation, detailing the accused's response that is filed with the incident report.
  - b. An advisory panel process exploring the gravity and probability of the allegations of abuse (the classical Safe Church Coordinator or the denominational Safe Church Ministry office is available to help assemble the panel)
  - c. An independent investigation into the allegations of abuse (the denominational Safe Church Ministry office will keep a list of reputable investigators). It is strongly recommended that councils make use of a third party investigator when:
    - i. The accused is a prominent leader in the community or region such that

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<sup>2</sup> Officebearers who participate in following up on allegations of abuse are required to take abuse of power training or abuse awareness training. Safe Church Ministry ([safechurchministry@crcna.org](mailto:safechurchministry@crcna.org)) offers a 60-minute online orientation and training on abuse awareness and response.

<sup>3</sup> This option is only appropriate when both the nature of the incident and/or the harm done are relatively minimal. The claimant must agree to this informal response.

- ii. The accusations consist of multiple victims or multiple jurisdictions;
  - iii. Real or perceived conflicts of interest make impartiality especially elusive.
  - d. If the accused is an office bearer, the elders/council will follow the Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader and include the church visitors in their initial deliberations about the best way forward.
5. Based on the information gathered (and the recommendations of the informal investigation team, the advisory panel or the third party investigators), the Safe Church Team leader, claimant's advocate, pastor, and elders (or a few council members) will determine a plan of action for responding to abuse. If the allegations are found credible, the plan will include:
- a. A determination of appropriate measures of discipline and opportunities for restoration. This could include suspension of church leadership for a period of time, counseling, abuse of power training, mentoring, oversight and accountability, a written apology to the claimant, or if an office bearer is involved, deposition.
  - b. A plan for providing ongoing care and accountability for the accused.
  - c. A plan for providing ongoing care and support for the claimant.
  - d. Provisions for counseling for the claimant.
  - e. If the claimant desires, an opportunity to participate in a restorative conversation with members of the council, members of the church, and/or, the accused (Information on Restorative Circle Processes may be found at [crcna.org/safechurch/restorative](http://crcna.org/safechurch/restorative)).
6. Throughout the process, every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality and dignity of the claimant and the accused.
7. The classical Safe Church Coordinator and the denomination Safe Church Ministry office are available for support, counsel, and resources throughout the process.

## Appendix A: Provincial Definitions

The Province Of British Colombia,has defined child abuse and neglect as the following:

- A. Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is a deliberate assault or action by a person that results in,or likely to result in, physical harm to a child or youth. It includes the use of unreasonable force to discipline a child or youth or prevent a child or youth from harming him/herself or others. The injuries sustained by the child or youth may vary in severity and range from minor bruising, burns, welts or bite marks to major fractures of the bones or skull to, in the most extreme situations, death.
- B. Emotional Harm: This is the most difficult type of harm to recognize. Under the Child, Family and Community Services Act, a child or youth is defined as emotionally harmed if they demonstrate severe:
- Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Withdrawal; or
  - Self-destructive or aggressive behavior

Reason to believe that a child or youth needs protection from being emotionally harmed may arise due to emotional abuse from a parent. This may range from the parent ignoring to habitually humiliating the child or youth to withholding life-sustaining nurturing. Emotional abuse may occur separately from, or along with, other forms of abuse and neglect. Emotional abuse can include a pattern of:

- Scapegoating
- Rejection
- Verbal attacks on the child
- Threats;
- Insults; or
- Humiliation

Emotional harm may also caused by the child or youth living in a situation where there is domestic violence by or towards a person with whom the child or youth resides. Domestic violence may involve physical abuse, threats, verbal insults or psychological abuse such as stalking.

- C. Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse is when a child or youth is used ( or likely to be used) for the sexual gratification of another person. It includes:
- Touching or invitation to touch for sexual purposes:
  - Intercourse (vaginal , oral or anal);
  - Menacing or threatening sexual acts, obscene gestures, obscene communications or stalking;

- Sexual references to the child's or youth's body/behavior by words or gestures:
  - Requests that the child or youth expose their body for sexual purposes;
  - Deliberate exposure of the child or youth to sexual activity or material; and
  - Sexual aspects of organized or ritual abuse.
- D. Sexual Exploitation: Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse that occurs when a child or youth engages in a sexual activity, usually through manipulation or coercion, in exchange for money, drugs, food, shelter or other considerations. Sexual activity includes:
- Performing sexual acts;
  - Sexually explicit activity for entertainment;
  - Involvement with escort or massage parlour services; and
  - Appearing in pornographic images.
- E. Neglect: Neglect is failure to provide for a child's or youth's basic needs. It involves an act of omission by the parent or guardian, resulting in (or likely to provide food, shelter, basic health care, supervision or protection from risks, to the extent that the child's or youth's physical health, development or safety is, or is likely to be, harmed.

## Appendix B: Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse – School Age

**Note:** Children rarely exhibit just one sign indicating that they are the victims of abuse. Some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes, or the after-effect of other kinds of trauma in their lives. Conversely, it is possible for abuse to be taking place without the appearance of any symptoms because of the child's ability to mask or deny what is very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, several symptoms appearing at once *may* be an indication of abuse.

- Complaints of pain, irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom; smearing feces on walls or objects
- Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck; failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort; hiding bruises
- Unusual fears: a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences
- Poor concentration in classroom; inability to focus
- Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviors, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing
- Engaging in self-injury, engaging in excessive masturbation or masturbation in a public setting
- Acting enraged and out of control; expressing anger through destruction
- Shyness or fear about physical touch
- Exhibiting sexual behavior beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in a sexual manner with other children or adults
- Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations; bullying others
- Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions
- Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting
- Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events because of being punished
- Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism
- Hyper-vigilance, excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled
- Preoccupation with fire and setting fires
- Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight

## Appendix C: Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse from a Child

**For informational purposes, the following set of guidelines pertains to information that a child may wish to disclose to an adult.**

1. If a child asks to talk with you at church, provide a room (with a window) in which to speak privately.
2. Listen carefully to what the child tells you and respond in a supportive, nonjudgmental manner. Disclosing abuse is a scary thing for children, and they need to know they are supported.
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 him or her.
4. Avoid asking leading questions. Examples of what you could say: "Can you tell me more?" "Is there anything you need to add?" Do not try to convince the child that the story isn't true or that it didn't happen the way he or she reports it did.
5. Do not attempt to assess the truthfulness of the child's disclosure—that will be for trained professionals to decide. Assure the child you believe him/her and that you care about him/her.
6. Tell the child that whatever happened was not his or her fault and reassure the child that he/she does not deserve to be hurt by anyone.
7. Do not tell or suggest to the child that he or she has been abused.
8. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.
9. Do not promise **not** to tell anyone. Tell the child that you need to find help so the incident can be prevented from happening again.
10. 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 what happened and that they will talk to the child later.
11. Do not ask the child to show you any bruises that are beneath the child's underwear or clothing; observe only those bruises that are accessible.
12. If you feel comfortable doing so, speak to the child and offer support in the following weeks and months.

## Appendix D: Confidentiality

In order to protect the dignity and well-being of any person who has been victimized by abuse, it is important that their identity is kept confidential. The following measures are implemented to protect the privacy of all parties and to ensure that information about any alleged act is limited to essential persons:

- A. Need-to-Know: Those positions in the need-to-know category include the following: chair of council, pastor, the pastoral care elders for the claimant and accused, and the Safe Church Team/Abuse Prevention and Response Team.
- B. Situations of abuse involving minors or vulnerable adults require sensitive care and full transparency with law enforcement investigations. In situations of abuse involving minors or vulnerable adults, there shall be a designated Safe Church Team member, pastor, or elder who consults the CRCNA Safe Church Ministry or a Classis Safe Church Coordinator.
- C. The names and information in any abuse allegations shall be limited to the positions listed in paragraph A. Need to Know on this page. Any request to release names of any involved party must be first cleared by the congregation's legal counsel.
- D. Discussion by Council or Committees of Council shall be conducted without the actual names of involved persons being used. Instead, descriptions such as "reporter", "alleged offender", and "claimant" shall be used.
- E. A liaison between the legal authorities or Child Protective Services/Children's Aid Society and the church staff/council will be appointed.
- F. After law enforcement has officially charged someone of a crime or after a legal decision has been made, there will be a communication outlining ways that the church and community may be able to move forward with respect and responsible ways to process the harm within the congregation and community.



## Appendix E: CRC Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders

As a Ministry Leader, I commit to the following:

### *Confidentiality*

- I will use confidentiality appropriately, which means I will hold in confidence whatever information is not mine to share.
- I will not use information shared with me in confidence in order to elevate my position or to depreciate that of others.
- My use of confidentiality will also be guided by mandatory reporting as required by law.

### *Relational*

- I will speak and act, in all my personal and professional relations, in ways that follow the pattern of Christ, who used his power to serve (1 Pet. 5; Mark 10; Phil. 2; 2 Tim. 4:2). I will conduct myself with respect, love, integrity, and truthfulness toward all—regardless of position, status, race, gender, age, or ability.
- To the best of my ability, I will contribute to an environment of hospitality.

### *Financial*

- I will ensure that funds are used for their intended ministry purposes.
- In all financial matters, including the acceptance of gifts, I will act with scrupulous honesty, transparency, and appropriate accountability.
- I will appropriately use accepted accounting practices and regular reviews and/or audits.

### *Intimate Relationships*

- I will maintain standards and appropriate boundaries in all relationships, which are informed by the Scriptures.
- I will keep all of my professional relationships free from inappropriate emotional and sexual behaviors. This includes not engaging in inappropriate intimate contact or a sexual relationship, unwanted physical contact, sexual comments, gestures, or jokes.
- *Safety*
- I will actively promote a safe environment where all persons are respected and valued, where any form of abuse, bullying, or harassment is neither tolerated nor allowed to take place.
- I will report known or suspected cases of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect of minors to the proper government authorities.
- I will support adults who disclose physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in a way that appropriately empowers the person who has been victimized.

### *Spiritual*

- I will acknowledge the use of Scripture and the Spirit's work in the community of the church and, therefore, refrain from presuming to be the sole "voice of God."

- I will use my position as a way to serve the body of believers, rather than myself, for the common good and the cultivation of the gifts of the Spirit.

*Additional Commitments*

- I will work within my professional competence, especially in counseling situations, and I will refer individuals to other professionals as appropriate.
- I will promote truthfulness, transparency, and honesty in all of my work.
- I will disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest.
- In all that I do, I will seek to use my position, power, and authority prudently and humbly and in non-exploitive ways.
- In the event that I misuse my power, either intentionally or unintentionally, as a ministry leader, I will acknowledge the harm that has been caused and the trust that has been broken, and I will actively seek restoration with justice, compassion, truth, and grace. I will humbly submit to the insight and accountability of others to ensure that I use any power entrusted to me fully in service to Christ.

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

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

## Appendix F: CODE OF ETHICS & COMPLIANCE FOR TCRC VOLUNTEERS

1. Believing that God has called me to serve children or youth in this congregation
2. My priority in volunteering/teaching and /or supervising with children or youth will be to seek their spiritual, emotional, social, and physical welfare.
3. I will respect the child or youth's cultural and ethnic background.
4. I will give the parent(s) full information about the program in which I am leading/supervising or volunteering.
5. I will not harm children or youth in any TCRC ministry programs and will protect them from all types of abuse.
6. 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 per Abuse prevention policy.
7. If I need to talk to a child or youth privately, it will be within sight and sound of another non-related adult.
8. I will answer a child or youth's questions openly and honestly.
9. I will work with the children or youth to set guidelines for acceptable behaviour 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.
10. If a child or youth indicates distress, I will offer comfort and support and will follow up with the ministry leader.
11. I will regularly pray for each child or youth.
12. 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.
13. I have read, understood and commit to follow and act per Terrace Christian Reformed Church policies as outlines in the Safe Church and Abuse Prevention Policy.

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

Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Position: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Appendix G: PARTICIPATION & RELEASE FORM:**

We (I) give permission for our (my) child(ren), \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in TCRC youth ministry events during the months of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. In addition, we (I) hereby agree to hold harmless the church or any person in its organization for the result of any negligent, willful, or intentional acts of our (my) child(ren) which requires repair and/or reimbursement of expenses. Further, authorization and permission are given to TCRC to furnish the above participant with any necessary food, lodging, and transportation to, from, and during any event which may or may not include student-driven vehicles. While our (my) child is attending an event, we (I) understand and accept that TCRC will provide supervision. Further, we (I), the parent(s)/guardian(s) of said participant(s), hereby grant permission to the pastor, youth leader, or an adult volunteer acting on the child's behalf to authorize medical treatment, including but not limited to emergency surgery or medical treatment. In the event of sickness or injury to our (my) child(ren), we (I) assume responsibility for all medical bills, if any occur.

Further, if it is necessary for our (my) child(ren) to return home due to medical reasons or disciplinary action, we (I) assume all transportation costs.

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital insurance? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Insurance company: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy and Group Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact (name and phone #): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Youth: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PHOTO & MEDIA RELEASE FORM**

I grant permission to TCRC to use photos, videos, or other media of my children in the following ways: TCRC website, Facebook page, PowerPoint presentations, and bulletin boards.

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix H: ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT REPORT**

**Name of Person(s) Involved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address of Person(s) Involved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email/Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date and Time of Incident:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Parent(s)/Guardian, if applicable:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Description of Accident/Incident (i.e., how injured, others involved, type of injury, etc.):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Action Taken:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Report Submitted by:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Report Reviewed by Policy Administrator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this form to the SCT**

## APPENDIX I: DUTIES OF THE HALL MONITOR

### **1. The hall monitor must be in the fellowship hall for the full service**

2. Will ensure both set of sanctuary doors are closed after the children leave the sanctuary for Sunday School
3. Will monitor the Sunday School classes while in session by visually checking in on each classroom. If the Sunday School class door is open, do not disturb the class, stand outside the door and listen for a few minutes to check on the class. If the door is closed, then do open the door to do your check. Please do 3 check ins to each class during the service.
4. Will monitor the nursery while providing care to children by doing visual check ins. In order to be least intrusive the door from the kitchen to the nursery is usually open and since this entry for checks is less disruptive to the children, especially those easily disrupted. Check ins to the nursery should be done 3 times if the nursery is not fully staffed, that is, less than 3 people. Please be prepared to assist nursery attendants if they request it.
5. Will not be required to deal with youths or adults being unruly or disruptive outside the sanctuary during the service. The focus of the hall monitor is the safety of all children. If anyone is behaving in a manner which could be a safety concern, immediately call on a council member and/or usher and /or a member of the congregation you are familiar with.
6. Will bring any questions or concerns to the attention of Council or the Safe Church committee.

This policy has been reviewed and approved by church council on \_\_\_\_\_.

( date)

Signatures of council: (Please print your name and sign)