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<i>Mission: Living Out God's Transforming Love</i>	

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INTRODUCTION

► Understanding the Need

- The issue of abuse is not a new one and has rapidly become a leading area of concern for organizations responsible for the care and safety of children.
- Increasingly it has surfaced and is now the single most important issue facing insurance companies.
- Abuse is not limited in its scope, affecting organizations regardless of size, function or geography. And regrettably, it is also present in our churches.
- Churches can be vulnerable places because they are natural places of trust but may lack the volunteer screening practices and training that ensure safe environments.
- Local church leaders have a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to develop clear policies and procedures that will protect children, youth and volunteers who participate in church ministries.

► Our Responsibility/Spiritual

- In the church, we recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care and we take our responsibility to them seriously. The Scriptures say:

So Jesus called a child to come and stand in front of them, and said, "I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself and becomes like this child. And whoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes me."

If anyone should cause one of these little ones to lose his faith in me, it would be better for that person to have a large millstone tied around his neck and be drowned in the deep sea. How terrible for the world that there are things that make people lose their faith! Such things will always happen – but how terrible for the one who causes them!"

Matthew 18:2-7 Good News Translation

- These policies and procedures are set forth to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we can authentically and effectively point children to Jesus. We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and teaching in our ministry to children. Our guidelines exist to protect every age level and to promote spiritual growth.

► Our Responsibility/Legal

- Ensuring that the organization is a safe place for children is a legal requirement.
- Organizations have a legal responsibility to ensure that a plan for protection is in place.
- Insurance companies require this same level of diligence in order to provide financial coverage.
- Child abuse is a criminal offence as well as a violation of human conscience and dignity. It is a violation of God's moral law within the trusted context of relationship. The emotional, physical and spiritual trauma to victims, the destructive consequences for abusers and the devastating effects on the credibility of the church ministry and the name of Christ make it essential that the church take all appropriate steps to aid in the prevention of abuse.ⁱ

► Understanding Child Abuse

1. "Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare."²
2. Abuse is categorized as physical, emotional, verbal, sexual or neglect.
 - a. **Physical abuse** means any physical force or action which results in non-accidental injury to a child and which exceeds that which could be considered reasonable discipline.
 - b. **Emotional abuse** is the failure to provide the praise, love, nurturing and security essential to the psychological and social development of a child. This neglect is likely to produce long-term serious emotional disorder.
 - c. **Verbal abuse** is difficult to specify due to the ongoing nature of intimidation and manipulation. It destroys an individual's self-worth and esteem.
 - d. **Sexual abuse** means any sexual exploitation of a child, whether consensual or not, which includes touching or any behaviour of a sexual nature toward a child. In determining whether this behaviour is of a sexual nature, one should ask whether a reasonable observer, looking at the behaviour in its context, would conclude that it is. This would exclude normal affectionate behaviour towards children and normal health or hygiene care.³ (Appendix 2)
 - e. **Neglect** means the failure of those responsible for the care of the child to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs of a child to an extent that the child's health, development or safety is endangered.⁴

POLICY PROCEDURES

Safety and security are primary concerns for the children and families who attend our church. At the same time, we are also concerned for those who volunteer in Kids' Park. We have developed these procedures for the protection of our children and our volunteers. All documentation is confidential and is kept in a secure location.

► Volunteer Requirements

1. Application Form

A **Ministry Volunteer Application** must be completed for all positions involving ministry to children.

2. References

Volunteers are asked to submit three (3) references from individuals who could provide the church with a clear picture of their ability to work with children. References cannot come from relatives but may be obtained from an employer, pastor, close friend or teacher. Reference checks are conducted by telephone, in person or by email.

3. Interview

Face to face interviews may be conducted by the Ministry Lead or an individual approved by the church leadership.

4. Police Records Check (Canadian Police Information Clearance) and Vulnerable Sector Clearance (18 years and older)

A Police Check voucher will be emailed to the prospective volunteer directly from the police service. They will also be provided with a **Request Letter** which states their intent to serve as a volunteer in Kids' Park. This is to be uploaded when they are completing their police check application online. **These must be renewed every 3 years.** If the volunteer has a valid PIC through another organization, it can be shared with OPCC in place of undergoing a new application.

5. OPCC Safe Church Guideline Completion (workshop or read-thru with quiz)

A **'Safe Church' Guideline Workshop** will be offered on an ongoing basis to equip volunteers with an understanding of ministry to children and the policies that ensure a safe and secure environment at OPCC. All new ministry leaders and those who need to refresh (every 3 years) should attend. For any who are unable to attend the workshop, at the discretion of the Ministry leader and Senior Pastor, an alternative (*Safe Church Guidelines booklet and online quiz*) to an in person workshop may be provided.

6. Six Month Waiting Period

All prospective ministry personnel must attend OPCC for six months before serving in Kids' Park. The only exception is for those who have transferred from another church in which they been regular attenders and children's ministry volunteers in good standing.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

► Classroom Staffing & Room Guidelines

1. Staffing Policies

- Adult volunteers over the age of 18 and teens between the ages of 11 and 17 may serve in OPCC Kids' Park Children's Ministries (recommended 5 year gap between volunteer student and children they serve). Volunteer Students are generally assigned to a mentor and under their tutelage participate as assistants in the classrooms.
- Ideally, at least two leaders should be with the children at all times; one of these leaders must be an adult (18+). Alternatively, one adult leader may be present in a classroom with windows, with a Hall Monitor on rounds.
- Adequate staffing is required to provide effective care and teaching. The recommended ratios are:

Newborn – 18 months (Nursery)	1 adult/teen to every 3 infants (only teens 14 & older can carry babies up to 12 months)
18 months - 3 years (Acorns)	1 adult/teen to 5 toddlers/preschoolers
4 years - Grade 1 (Sprouts)	1 adult/teen to 8 children
Grade 2 - Grade 4 (Saplings)	1 adult/teen to 10 children
Grade 5 & 6 (Oaks)	1 adult/teen to 10 children

- Occasional observers, such as a parent staying with their child, who join a class will be checked in as Visitors. Visitors should be clearly identified with a nametag and on the attendance list. If they have not been screened and approved, they should not be placed in a position of trust with the children (teachers, helpers, taking children to washroom, etc.).

2. Room Guidelines

- Ideally the door of each classroom should remain open, however doors are permitted to be closed if they have windows with clear lines of visibility. All nursery and preschool rooms will be equipped with Dutch doors or baby gates to facilitate the open-door policy without compromising the safety of the children.
- Children are not to be dropped off in a classroom without at least one adult teacher and Hall Monitor present.
- After the children have been released from the service to come upstairs, the doors between upstairs and downstairs will be locked.

- d. The Hall Monitor will roam between the classrooms and hallway during the services to make sure all the classroom needs are met. Should there be a need to reassign teachers or helpers between classes to accommodate ratios, help with crying children, access more supplies, or walk a child to the washroom, the Hall Monitor can be contacted using the radio.
- e. There will be a buzzer system in place in the Acorns room. Parents will receive a buzzer at check in and the buzzer will vibrate and flash if they are required to attend to their child.
- f. If parent assistance is required for a child in the Sprouts or Saplings classes, the Hall Monitor will notify the parent.
- g. Should a child want/need to return to their parent, the Hall Monitor will notify the parent.

3. Internet & Phone Use

- a. Computers will be placed in open areas where the screen is easily visible.
- b. Computers will be password protected. Only the teachers and adult helpers will have access to the password.
- c. Cell phone use in the classroom is discouraged except for emergency purposes.
- d. Communication outside of scheduled programs should only be done with parent knowledge and when possible with the participation of the parent. This includes telephone, email, Facebook or other online social networks.
- e. No cell phone photos of children can be taken or posted online. Any photos/videos of children that are used for OPCC promo or presentation purposes must have signed approval by a parent.

► Child Security

Every volunteer should understand the need to maintain child security. When parents bring their children to our classrooms, we are responsible for their safety and security until they are returned to the care of their parent. Children should attend the class designed for their age, grade or developmental level as much as possible.

1. Volunteer Identification

OPCC Kids' Park nametag lanyards are provided for all volunteers. The lanyard nametag must be worn each week unless it is missing or lost and then a printed or handwritten nametag sticker is required. If your lanyard nametag is missing, please notify the Ministry Lead and have a replacement made.

2. Registration of Children

The name, contact info, age/grade and special needs of each child (regular attenders and somewhat modified for visitors) and their parents/guardians are maintained weekly, updated annually and kept in a central confidential file. A media release and permission statement is included on all regular attender registration forms. All registered families are input and tracked on a central database, Breeze.

3. Receiving & Releasing Children

a. Check In Computers

The check in kiosk should be staffed by two attendants, with other helpers staying within range in the foyer to help identify new families or provide extra check in help. The name of the child should be checked in on the Breeze check in system and three labels will be printed. The child should wear one, give one to their classroom teacher or helper and the parent keeps the third label to be presented to the classroom teacher or helper at time of check out. For newcomers and visitors who have not been registered in Breeze, a hard copy sign in sheet will be available to record their name, age, parent's name and phone number and any special needs. In this case, as well as if the printer system is not working, labels can be handwritten for the child. When handwriting labels, include the child's first and last name, as well as the last four digits of their parent's phone number (which will act as a pick up code). Any entries on the hard copy sign in sheet will be entered into Breeze after the service.

b. Checking into the Classroom

i. 18 months - 3 years

A designated helper should be stationed at the door to the classroom to assist with welcoming the children into the class. The helper is required to pay close attention as the door is being opened so as to prevent other children from exiting the room without consent.

Child nametags, check in and check out stickers are necessary for all children attending Kids' Park. Each child will require two stickers with the child's name, one to wear as a nametag and one to put on the attendance list in the classroom. Parents will provide the check out sticker when picking up their child after the service and initial/sign their child's attendance label. The code on the check out label should match the code on the child's attendance label.

ii. 4 years - Grade 6

Child nametags, check in and check out stickers are necessary for all children attending Kids' Park. Each child requires two stickers, one to wear as a nametag and one to put on the attendance list in the classroom. Parents will provide the check out sticker when picking up their child after the service and initial/sign their child's attendance label. The code of the check out label should match the code on the child's attendance label.

c. Stop! Check for Allergies

Please read the nametag stickers quickly and carefully to look for any special instructions/allergies and pass the word on to all leaders in the room.

d. Leaving the Room

In the event that a class leaves their classroom for any reason (fire drill, small group, etc.) an adult Teacher/Helper must take the attendance class list with them.

e. Checking Out of the Classroom

i. 18 months - 3 years

A designated helper should be stationed at the door to the classroom to assist as parents/guardians are checking out and collecting their child. The helper is required to pay close attention as the door is being opened so as to prevent other children from exiting the room without consent.

Only release a child to a parent/guardian after they have provided a check-out sticker and initialed/signed their child's attendance label. Match the security code on the nametags to ensure the child is attached to the right parent/guardian,

particularly visitors. As much as possible, parents/guardians should not enter the classroom when picking up their child unless requested to do so. This enables classroom staff to maintain order and provide a better level of security.

ii. 4 years - Grade 4

Only release a child to a parent/guardian after they have provided a check out sticker and initialed/signed their child's attendance label. Match the security code on the nametags to ensure the child is attached to the right parent/guardian, particularly visitors. As much as possible, parents should not enter the classrooms when picking up their child unless requested to do so. This enables classroom staff to maintain order and provide a better level of security.

iii. Grade 5 - Grade 6

Children of this age group can be dismissed without a parent/guardian present. Please ensure the service is finished before dismissing the class by waiting for parents to arrive upstairs to pick up the other age groups.

f. Organize the Lists

When all the children are checked out, ensure the attendance sheets are secured in the binder. These lists are to be scanned and both digital and hard copies filed for reference. Digital and hard copy attendance records are to be kept on file permanently.

► **Washroom Guidelines**

1. 18 months – 3 years

- a.** In the event of a diaper needing to be changed or if a child requires assistance in the washroom, their parent will be notified via the buzzer system to come upstairs and attend to their child.
- b.** Do not enter the washroom with a child unless assisting with handwashing. The door is to be kept open. Never be alone with a child in a closed door washroom.
- c.** Handwashing requirements to be posted and followed.

2. 4 years - Grade 6

- a.** 4 years - Grade 1 children should be escorted to the washroom by a leader with the Hall Monitor within close range. The leader or Hall Monitor should stand outside the washroom in close proximity.
- b.** Grade 2 - Grade 4 children should be accompanied by a leader or the Hall Monitor. The leader or Hall Monitor should stand outside the washroom.
- c.** Grade 5 & 6 children may go to the washroom on their own. Their absence should be monitored.
- d.** If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, call their name from outside the washroom. Remain outside and wait for the child before escorting them back to the classroom.
- e.** Never be alone with a child in a washroom and never go into the cubicle with a child and shut the door.

► Health & Safety Guidelines

1. Sick Children

A child who is ill, or has a known communicable disease, and could therefore expose other children and volunteers to illness should not be received into the nursery or classroom. Some signs of illness include:

- Unusual fatigue or irritability
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Runny nose and eyes
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Inflamed mouth and throat

If a child exhibits these symptoms, the Hall Monitor will notify the parent to come and get their child. Gently tell the parent that it is best for their child and the others.

2. Medications

- a. Volunteers are not to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medication, the parent should administer it.
- b. In extreme cases where EpiPens and puffers are needed for allergies or asthma, a "Medical Consent" form with written instructions or arrangements should be filled out by a parent and reviewed with the Ministry Lead. Medical Consent forms are available at the check in desk. (Appendix 3)

3. Injuries and Emergencies

- a. A first aid kit is available in each classroom. All volunteers should locate the kit in their room and look through it to gain awareness of its contents. Each kit should contain disposable latex gloves, antiseptic wipes, 3" x 3" gauze pads for blood absorption and a selection of Band-Aids. For more severe injuries, a more comprehensive first aid kit is located in the kitchen and includes a CPR mask and a variety of materials to be used in an emergency by a trained first aid person, as well as ice packs stored in the freezer.
- b. There should be a certified first aid person scheduled in one of the classrooms or as the Hall Monitor each week.
- c. A parent should be contacted immediately when an injury, accident or medical emergency occurs. Alert the first aid person if possible (list posted in each classroom binder). If deemed necessary by the attending adult, "9-1-1" should be called.
- d. Any accident resulting in injury should be reported to the Ministry Lead and an "Incident Report" filed (Appendix 4). Incident Report forms are available in the binders for each classroom. Please be sure that the completed form is returned directly to the Ministry Lead.

4. Severe Allergies

- a. Parents and caregivers are responsible for notifying the church of any known allergies which their children have. The information is on their registration and input into the database.
- b. Ministry personnel assigned to care for the child should be notified and take note of the allergy when the child comes into the classroom. The Ministry Lead or teacher should communicate child's allergy to all volunteers in the classroom.

- c. In the event that a child has a life-threatening allergy and immediate EpiPen response is necessary, a parent can ask and equip an adult leader in the class to administer the EpiPen, however, a Medical Consent form must be signed (Appendix 3). If there is any indication that a child is having an allergic reaction, the parent should be notified immediately so they can administer the EpiPen, if necessary. If an EpiPen is administered, the incident should be followed up with professional medical attention.

5. Procedures for Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood

A detailed compilation of guidelines on dealing with blood-borne pathogens and infectious diseases is provided for your information (Appendix 1).

- a. Separate the injured child from the other children. Isolate the area where any blood may have dropped on carpet, toys, etc. Parents should be contacted at this time.
- b. Check to ensure that no other children had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury.
- c. Put on the latex gloves available in the first aid kit and bandage the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.
- d. Carefully wipe up all blood, gather all bloody bandages, and remove to a secure waste removal receptacle.
- e. Remove and properly dispose latex gloves. Wash hands carefully with sterilizing soap available in first aid kit.

6. Emergency Evacuation

Emergency evacuation procedures will be reviewed as needed by the Senior Pastor and staff. These procedures are to be posted in a visible place in each room stating the planned route of escape to the nearest exit. The Senior Pastor, in cooperation with the Facilities Manager and Office Manager, will ensure that the annual fire and evacuation drills are completed.

► Proper Display of Affection

1. Appropriate Touch

Physical touch is an important element in the communication of love and care. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love:

- a. Speak to the child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
- b. Hold the child's hand when speaking, listening or walking him or her to an activity.
- c. Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting or quieting is needed.
- d. Pat a child on the head, hand, shoulder, or back to affirm him or her.
- e. Gently hold the child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour.
- f. Hold a preschool child who is crying.
- g. All touch should be done in view of others.

2. Inappropriate Touch

The following types of touch should be avoided:

- a. Kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you.
- b. Extended hugging and tickling.

- c. Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit.
- d. Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.
- e. Being alone with a child.
- f. Prolonged physical contact.

► Classroom Management

Classroom management will be conducted in a loving and caring way. Preventative measures should be introduced first to prevent behaviour problems.

1. Preventative Measures

- a. Create a loving, caring atmosphere.
- b. Make sure everything is in order and you are well prepared to receive the children.
- c. Respect the children.
- d. Be fair.
- e. Focus on positive actions.

2. Discipline Steps

- a. Deal with problems 'one on one'.
- b. Explain to the child why the behaviour is unacceptable.
- c. Tell the child what they should be doing.
- d. Offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the child.
- e. If you need to remove a child, call the Hall Monitor who will offer options, e.g. walking, talking and/or talking to parents.
- f. After all the above has been tried and the child is consistently disruptive over a period of 2-3 weeks, invite the parent(s) to attend the class along with the child to assist with the discipline process.

3. Classroom Guidelines

- a. One person talking at a time.
- b. Quiet hands get answered.
- c. Use inside voices.
- d. Obey directions the first time.
- e. Use good manners.
- f. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
- g. Respect each other.
- h. Be friendly.
- i. Visit the washroom before class begins.
- j. Remember – life isn't always fair.

4. Bullying

Bullying in any form will not be tolerated. All ministry personnel will take action to prevent bullying by assisting and supporting children who are being bullied. Handle the situation sensitively by coaching the children to speak truthfully in order to resolve the conflict. If it is ongoing, speak to the Ministry Lead to address the issue with parents.

YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES

► Youth Ministry Volunteer Standards

1. Contact Opportunities and Device Use

- a. Volunteers are encouraged to meet with youth only during the boundaries of youth ministry related programming, with the exception of supporting youth at their external public events, e.g. recitals, sports events, award ceremonies.
- b. Youth meetings should occur in a group setting with at least two volunteers and avoid activities that would involve isolation.
- c. The Ministry Lead must provide pre-approval for any volunteers that intend on conducting one-on-one mentoring.
- d. Pre-approved one-on-one mentoring must take place in a public setting under the following conditions:
 - i. Prior to the meeting, the Ministry Lead is informed of the time and location of the meeting,
 - ii. Written consent is obtained from the parent/guardian of the youth member,
 - iii. Separate transportation is arranged, and
 - iv. Documentation will be maintained and filed including parental/guardian consent and provided to the Ministry Lead.
- e. Computers will be placed in open areas where the screen is easily visible.
- f. Computers will be password protected. Only the Ministry Lead will have access to the password.
- g. Cell phone use during youth programming is discouraged except for emergency purposes.
- h. Communication outside of scheduled programs should only be done with parent knowledge and when possible with the participation of the parent. This includes telephone, email, Facebook or other online social networks.
- i. No cell phone photos of youth can be taken or posted online. Any photos/videos of youth that are used for OPCC promo or presentation purposes must have signed approval by a parent.

2. Open Door Policy

Small group or one-on-one meetings with volunteers and youth must take place in a room with an open door, or in a room with an unobstructed window in the door.

3. Physical Contact

- a. Volunteers must be made aware of what constitutes appropriate touch, such as:
 - i. One arm hugs
 - ii. Shoulder to shoulder hugs
 - iii. Touch on the back or shoulder
- b. Volunteers must refrain from inappropriate touch at all times, such as:
 - i. Chest-to-chest hugging
 - ii. Extended hugging
 - iii. Exuberant affection
 - iv. Lap sitting
 - v. Kissing

- vi. Tickling
- vii. Touching of thighs, knees, back rubs or inappropriate spots of the body

4. Dating

Volunteers working with youth must not pursue a dating relationship with a student.

► Youth Ministry Programming

1. Staffing Policies

Youth programs should comply with the following staffing ratios:

Junior High (Grade 7 - Grade 9)	2 adults to 14 youth
Senior High (Grade 10 - Grade 12)	2 adults to 20 youth
High risk activities	2 adults to 5 youth
Overnight events	2 adults to 10 youth

- a. There must be at least two (2) unrelated Ministry Personnel at all events. Events with mixed genders must be supervised by both male and female Ministry Personnel.
- b. It is recommended there be at least a five (5) year age difference between Ministry Personnel and the youth they supervise.

2. Registration of Youth

The name, contact info, age/grade and special needs of each youth (regular attenders and somewhat modified for visitors) and their parents/guardians are maintained weekly, updated annually and kept in a central confidential file. A media release and permission statement is included on all regular attender registration forms. All registered families are input and tracked on a central database, Breeze.

3. Attendance

- a. Attendance of youth is to be taken at each event, whether on site at OPCC or elsewhere. Digital and hard copy attendance records are to be kept on file permanently.
- b. Attendance records must include the date, age/grade of student, full name of student, full names of all volunteers and any occasional observers that are attending on that date.

► Special Events & Overnight Policies

1. Field Trips & Special Events

- a. Off-campus activities should be pre-approved by the church leadership. Parents should be notified at least one week prior to the outing.

- b. Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in field trips and special events. Forms must be kept in the leader's possession during trips and events (Appendices 4 & 6).
- c. All trips and outings should be supervised by a minimum of two approved, unrelated adult leaders, preferably male and female. Recommended ratios should be maintained.
- d. When planning local special events, it is preferred that parents drop off and pick up their children at the event location.
- e. All ministry personnel drivers transporting children during church activities must be pre-approved by leadership, provide a copy of their valid driver's license and current automobile insurance in accordance with the church insurance policy, and have had a minimum of five years of driving experience.

2. Overnight Events

- a. All overnight activities must be pre-approved by the church leadership.
- b. Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in overnight events. Forms must be kept in the leader's possession during trips and events (Appendices 3 & 5).
- c. All overnight activities should have a minimum ratio of two leaders for every ten youth. Leaders should have an assigned group of youth for whom they will be responsible during the overnight event. Female personnel will be assigned to girls, male personnel to boys.
- d. There must always be a minimum of two approved, unrelated adult ministry personnel.

VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION PROCEDURES

► Definition of a Vulnerable Adult

Alberta Health defines a Vulnerable Adult as an adult who is not able to defend themselves, protect themselves, or get help for themselves when injured or emotionally abused. A person may be vulnerable because of a physical condition or illness, such as weakness in an older adult or physical disability, or a mental or emotional condition.⁵

► Plans for Safety

At all times, a safe environment must be ensured when planning activities or meetings with vulnerable adults. Safety precautions must be communicated with the vulnerable adult as well as their caregiver and/or family members.

► Vulnerable Adult Meeting Policies

1. For pastoral calls on those who are homebound and/or senior citizens, or to hospital or aged care facilities, the Pastoral Staff will keep detailed records of date and time of visitation. The visit will be logged by notifying the Office Manager via text message when they arrive and when they leave the destination, and will keep a detailed record of any offsite incidents. Additionally, when possible, the door must remain open with family members, caregivers or nursing staff nearby should they be needed.
2. Church based one-on-one meetings with vulnerable adults and ministry personnel must take place in a room with an open door, or in a room with an unobstructed window in the door.
3. Personal care is the responsibility of the family members or caregivers, not ministry personnel.

DISCLOSURE POLICY

A person who knowingly fails to report in the following circumstances is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offence. Should you have questions regarding a specific incident, contact the Ministry Lead who in turn will, if necessary, contact Children's Services.

1. What Should I Do if a Child Discloses

The role of the adult to whom a child discloses any discomforting information is 4-fold:

- a. • **Affirm** the child. Respond with affirmative but neutral statements like: "I understand"; "Can you tell me more?"; "How does that make you feel?". Avoid using leading questions such as, "Did daddy do this?".
- b. • **Believe** the child. Let the child know that you believe what they are saying is true.
- c. • **Comfort** the child. If appropriate, offer to comfort the child by: letting them cry; holding their hand; praying with the child; or offering a hug to the child. We need to be aware that a physically traumatized person may feel overwhelmed or threatened by acts of physical comfort; be sensitive and respect any decline of or withdrawal from physical comfort. (Appendix 2)
- d. • **Document** the disclosure on a *Suspected Abuse Report Form* (Appendix 6) in writing and present it to the Ministry Lead. These Forms may be obtained from the Ministry Lead.

2. Reporting

The report must be completed by any personnel who has 'reasonable and probable grounds' to believe that a child is being harmed or in danger of being harmed by an adult or older child. Fill out the 'Suspected Abuse Report Form' (available in the classroom binders) reporting the disclosure as written documentation (Appendix 6). The reporting must be immediate, a direct report, and an on-going report. The report may be done in conjunction with pastoral staff or your immediate Ministry Leader. Meet with the Ministry Lead and together decide what will be reported and if a parent should be informed of our reporting action [this is optional, it is NOT legally required to inform the parent(s)]. If it is deemed necessary, the Ministry Lead may inform the parent(s) in regards to our intervention regarding the child.

3. Confidentiality

It is extremely important in these matters to keep the information confidential at all times. Any suspicions of abuse should be directed only to the Ministry Lead.

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