

**Good Shepherd Community Church
Child/Youth/Leader/Vulnerable Persons
Protection Policy**

January 18, 2010

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GOOD SHEPHERD COMMUNITY CHURCH

Child/Youth/ Leader/Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy

A. Introduction

Child Abuse is a common problem in our society. Though we would like to think that the church is immune to such crimes against children and youth, unfortunately, this is not the case. The shocking reality is that many of those who seek to sexually abuse children find the church an easy avenue to fulfill their fantasies and give expression to their sinful life style.

A single incident of abuse can devastate a child, his/her family and the church. It can undermine the integrity of the church's ministry to children and youth for many years to come. Realistically, a single incident could be a threat to the viability of the entire witness and ministry of a local church.

Jesus makes it abundantly clear in Matthew 18:1-6 and Mark 10:13-16 how He feels about the care, nurturing and protection of children. He expects His disciples to have this same love and concern for these little ones. In fact, some of His strongest words of condemnation are directed toward those who violate this trust.

B. The Position of Good Shepherd Community Church on the Issue of Child and Youth Abuse

Good Shepherd Community Church deplores the fact that child abuse does exist and is committed to its prevention from any source - church, family or community. We are committed to respond to suspected or actual abuse in a manner that complies with Biblical, as well as, legal expectations.

Not only are we concerned for the protection of children and youth and believe that their well being is the responsibility of the whole body, but we are, also, concerned for the protection of workers regarding false allegations. We care about the Church of Jesus Christ and want to safeguard the public perception of the church. This policy provides a framework by which our workers can remain above reproach. Faithful adherence to the policies and procedures will avoid compromising situations and provide protection for the workers, as well as, the children and youth.

Any worker who abuses a child or fails to report child abuse where there are reasonable grounds indicating its existence, may be subject to disciplinary action and legal consequences.

Therefore, Good Shepherd Community Church accepts that it is our moral, legal and community responsibility to have an agreed upon document of policies and procedures regarding child and youth protection. The purpose of this policy is to:

1. present clearly the position of Good Shepherd Community Church on child abuse and the absolute necessity of providing a safe environment at all times;
2. present guidelines for the recruitment of volunteers;
3. present guidelines for the on-the-job conduct of volunteers and employees;
4. present guidelines for the reporting of suspected abuse;
5. present guidelines designed to limit the church's legal liability.

C. Child Abuse - What is it?

Child abuse can include the following:

1. physical harm;
2. sexual molestation or exploitation;
3. the failure or refusal to provide medical treatment for physical harm or suffering;
4. emotional harm;
5. the failure or refusal to provide protection and care for a child suffering from mental, emotional or developmental conditions that could seriously impair the child's development.

Abuse always involves the misuse of power that others have over vulnerable persons. Vulnerable persons include both children and adults with physical or mental disabilities.

A child is defined differently under various provincial and federal legislations. Therefore, for the purposes of this policy, a child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

In reference to corporal punishment, within the context of the church's ministry, it is never permissible to strike a child or use other forms of physical punishment.

D. Screening and Selection Guidelines

1. A written application for all positions, including ministerial staff, will be required for both paid and volunteer staff;
2. References will be checked and criminal record checks shall be conducted;
3. Persons with criminal abuse records will not be accepted;
4. Personal interviews of applicants and decisions on appointments will be conducted by at least two persons. A written summary of the interview is to be completed and kept on file in the church office;
5. Once all the recruitment steps have been completed, the appropriate ministry leader will be advised if the person is not suitable. New leaders may not assume any duties beyond observation, until the full process is completed;
6. All volunteer personnel should be members or adherents of Good Shepherd Community Church;
7. All those working with children and youth will be trained to understand the nature of abuse and to carry out our abuse prevention policies including reporting procedures for suspected incidents;
8. All workers must complete the application process, as defined on Form #GSCC-PP7;
9. We will take seriously our policies to prevent abuse and see that they are enforced;
10. Files of applications, interviews, references, incidents reports and all relevant material shall be kept in strictest confidentiality with limited accessibility for at least seventy years from the effective date on the form.

E. Investigation and Reporting

Provincial legislation requires that a person, who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be in need of protection, or may be suffering or has suffered abuse, must report the belief and information to the appropriate authorities. Failure to report may result in a charge being laid against the corporate body of the church and the responsible individuals. Where a worker may be in doubt about what appropriate action should be taken, he/she should consult with his/her immediate supervisor.

The following are the procedures to be followed when abuse is reported or suspected:

1. When you as a worker have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is in need of protection or has suffered abuse, you must document your suspicions and report your suspicions in writing on Form #GSCC-PP9 to a member of the Pastoral team. It is not up to you to decide whether or not the child is being

abused. The suspicion alone requires you to inform. Make a note of your report and request a written response (page 2 of Form #GSCC-PP9) outlining the action plan.

2. If a child actually discloses to you that he/she has been abused, report this, without delay, verbally to a member of the Pastoral team and then follow it up with a report in writing on Form #GSCC-PP9 outlining the date, time and place of the child's disclosure to you. Request a written response (page 2 of Form #GSCC-PP9) of action taken.
3. You **must** contact the Children's Aid Society. If there is any uncertainty about whether or not there are reasonable grounds to report suspected child abuse, the Children's Aid Society must be consulted for assistance. Utmost care will be taken to respect the confidentiality of the child and any person who may be accused of abuse, but the duty to report to the Children's Aid Society takes precedence over any duty of confidentiality.
4. Be supportive of the child - you may be the only one he/she feels can be trusted.
5. If a child has disclosed to you, they will need to hear:
 - I believe you;
 - You did the right thing in telling me;
 - It's not your fault;
 - I'm sorry, this should not have happened to you;
 - I will do whatever I can to help and support you.
6. Avoid:
 - Correcting or modifying the child's words or story;
 - Expressing horror or anger;
 - Confronting the offender;
 - Questioning the child at length. Any investigation is the responsibility of the Children's Aid Society and/or the Police. Utmost care must be taken that potential evidence is not compromised.
7. If the alleged abuser is a ministry volunteer or a staff person,
 - a member of the Pastoral team will immediately obtain advice from the insurance broker and legal counsel,
 - at no time will the alleged abuser be allowed unsupervised access to any child,
 - and the alleged abuser will be suspended from his/her duties until the appropriate authorities have investigated the allegation and the allegation has been proven unfounded.

8. While all necessary precautions will be taken to protect children, the innocence of the alleged abuser will be presumed until proven otherwise.
9. No internal investigation by any officers of the church will precede an investigation by the Children's Aid Society unless the Society has first been advised and has granted permission for such an investigation.
10. All incidents will be annotated by the Pastoral team member using Form #GSCC-PP9. A Pastoral team member or Board of Elders' member will be assigned by the Board of Elders to deal with inquiries from the community or media in the event of an allegation. No other person shall represent the church in this way.

F. Safety Policies and Supervision Guidelines

Our desire is to provide a safe, caring environment where the child feels safe and learning can take place.

1. There will be a minimum of two workers in any room with children, except in the event of an emergency situation. Under no circumstances should only youth volunteers be assigned responsibility for children. Ideally, there will be a ratio of one adult for every 3 - 6 pre-school - kindergarten children, one adult for every 8 - 10 children in grades 1 - 6, and one adult for every 12 - 16 youth in grades 7 - 12. A team approach allows for flexibility in handling specific situations and facilitates the development of leadership and teaching skills.

When it is necessary for only one worker to be in a room with children, the door of that room will remain slightly open or be a window-door that will allow a monitor to look in occasionally without interrupting.

2. Regular monitoring of the property will be done to ensure that out-of-the-way places (i.e. washrooms, storage areas, unused rooms, poorly lit areas, etc.) are not being accessed by individuals as places to lure and abuse others. It is recommended that a monitor be assigned for each activity. This volunteer should be an adult who has gone through the recruitment process. As well as checking the property, this person may be called upon to assist another adult in helping a child in the washroom or supervising in a room, if it is necessary for a worker to step out temporarily.
3. An accurate attendance form for ALL those present must be maintained for each activity. (See Form #GSCC-14.)

Age 0 - kindergarten programs will provide a sign-in sheet, indicating the child's name, parent/caregiver's name and location during the activity, and the names of the volunteers accepting the child. When children are leaving the room, parents need to sign-out the child.

All Children and Youth Programs will register each child indicating name, address, age, phone number, health and medical information and who to contact in an emergency, using Form #GSCC-PP10.

4. The washrooms are an area where we need to be very sensitive to the possibility of problems. A child under 6 years old should not be sent to the washroom by him/herself. When a child must go to the washroom, a volunteer worker will escort the child and remain outside the door of the washroom with the door ajar. If the child needs special assistance in the washroom, a second worker should be called to assist and remain within visual contact. A volunteer is not permitted to be alone in the washroom with a child or children.
5. Special day and overnight events that occur on or off the church premises, will be pre-planned, approved by the Board of Elders or the Pastoral team member in charge and be advertised well in advance of the event. Written parental consent shall be required in all cases, using Form #GSCC-PP12.
6. Transportation arrangements will be organized so that a driver is not alone with a child or youth. Parents will be requested to bring children and to collect them from the church activities whenever possible.
7. One-on-one counseling will always be arranged with the signed consent of all parents and guardians of the child/youth. The meeting will occur in a public place, or a place that allows for easy visibility and access. The seating is to be arranged so that the child/youth has freedom to leave the room at any time. If the door does not have a window, it will be left ajar.
8. In general, all children are to be supervised while at the church either by leaders in a structured activity or by their parents.

G. Education and Training

The "Child/Youth/Leader/Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy" shall be given to all prospective workers at the time of interview. In addition, all applicants must agree to attend

seminars and workshops regarding child safety, abuse and misconduct prevention. Sessions will be organized to provide all new staff members and volunteers with opportunity for training, which will generally occur on the third Saturday in October. The Board of Elders may require re-training of volunteers from time to time. Training will include topics such as the following:

- defining sexual abuse;
- the short and long term effects of abuse;
- the disclosure process and how to receive a disclosure;
- awareness of applicable church policies and procedures;
- signals of possible abuse and abusers;
- appropriate discipline;
- appropriate touching;
- policies regarding field trips.

H. Implementation and Compliance

The Board of Elders shall appoint an officer (the “Compliance Officer”) who shall monitor and be responsible for the continued adherence and compliance with this policy.

The Compliance Officer shall be a member of the Board of Elders and shall provide regular and ongoing reports to the Board of Elders concerning the implementation and compliance of this policy and any other matters incidental thereto as the Board of Elders may require.

From time to time the forms may need changing, or new forms may need to be created. All such changes and additions must be approved by the Compliance Officer, and updated in the Appendix. When a change is made to the body of the Policy document, it must be approved by the Board of Elders.

January 2010

Appendix - Forms

1. Adult Volunteer Application Form #GSCC-PP1
2. Volunteer Application Form Day Camp #GSCC-PP2
3. Medical Form for Volunteers Under 18 #GSCC-PP3
4. Police Check Completed by an Organization Other Than Us #GSCC-PP4
5. Volunteer Interview Form #GSCC-PP5
6. Reference Contact Form #GSCC-PP6
7. Volunteer Process Checklist #GSCC-PP7
8. Request for Criminal Check #GSCC-PP8
9. Evidence of Child Abuse, Report and Response Form #GSCC-PP9
10. Registration for People Under 18 #GSCC-PP10
11. Registration for Children with Adults in the Building #GSCC-PP11
12. Special Event Permission Form #GSCC-PP12
13. Division of Responsibilities Regarding the Church's Abuse Policy #GSCC-PP13
14. Sample Attendance Form #GSCC-PP14
15. Day Camp Child Registration Form #GSCC-PP15
16. Child Suspected of Being Abused, Report and Response Form #GSCC-PP16