



A Plan to Protect

For Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Sector
Ministries
(Fall 2017)

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1. Protect Through Awareness

Introduction

The Church has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children participating in church programs that are under the auspices and authority of the church. Child abuse is a criminal act 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. It is criminal behavior that causes emotional, physical and spiritual trauma to victims, and has destructive consequences for abusers. The devastating effects on the credibility of the church ministry and the name of Jesus make it essential that we take all appropriate steps to prevent abusive incidences from occurring.

Eucharist Church is committed to creating safe places for people to hear the message of Jesus. This includes safe spaces for children, youth and vulnerable people. We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in our ministry to the family.

Churches have unique features that can make them susceptible to incidents of child molestation - they have large numbers of children, a shortage of willing workers, and a culture of trust that assumes no Christian could be suspect of such exploitation. Children are naturally trusting and impressionable, and readily place their faith in adults who care for them. It is our God-given and legal responsibility to safeguard that trust.

We consider all forms of abuse to be a serious matter. Child abuse can potentially leave scars that last a lifetime, and the effects of abuse are too often minimized or dismissed. The degree of damage that results from abuse depends upon several factors including the intensity, duration and frequency of the abuse, as well as the nature of the relationship of the perpetrator to the child. If the abuser is a known and trusted authority figure in the child's life, the degree of impact increases dramatically.

Eucharist is committed to providing a safe environment for children and youth, and maintains a policy of zero-tolerance for abuse, harassment, or neglect. All staff and volunteers who teach, care for, have access to, or have positions of trust with children, youth, and/or vulnerable persons within Eucharist Church are required to follow the guidelines and procedures as defined in this document. Every activity involves some risk, but this plan is designed to prioritize the safety of children and volunteers with the goal of making all programs and activities as safe as is reasonably possible.

Definitions

Unfortunately, child abuse is not a rare occurrence in Ontario. According to Ontario's Children's Aid Societies in 2007 over 27,000 children suffered some form of abuse or neglect. Canadian authorities estimate that the incidence of child abuse and neglect in Canada parallels that of the United States. At least one in three girls and one in seven boys are sexually abused by the time they reach the age of 18. In the majority of cases, sexual abusers

are known to their victims. More than half of all sexual abuse occurs within the family. Offenders come from all economic, ethnic, racial and educational backgrounds and religious traditions. They may be respected members of the community, church or synagogue. No one profile fits a perpetrator of abuse. Trusted adults can easily mislead children while we are focused on “stranger danger”.

- Over 80% of the time, the abuser is someone known to the victim.
- Most abuse takes place within the context of an ongoing relationship.
- The usual offender is between the ages of 20 and 30 years of age.
- 20% of sex offenders begin their activity before the age of 18.
- Child abusers are often married.
- 33% of sex offenders have experienced some form of sexual trauma as children.

We must be aware of the pain and long-term suffering that accompany abuse. Studies of adult victims of abuse suggest the following effects: sexual dysfunction, eating disorders, substance abuse, dissociation from emotions, and possible perpetration of abuse on others. 80-85% of female prisoners are victims of child abuse; 85% of runaways have been sexually abused; 99% of child prostitutes and as high as 80% of adult prostitutes suffered childhood abuse; childhood abuse dramatically increases the chances of personality disorders, substance abuse and attempted suicides.

When church leaders and congregations perpetuate the abuse, lifelong religious confusion and deep feeling of hatred towards God and the church can occur.

“Child abuse” is defined as follows:

- An act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust which is not accidental, which harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical or mental health or a child’s welfare.
- Primarily categorized as physical, sexual, emotional or involving neglect.
- All child abuse involves the misuse of power.
- Misuse of power takes place when people take advantage of the authority or power they have over vulnerable people.
- Vulnerable people include adults with physical or mental disabilities and children.

For the purpose of this document, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years old

Physical Abuse is using physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child or youth. Injuring a child or youth is not acceptable, regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline. This could include hitting, slapping, biting, shaking, burning or throwing a child.

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of hurting a child’s feelings to the point of damaging their emotional development or sense of self-respect. It includes verbal attacks on the child, insults, humiliation or rejection.

Sexual Abuse occurs when a child or youth is used by somebody for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may also be sexual abuse if older or more powerful children or youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful. Sexual abuse includes behaviour that involves touching, and non-touching (verbal comments, pornographic videos, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, allowing children to either hear about or witness sexual activity)

Neglect is the failure to provide the child's basic physical needs for food, clothing, and shelter. It can also mean a failure to provide for emotional needs, attention and supervision. This can occur when caregivers do not know about appropriate methods of care, when they cannot adequately supervise, or when they are unable to plan ahead.

Harassment is persistently and wrongfully badgering a person with annoying, offensive or troubling behavior.

Improper Discipline includes any physical punishment, verbal or emotional abuse or neglect. **Corporal punishment is absolutely prohibited.**

Symptoms of Abuse and Molestation

Church workers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioural and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit. A one-time event would not necessarily constitute a potential abuse case; sudden unexplained changes, however, would warrant investigation. Bear in mind that these possible indicators are not necessarily proof. Some of the more common signs are summarized below:

Physical signs may include:

- lacerations and bruises
- nightmares
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- difficulty with urination
- bedwetting
- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
- pregnancy
- venereal disease or sexually transmitted infections

Behavioral signs may include:

- anxiety when approaching church, child care area or nursery area
- nervous, hostile or rejecting behaviour towards one or more adults
- sexual self-consciousness
- “acting out” sexual behaviour or other expressions of sexual knowledge beyond that appropriate for the child’s age
- extreme withdrawal from church, school or sports activities
- withdrawal from friends and family

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don’t like (*names a particular person*)
- (*Particular person*) does things to me when we’re alone
- I don’t like to be alone with (*particular person*)
- (*Particular person*) fooled around with me

Child abuse can happen at home, at school and at church. Having been placed in positions of trust, it is our responsibility, before God and the governing authorities, to be aware and prepared to create safe places for our children and youth.

What are reasonable grounds for reporting a suspicion of abuse? Reasonable grounds are what an average person, given his or her training, background and experience, exercising normal and honest judgment, would assume to be an action that needs attention. **No action would be taken against a person making a report unless it is made maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief.**

2. Child Protection Procedures

Eucharist Church is committed to the following:

- We will screen all paid employees, and volunteers who work with preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- We will check references and do criminal record checks on all our workers, for any position involving work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Individuals that have been accused, or convicted, or are under the suspicion of crimes against children and/or youth, or who have been convicted of violent crimes or other relevant crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programs where children or youth participate.
- We will train all of our staff who work with preschoolers, children or youth, both paid and volunteer, to understand the nature of child sexual abuse, how to carry out our policies to prevent sexual abuse including our clearly defined reporting procedures for suspected incidents.
- We take seriously, our policies to prevent sexual abuse.
- Ideally a minimum of two workers (with one at least 18 years of age) will be present during any children's activity.
- We will follow the "Six Month" rule. Volunteers will be permitted to work with preschoolers, children or youth only after they have been attending Eucharist Church for a period of six months. Such a policy gives us an opportunity to evaluate applicants and volunteers, and will help to deter persons seeking immediate access to children. This provision may be waived where the person is transferring in from another church and has a letter of recommendation signed by the pastor of that church.

These safeguards are not only to protect our children, but also our workers.

Classroom Staffing and Supervision Guidelines

Programs that involve children and youth are to be staffed by a team of security cleared staff and volunteers and must always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision will be maintained before and after the event until all children grade 5 and under are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

Children of any age are not permitted to leave the premises until the program concludes. Should a child leave the premises while a program is operating, the child's parents/guardians will be notified immediately. Children grade 6 and up are permitted to leave the premises after the program concludes, and it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure their child is picked up or has instructions to get home.

Programs that involve children grade 6 and up will ensure adequate supervision from the time of the start of the program to the completion of the program. Supervision outside of program times is the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Our desire is to provide a safe, loving classroom where the child feels comfortable and learning can take place. Therefore we follow the following guidelines:

1. **Two Leader Rule:** A minimum of two unrelated adults are present for any child's activity or transportation. This rule helps reduce the risk of child abuse and also reduces the risk of false accusations made by children or youth towards staff or volunteers. (In certain situations, exceptions may be allowed if covered by the "open door" policy, or by having classrooms with windows.)
2. **Open Door Policy:** If necessary that only one adult be alone in a room with children, the door of that room must remain open at all times. All classrooms should have windows that will allow supervisors to monitor class activities without interrupting the teaching process.
3. **Age Requirements of Volunteers:** There must be a five year gap between staff/ volunteers and the children they serve. The minimum age for volunteering is 12 and between the age of 12 and 16, they must volunteer alongside an adult.
4. **Staff Monitoring:** Ministry staff will make regular visits to the classrooms to ensure the class is properly staffed and supervised.
5. **Family Volunteer Teams:** Family ministry teams work well together and can be encouraged as a positive method of staffing. However, for the protection of the family unit, we recommend the presence of at least one other volunteer who is not related to the family.
6. **Adequate Supervision:** There are to be no children in the church building unsupervised. The supervisor needs to have sufficient charge of the group so that a positive environment is maintained
7. In order to provide a safe environment where a child can be properly cared for the following guideline and ratios are to be followed:

Ratios from Day Nurseries Act:

Age of Children/Youth Ratio

Newborn to 18 months 1:3
18 months to 30 months 1:5
30. months to 5 years old 1:8
6 years old - 12 years old 1:15

Ratios We Recommend:

Age of Children/Youth Ratio*

Infants/ Walkers 1:3
2 Year Olds 1:4
3 Year Olds 1:5
JK/SK 1:7
Grade 1-5 1:10
Grade 6-12 1:15
Overnight grade 5 and under 1:5
Overnight grade 6-12 1:10

*Note the minimum Two Leader guideline above.

These ratios are the minimum requirements for security purposes only. They are not intended as standards for the number of children per small group leader.

8. **Occasional Observers:** Occasional observers (visitors) who join a class will have their attendance recorded and kept on file with the classroom attendance for that day. Visitors will be clearly identified and, if they have not been screened and approved, they will not be placed in a position of trust with the children who are not their own.
9. Volunteers under the age of 18 will not be responsible for releasing children from the program and checking parents' ID.

Receiving and Releasing Children

These procedures will be in effect for all children infants to grade 12.

- The names, addresses and phone numbers of parents, youth and children must be carefully maintained in our church database.

- A release and permission statement will be included on all registration forms releasing the church from unforeseen and accidental damages along with contact information in case of an accident.
- All leaders working with children will wear a name badge.
- Attendance of both children and leaders (including first and last names) will be taken in each classroom every time a program is in session. This includes events and retreats. These records will be kept on file for a minimum of 33 years.
- Programs for preschool aged children will have a sign-in sheet. An accurate sign-in procedure will include each child's name, parent's name and parent's location during that period of time. Space will be provided for parents to list any special needs. Preschool children should not be received into the classroom until properly signed in. A child will be released to a parent or representative only on the basis of a signature, security number, or identification card .
- Children are never to be dropped off in the nursery or classroom without a teacher/ caregiver present. If only one teacher/caregiver is present, the door must be left open. Doors are to be supervised so that children are not able to exit alone and/or a parent cannot take them from the room without a worker's assistance.
- Parents are not to enter the nursery or classroom when picking up their child unless requested to do so. This better enables the child-care staff to maintain order and provide the level of security that parents would expect
- Parents/guardians of children must not leave the church premise while their child is involved in our programs unless written consent has been given by leader. We also will require parents/guardians to leave an emergency number in case we are unable to locate them if needed.

Washroom Guidelines

Parents/guardians are encouraged to take their child(ren) to visit the washroom or ensure that their child's diaper is dry prior to each class or service. This recommendation will be

communicated to parents/guardians at the beginning of each new school year and throughout the year to newcomers.

Nursery Children

As a general rule, staff in the nursery will not be expected to change diapers. However in the event that this becomes necessary the following rules will apply:

Diaper changing must always take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child that is being changed, as well as the other children and workers in the room.

Diaper changing should be the responsibility of the parent unless it is **absolutely essential** that a diaper needs to be changed (i.e. a parent has been paged to the classroom for this purpose and is not responding). If necessary a security cleared leader may change the diaper as long as they follow the plan to protect procedures.

Preschool Children

Preschool children are not to go to the washroom alone.

Ideally, two volunteers will escort a group of preschool children to the washroom. Where two adults are not available, one leader may take a group of preschool children to the washroom if another leader is within visual contact, or the leader must stand outside the door only.

If just one child must go to the washroom, the volunteer should escort the child to the washroom and keep the outside door open. The volunteer should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.

When a preschool child needs assistance in the washroom, a leader can enter the cubicle to assist utilizing the following guidelines:

- The outside washroom door must be propped open and the leader must stand in the open cubicle doorway.
- The leader will take into consideration the privacy of the child.

No leader will ever be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.

Elementary Age Children

Grades 1-5 children are not to be sent to the washroom alone but should be accompanied by a buddy and/or a leader. Leaders are not to be alone with children in an unsupervised washroom and are never to enter into the cubicle with a child and shut the door.

Grades 6-8 Children

In order to prevent issues, we encourage that children use the facilities prior to the start of a program. Children are required to ask for permission to go to the washroom. Leaders are not to be alone with children in an unsupervised washroom.

Health and Safety Guidelines

Illness: A child, who is ill and could therefore expose other children and workers to illness, will not be accepted into the classroom. Any child with a known communicable disease will not be accepted into children or youth programming.

Medications: Our church's paid staff or volunteers are NOT to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medicating, the parent must give it. No medication will be left in the classroom or with a worker or child. In extreme cases (i.e., peanut allergies, ventilators, etc.), arrangements should be made with written instructions and the written permission of the child's parent/guardian. In the special case of a retreat or event, the leader will help the child find a proper storage for medication, but will not administer.

Procedures for Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood

- First Aid kits will be accessible to each classroom
- Separate the other children from the injured child. The injured child must not be moved, unless they can stand and walk on their own. Isolate the area where any blood may have dropped on carpet, toys, etc. Apply first aid measures and send someone to locate the parents/guardians.
- If other children have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury, their parents/guardians should be informed.
- Put on non-latex gloves (available in the first-aid kit and diaper changing supplies) and bandage the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.
- Carefully wipe up all blood and bloody bandages and remove to a secure, inaccessible waste removal receptacle.
- Any blood on the floor or toys must be washed away using a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water.
- Remove and properly dispose of non-latex gloves. Wash carefully with sterilizing soap (available in first-aid kit).
- Complete an Incident Report for any and all accidents. Injuries are to be reported to the ministry lead.

Allergies: Children having severe allergies will have the information brought to the attention of the lead and the volunteers serving that child. This information will be noted on their registration form.

Cleanliness: Child care areas will be sanitized regularly. All surfaces, toys, tables, trays, bedding, bibs and doors will be cleaned regularly. Carpets will be every second month.

Zero Tolerance: There will be no tolerance given for abuse, harassment, or neglect as defined by this document.

Discipline and Classroom Management

God's definition of discipline is outlined in Hebrews 12:7-11. Discipline is not something you do to a child. The word discipline does not mean punishment. It comes from the root word disciple, which means training that molds character, behavior and values. Rather than

seeking to merely maintain control or keep children quiet, our goal in managing children's behavior should be to shape their character in such a way that they will become disciples.

Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, pushing) is strictly prohibited.

1. Preventative Discipline

- Create a loving, caring atmosphere.
- Arrange your environment for children and for learning.
- To gain respect you must grant respect.
- Model self-discipline and structure in your own life.
- Prepare exciting and interesting classes with short transitions between activities.
- Establish and communicate realistic expectations for the children.
- Be sure the activities that you provide are meaningful and age-appropriate.
- Be fair and consistent with all children.
- Be sure your focus is on positive actions and reward positive behaviour.
- Be aware of children with special needs and bring their needs to the attention of the ministry lead.

2. Remedial Discipline

- Try to deal with the problems individually.
- Explain to the child why the behaviour is unacceptable and instruct them in how to do it correctly.
- Redirect the child to positive action.
- Explain the consequences of unacceptable behavior by defining the correct way to behave as well as the result of the wrong behavior.
- Offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the child.

3. Classroom Rules will be established to clearly communicate the expectations required of children. Virtually all other rules can be collapsed within the concept of respecting each other.

4. Discipline Stages:

- Verbal correction of misbehavior
- Removal from group activity (i.e. time out), but not segregation from room
- Graciously advise parents of misbehaviour to collaborate on alternative behavior management strategies.
- Graciously advise parents of misbehaviour and arrange an agreement of behaviour in conjunction with your ministry lead
- Withdrawal from program and suspension of attendance privileges

Reasonable restraint can be applied if the youth or children are hurting themselves or placing members of the group at risk, otherwise youth or children should not be touched in restraining or punishing ways.

Proper Display of Affection

Appropriate Touch: Recognizing that children need appropriate displays of affection that reflect pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love, all touch will be age and developmentally appropriate. All touch must be done in view of others and done in the

context of appropriate settings as outlined in this document. We encourage ministry leaders to:

Preschool:

- Hold a preschool child who is crying.
- Speak to a child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
- Hold a preschool child's hands when speaking, listening, or walking to an activity.

Grade 1-8:

- Speak to a child's eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
- Hold a child's hand when speaking, listening or walking him or her to an activity.
- Gently hold the child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour.
- Put your arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting.
- Pat a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.

Inappropriate Touch: Leaders will be made aware that the following actions are deemed inappropriate and will not be permitted:

- Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (strictly prohibited except in cases of diapering and assisting preschoolers as outlined in washroom policies).
- Holding a child's face when talking to or disciplining a child.
- Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.
- Prolonged physical contact with any child or youth.
- Seductiveness or suggestive contact.
- Any physical contact of any kind that is done for the pleasure or satisfaction of the care providers.
- Any touching used to express power or control over a child.

Special Events and Overnight Policies

Teachers/Leaders are encouraged to plan social activities and involve their pupils in field trips and service projects. The following precautions need to be taken with these activities.

Field Trips and Special Events

- Activities conducted away from the church property should be pre-approved by the supervising pastor or coordinator.

- 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 ministry lead's possession during trips and events with a photocopy of the completed forms filed in the church office. The originals are to be kept on file permanently.
- Parents must be notified at least one week prior to the outing.
- All trips and outings will be supervised by a minimum of two ministry volunteers and they need to follow the staff to child ratio as listed.
- For local special events, it is preferred that parents drop off and pick up their children at the event location.
- Attendance of all ministry personnel and youth will be recorded on the Trips and Off-site Travel Forms. Forms will be maintained and filed in the church office and be kept permanently on file.

Overnight Events

- All overnight events must be pre-approved by a supervising pastor.
- During any overnight activity or retreat involving both sexes, there should be both male and female workers present. All personnel will be assigned to a specific group of children/youth for whom they are responsible.
- All overnight events will be supervised by a minimum of two adults and they need to follow the staff to child ratio as listed.
- Youth attending retreats and overnight events will not be allowed to leave the event. Any exceptions must be added to the permission form signed by the parent/guardian.
- Female and male youth are not allowed in each other's rooms or tents for any reason during the overnight event and they are not permitted to sleep in mixed company.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in overnight event. If there is travel involved or any element of risk in the activity, parents must be asked for further signed authorization.

Transportation

It is always preferred that parents both drop off and pick up their youth/children at the event location. When transporting students, the following guidelines will be observed:

- When the transporting of children is involved in an activity, all drivers must be pre-approved by the ministry leader and have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance, with a minimum of five years driving experience.
- Drivers must obey all the rules of the road, including the speed limits. Reckless and unsafe driving will not be tolerated.
- The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts and each child will be in age appropriate safety restraints.

- Seat belts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times while the vehicle is in motion.
- A proper written consent form must be signed by parents prior to the outing. This form will be specific to one driver.
- Children will not be left unattended in a vehicle.
- Trips and Off-site Travel Forms will accompany the groups with the original left in the church office and filed permanently consisting of the participants names and phone numbers; location of the event and the location's phone number; and names of the drivers and the vehicle's information.
- Children and youth may not be transported one-on-one. If necessary, teams of two pre-approved ministry leaders may pick up and drop off children/youth. If necessary to drive one student, the ministry leader will ask the student to sit in the back seat.

Meeting with Students outside of Regular Programming

When a legitimate reason arises where a leader needs to meet with a child outside of regular ministry programming, written or verbal consent from the parent/guardian must be obtained prior to the meeting. Ministry Leads or Lead Pastors will be informed of all meetings in advance, and meetings must take place in a public space and be clearly visible to other adults

Online and Media Requirements

Social media is a major part of our culture and a means by which we interact with the children/youth that are a part of our community. As ministry personnel interact with children/youth that are a part of our ministry, we want to ensure the safety of all parties involved. *Online communication and text messaging with children grade 5 and younger is not permitted.*

Social Media: The appropriate methods of social media interaction between students and leaders are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Social media interaction must be done publically or include a second leader in messages.

Video Calls (Skype, FaceTime, etc.): will include 2 leaders with the acknowledgement of the ministry supervisor and notification of parents.

Phone, Texts, and Emails: Text messaging should not be the primary means of communication between leaders and children, and not as a means of building relationships or having deeper conversations. Whenever possible, these conversations should be moved to Facebook or email.

We ask all leaders to abide by the following guidelines:

- When communicating with youth through Facebook, Twitter, email, text messaging, or other forms of social media, it is important to save all correspondence in the event that any of the content is called into question.
- Online interaction will be such that is appropriate to the ministry setting in which the worker or volunteer serves.
- In the event that children or youth attempt to converse or exchange information of an inappropriate nature, the worker or volunteer will contact a supervising pastor immediately.
- Leaders will not post comments, content, or photographs that are not conducive to the integrity of the ministry, or that may be considered a contradiction of beliefs and core values of Eucharist Church.
- Leaders will not post photographs or videos of children or youth online except with permission on an approved page of Eucharist church.
- Ministry personnel will not use Eucharist's logo or other graphics that may cause confusion as to whether or not a site is an "official" site of Eucharist.

Photography and Videotaping Policy

As a general rule, no child or youth will be photographed, videotaped, or audio taped by ministry personnel without prior written consent from a parent or guardian. Consent must be given through use of an approved release form. All photography, videotaping or audio taping must be approved by a ministry lead or Lead Pastors.

Emergency Procedures

Emergency Exit Plan

- An emergency exit plan with maps and procedures should be visible in each classroom.
- All workers need to be familiar with the emergency exit plan.
- Procedures for fire emergencies will be reviewed semi-annually.

Fire Safety Procedures

In the case of a fire, refer to your emergency evacuation plan and map.

For classrooms with children infants to Grade 5:

- The ministry lead will ensure that the children are all accounted for and help them leave the building in an orderly way. All attendance sheets should be in the lead's possession.

- When the children are safely gathered outside the building, the lead will do an attendance check to ensure that each child is accounted for. Parents will not be allowed to pick-up their child until all the children have been accounted for and approval has been given by the ministry lead.

3. Screening Process

Security Clearance Process

To protect our children and to be protected from liability, Eucharist Church must take reasonable action in screening and supervising the volunteers involved in children's ministry. All ministry staff and volunteers must be approved. In order for prospective ministry personnel to be "security cleared" individuals will submit and complete the following:

1. Face to Face Interview

2. Ministry Application Form

3. Adhere to Six Month Rule - We will adhere to the "Six Month" rule, which will require volunteers who desire to work with children to have been regular attendees of Eucharist for a period of six months. Such a policy gives the church an opportunity to evaluate applicants and volunteers, and will help to deter someone seeking immediate access to children. This provision may be waived if the prospective volunteer is transferring from another church and has a letter of recommendation signed by the pastor of that church on letterhead or a

documented phone call with the previous church. It will also be possible that screened volunteers can apprentice with experienced volunteers for the initial six months.

4. Reference Checks - We will have each paid staff and volunteer staff provide two (2) personal references from sources who can speak to their overall integrity and previous work with children and/or youth.

Acceptable references may include the following.

- Former Pastor or Ministry Leader
- Current or previous employer
- Parents (for minors) - qualifies as one reference
- Teacher (for minors)
- Another person who has sufficient strength of relationship

4. Police Records Check - We will have each paid staff and volunteer staff (16 years of age and older) submit a Police Record Check, including a Vulnerable Sector Search for any position involving work with, or access to children or youth. Police checks must be renewed within 5 years of the date of completion, otherwise the check will be considered invalid.

6. Training - We will train all of our staff and volunteers who work with children and youth to understand how to carry out our policies contained within this manual to prevent any type of abuse. Training will be yearly and attendance will be tracked.

7. Final Approval from Church Leadership - Ministry personnel will complete the security clearance process prior to being scheduled in a position of trust. Also, ministry personnel who serve children and youth will have a personnel file kept with church records for a minimum of 33 years.

Security Clearance Considerations

Occasional Observers who join a class will have their attendance recorded and kept on file with the classroom attendance for that day. Visitors will be clearly identified as such. If they have not completed the security process, occasional observers will not be placed in a position of trust with any child who is not their own. Occasional observers may include summer serve volunteers, parents, and volunteers at special services who are paired with security cleared volunteers. Occasional observers will not:

- be left alone in a classroom with a child, or group of children
- change diapers or assist with toileting
- record attendance
- be the lead teacher of a lesson
- release children from the classroom

Police Record Checks: If there is a record or information that raises some concern, a pastor will meet with the person to discuss the offence. If the offence is other than child abuse or sexual abuse, the volunteer may proceed with ministry in the church provided both the pastor and the ministry leader involved agree. The following are criteria considered when evaluating the information:

- The number and type of convictions

- The age and circumstances of the offender at the time of the offence
- The length of time between past criminal activity and the present
- The conduct and circumstances of the individual since the offence
- The likelihood of the individual repeating the offence
- Individuals that have been accused, or convicted, or are under the suspicion of crimes against children and/or youth, or who have been convicted of violent crimes or other relevant crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programs where children or youth participate.

The information contained in the Police Record Check is considered strictly confidential. Only appropriate staff and relevant leaders of the church can be privy to the information. The Elders will be consulted for their approval only in the event of disagreement. All documentation collected during the screening process will be held in person's confidential file.

4. Reporting and Response

Hearing an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse:

The following policies outline the recommended procedure and sequence for reporting suspected abuse cases.

1. For the protection of our children and youth, all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse against children and youth will be taken seriously.
2. Upon hearing of potential abuse or allegations of abuse to a child or youth, the ministry personnel should document all pertinent information. All documentation must be kept permanently unless otherwise directed by legal counsel.
3. Stay calm and listen to the child.
4. Do NOT ask leading questions or attempt to investigate the incident. Get the basic story, give emotional support and remind the child that he or she is not at fault.

5. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the child is the first priority. Responding in a negative or non-supportive manner to the alleged victim can increase the pain of the child and their family, and future reconciliation will be more difficult, along with increasing the possibility of damaging litigation.
6. Do not promise the child that you will not tell anyone. The only claim of confidentiality which overrides the legal duty to report is solicitor-client privilege. Thus physicians, clergymen and others who consider their professional relationships confidential for certain purposes are not exempt from the duty to report child abuse or neglect.
7. In no way should the accused or any other parties be contacted at the point of completing the documentation aside from the appropriate authorities and ministry coordinator.
8. Any allegations of abuse to a child or youth must be reported to the proper authorities. The reporting should be done in conjunction with a senior pastor.

Reporting an Allegation of Abuse:

Any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child (or children) is in need of protection is legally required to report the matter to the Children's Aid Society or the police. Reporting must be done orally by telephone or in person. We believe that church leaders have a double accountability before God to be aware of the great responsibility relative to protecting our children.

If you have any concerns regarding the safety of a child in our church, you **must report this to your pastor or ministry coordinator immediately**. He/she will then work with you in addressing the issue and, if needed, contacting the appropriate child protection agency. An effective response strategy to an allegation of abuse recognizes the following underlying principles:

- All allegations are to be taken seriously.
- Adequate care must be shown for the well-being of victims.
- Situations must be handled forthrightly, with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
- Full co-operation must be given to civil authorities.

- The incident will be reported to the church's insurance agent.
- The church will notify and work in conjunction with CBOQ leadership.
- The victim should not be held responsible in any way.

In the case of an allegation, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. **Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse** - If a child discloses to you that an episode of abuse has occurred, take the allegation seriously. Follow the guidelines stated in the previous section on "Hearing an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse".
2. **Reporting the Incident or Allegation** - Any allegation of abuse will be reported to a senior pastor immediately. The pastor will contact appropriate authorities, and although the police and Children's Aid will require the name of the reporter, the pastor will safeguard the anonymity of the reporter to others. The Church will ask the appropriate authorities how it could assist in helping and supporting the investigation and the hurting child and their family. The senior pastor or his/her designate will notify the church's insurance provider and seek legal counsel if helpful, upon hearing of a suspected child abuse case. All information should be kept confidential and the individual who is suspected of the abuse should not be contacted. If the suspected abuse happened in the context of church ministries or was committed by a church member or attendee, the parents of the victim must be notified immediately by the senior pastor or by church leadership. The decision to investigate will be entirely up to the CAS and/or police.
3. **Documentation of the Incident** - As soon as possible, take care to accurately and thoroughly document all interactions, observations and comments clearly by filling out the "Suspected Child Abuse Form". Report any additional concerns you become aware of, even if a previous report has already been made with respect to the same child and/or abuser. Abuse forms will be kept permanently.
4. **Notification of Appropriate Authorities** - Reports of suspected abuse should be done with the knowledge and assistance of the supervising pastor. Social Workers designated to receive reports are trained to investigate and assess the need for interventions. The supervising pastor will ask the Children's Aid Society and/or the police how to proceed with notification of the child's parents, unless the allegations concern the involvement of the parents.
5. **Protection of the Victim** - If the allegation of abuse comes forward while the child is in the care of the church, the child must be kept in a safe place and a plan developed in conjunction with the Children's Aid Society and/or police as to how to proceed with

the investigation. Pastoral care will be offered, as appropriate, recognizing that specialized services may be required.

6. **Treatment of the Accused** - It is crucial to ensure that even in a situation where an accusation of abuse has been made, the accused needs to be treated with dignity and in a manner of love. While under investigation, the innocence of the abuser should be assumed. However, for the safety of all involved, the accused will be immediately suspended pending the outcome of the investigation. Pastoral care will be offered, as appropriate, recognizing again that specialized services may be required.

7. **Confidentiality** - It is important to keep all relevant information restricted to those who need to be advised. Therefore, all suspicions of abuse should be directed only to the person responsible for that ministry or a senior pastor. Discretion must be observed and details of suspected abuse must not be shared among the church community. Information should be shared on a need-to-know basis, expanding only as individuals are drawn into the response and investigation. Confidentiality for the suspected victim and the accused must be protected.

8. **Report Follow-Up** - A confidential written report with conclusions and actions taken should always be made by the supervising pastor following a child abuse report. These reports will be kept permanently in a confidential personnel file.

If it is proven that a staff member or volunteer who has access to children or youth at Eucharist Church has committed abuse, the church will practice discipline according to Matthew 18:15-17, the policy manual of the church and the CBOQ guidelines.

5. Policy Monitoring

Compliance with the Plan to Protect Guidelines

Education, communication, and commitment to this policy are key to our efforts to prevent the occurrence of abuse of children in our care. We recognize the serious nature of the implementation of this policy and believe it to be critical in providing a safe and effective environment for our children. As such, we require an annual refresher training of the relevant policies and procedures for children's ministry.

Ministry leaders will review the Plan to Protect Guidelines, including a report to the Elders Board and consider the following:

- Are all staff and volunteers working with children or youth trained regarding these policies?

- Are the required policies and guidelines being followed?
- What obstacles exist in complying with the policies?
- What is the level of cooperation?
- Do sufficient materials exist for training and information?
- Are the policies printed and available?