

Policies and Procedures Manual

Plan to Protect Children, Youth, and Leaders

Based on material originally produced by The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada and Evangel Tabernacle, Kelowna, BC

Elevation has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children participating in church programs. Incidents of child abuse or accusations of molestation can occur in any church. By nature, churches are trust-based organizations allowing adults to have access to children. However, trust must be tempered with guidelines and procedures to prevent a church from being susceptible to incidents of abuse as well as protect staff and volunteers from potential allegations of abuse. Therefore, everyone who supervises children or youth through *Elevation* is required to follow the applicable guidelines and procedures outlined in this document.

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Child Protection Procedures	4
Applying to Serve	5
Safe Classrooms	6
- Supervision	6
- Health and Safety	7
- Appropriate Touch	8
- Discipline	9
- Age 0-2 Program	10
- Age 3-5 Program	11
- Grade 1-6 and Youth Program	12
Special Events & Overnights	13
Child Abuse	14
Incident Reporting	16

Appendices:

A	Ministry Covenant
B	Discipline and Restoration of Ministry Leaders
C	Children's Ministry Leadership Application Form
D	Interview Form
E	Contact
F	Script for Interviews
G	Checklist
H	Medication Administration Release Form
I	Waiver & Medical Release for Overnight Events
J	Photo Waiver
K	Medication Administration Release Form
L	Initial Report (Suspected Child Abuse)
M	Follow Up Report (Suspected Child Abuse)

Child Protection Procedures

Elevation is committed to the following:

1. We will screen all paid employees, including ministerial staff, and volunteers who work with preschoolers, children or youth.
2. We will check references and do criminal record checks on all our workers, for any position involving work with preschoolers, children or youth. Anyone with criminal abuse violations will not be allowed to work with children or youth.
3. We will train all of our staff who work with preschoolers, children or youth, both paid and volunteer, to understand the nature of child abuse and child sexual abuse, how to carry out our policies to prevent abuse, including our clearly defined reporting procedures for suspected incidents.
4. We take our policies to prevent child abuse seriously and will see that they are enforced.
5. All workers will sign the Ministry Covenant, agreeing to comply with church policies and guidelines.
6. We have adopted a basic “Two-Adult” rule. Such a rule says that two adults should be present during any children’s activity. One worker must be over 18 years of age.
7. We will follow the “Six Month” rule. Volunteers will be permitted to work with preschoolers, children or youth only after they have been part of *Elevation* for a period of six months. (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.)

Applying to Serve

Every prospective ministry leader must complete the following before beginning work with children or youth:

- Children's Ministry Leadership Application form (See Appendix C).
- Personal References – Three personal references (ie former pastor, teacher, employer, other volunteer) must be submitted. At least two of these references will be contacted and asked to affirm the appointment of the volunteer.
- Criminal Record Check - The cost for a Criminal Record Check requested by *Elevation* will be borne by the church. Minors under 16 years of age are exempt from the CRC. A copy of a CRC done for any purpose within 120 days of beginning to work with children or youth at *Elevation* is acceptable. Criminal Record Checks must be updated every 3 years.
- Interview – This short interview allows leaders and volunteers to ask follow up questions. The information given in the interview will be available only to the pastoral staff and children's ministry leader-
- Review of Plan to Protect – Each volunteer must read this document, and then sign a record indicating they have done so.

Criminal Record Checks

A CRC does not note civic offenses, such as parking or driving tickets, but only criminal offenses.

If there is no criminal record of any sort, the volunteer may be considered for ongoing service in the church.

If there is a record or information which raises some concern, the designated ministry leader and the pastor of the volunteer will meet to discuss the matter.

If the offense is other than child or sexual abuse, the volunteer may proceed with ministry in the church provided both the pastor and the ministry leader involved agree. Criteria considered will include: the number and type of convictions; the age and circumstances of the offender at the time of the offense; the length of time between past criminal activity and the present; the conduct and circumstances of the individual since the offense; and, the likelihood of the individual repeating the offense

*If the offense is related to abuse of children or of a sexual nature, the volunteer may not be involved in ministry with children on behalf of *Elevation**

The information contained in a CRC's is confidential. Only the affected pastor, his supervisor, and the children's ministry leader can be privy to the information. The Steering Committee will be consulted in the event of a disagreement.

Safe Classrooms

Classroom Staffing and Supervision Guidelines

Adequate supervision should be maintained before, during and after an event until all children are in the custody of their legal guardians. Here are some guidelines to help insure this takes place:

Two Leaders

Generally, there should be at least two leaders in any room with children. Smaller classes could use high school students or have parents help out on a rotational basis.

Open Door Policy

When it is necessary that only one adult leader be in a room with children, the door of that room should remain open.

Obtain Parental Permission

Church staff or volunteer workers must obtain the consent of the child's parent or guardian before going out alone with that child, or spending time with the child in an unsupervised situation. Workers must also notify an appropriate church leader of such meetings in advance. Children must also have parental permission for involvement in church sponsored field trips or overnight events.

Transporting groups of children

At least 2 adults should be present with the kids when leaving the room. One worker should be at the end of the line. Leaders should take a head count before and after.

Emergency Situations

In case of a fire make sure you have all of the children. If possible keep all Sunday School groups together. Try to buddy up younger children with older children.

In case of an intruder, close and lock the door, have children sit quietly away from all doors and windows.

Health and Safety Guidelines

Sick Children

Any child who displays signs of illness should not be received into the nursery or a classroom.

Medication

In extreme cases (i.e. peanut allergies, ventilators, etc.) arrangements should be made with written instructions and the permission of the child's parent. Otherwise, *Elevation* workers are not to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medication, the parent must give it. No medication will be left in the classroom or with a worker or child.

Procedures for Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood

- Separate the injured child from the other children. Isolate the area where any blood may have dropped on carpet, toys, etc. Apply first aid measures and send someone to locate the parents.
- If other children have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury, their parents should be informed.
- Put on non-latex gloves (available in the first-aid kit) 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.
- Sanitize the area in the room that was affected by the blood.
- Remove and properly dispose of non-latex gloves. Wash carefully with sterilizing soap (available in first-aid kit).

Cleanliness

- Spray any used toys or table tops with our sanitizing Virox solution weekly. Make sure everything is clean and sanitary before you leave. If something needs to get washed, let the Children's Ministry Director know.

Appropriate Touch

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be sensitive to how their touch might be interpreted by different kinds of people.” Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. The following guidelines are recommended:

Appropriate Touch

Love and caring can be expressed by:

- Bending down to the child’s eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully
- Taking a child’s hand and leading him or her to an activity
- Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting.
- Taking both of the child’s hands as you say, “You did such a good job!” (or “I’m so glad to see you. We’ve missed you!” etc.)
- Patting a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him/her.
- Holding a child by the shoulders or hand to keep his/her attention while you redirect the child’s behaviour.
- Gently holding a child’s chin to help him/her focus on what you are saying. (important for children with attention issues.)
- Holding a preschool child who is crying

Inappropriate Touch

Do not:

- Kiss a child, coax a child to kiss you, engage in extended hugging and tickling
- Touch a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child with toileting as outlined below).
- Carry older children or have them sit on your lap.
- Be alone with a child.
- Engage in prolonged physical contact.
- Participate in opposite sex piggyback rides.
- Engage in seductive or suggestive contact or any physical contact of any kind that is done for the pleasure or satisfaction of care providers.
- Use any touching to express power or control over a child.

Discipline and Classroom Management

1. Preventative Discipline
 - a. Create a loving, caring atmosphere.
 - b. To gain respect, you must “give” respect.
 - c. Establish and communicate realistic expectations for the children.
 - d. Provide meaningful and age-appropriate activities.
 - e. Be fair and consistent with all children.
 - f. Be sure your focus is on positive actions.
 - g. Be aware of children with special needs.

2. Remedial Discipline
 - a. Try to deal with the problems individually.
 - b. Explain to the child why the behaviour is unacceptable.
 - c. Redirect the child to positive action.
 - d. Explain the consequences of unacceptable behaviour by defining the correct way to behave.
 - e. Offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the child.

3. Classroom Rule Suggestions
 - a. One voice 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.

4. Some examples of *appropriate discipline* within the ministry setting:
 - a. Praising the specific behaviors you want to see in your group (i.e. “good listening”, “thank you for waiting”)
 - b. A firm gentle voice addressing and redirecting the behavior (i.e. “you are running; walk please”)
 - c. Confidential parental discussion when necessary.
 - d. Age appropriate “time outs” or withdrawal from activity.

5. Some examples of *inappropriate discipline* within a ministry setting:
 - a. Corporal punishment of any kind.
 - b. Any words or tone that would cause a child to think he or she is the “problem.”
 - c. Any words that could cause feelings of condemnation or shame-

Program for Children Age 0-5

Child Security

1. All ministry leaders working with the children must wear a nametag.
1. The names and addresses of parents and children must be carefully maintained.
1. Parents of nursery aged children will be provided with an I.D.# at the time the child is brought to the nursery. The child will be released only to the bearer of that I.D.#. The parent must provide in writing, any special needs of their child.
1. Programs for children aged 0-2 must provide a sign-in sheet. An accurate sign-in procedure would 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. A child will be released to a parent or representative who has the I.D.#.
1. Children are never to be dropped off in the nursery 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.

Washroom Guidelines

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.
- Children must be 12 years of age or older, with appropriate training before being permitted to change infant's diapers.
- Parents should be encouraged to take their children to visit the washroom prior to each class or service.
 - For preschool children, if multiple children need to go to the washroom, two adults will escort the group the washroom.
 - If just one child must go to the washroom, the adult volunteer should escort the child to the washroom and ensure its safety. Depending on the age and gender of the child, the volunteer may remain outside the washroom door (and call the name of the child, if he/she appears to be taking too long), or just inside the washroom door, if appropriate.
 - Volunteers should not be alone with a child in a 'private, unsupervised' washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.
 - If preschool children need assistance in the washroom, an adult may need to enter the washroom cubicle (do not close the door). If this is the case, a second adult should be within visual contact or at least notified on departure and arrival.

Program for Grades 1-6

Washroom Guidelines

- A child in grades 1 through 3 must be accompanied by an adult worker. The adult should escort the child to the washroom, and ensure his or her safety. The worker should remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him/her back to the classroom.
- The worker should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.
- A child in grades 4 through 6 must use a buddy system (another child of the same sex and age range) when going to the washroom.
- Never go into a washroom cubicle with a child/youth and shut the door.

Program for Youth

Security

1. The following guidelines for ‘Special Events and Overnights’ apply to all off-site youth activities.
2. Youth are not expected to provide ‘waivers/permission forms’ for weekly activities, but should provide those for overnight or special events where additional travel is involved.
3. Youth leaders are encouraged to develop meaningful relationships with youth, but must treat those relationships with respect and not allow any inappropriate touch or emotional intimacy. Hugs (generally, one arm from the side), horseplay, and any other touch must be respectful, and appropriate.

Special Events and Overnight Policies

Teachers are encouraged to have special class activities in their homes, plan social activities and involve children and youth in field trips and service projects. The following precautions need to be taken.

Field Trips and Special Events

- Off-site activities should be pre-approved by the Ministry leader and/or relevant staff member.
- Parents should be notified at least one week prior to the outing.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in field trips and special events (Appendices H & I)
- All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of two approved, non-related, adult leaders.
- When the transporting of children is involved in an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts.
- Every effort should be made to limit time alone in a vehicle transporting a child/youth. When it is necessary, clear accountability should be maintained (eg. phone a co-leader at time of pickup and drop off).
- At every special and regular children and youth off-site activity, at least one of the leaders must not be related to the other leaders.

Overnight Events

Church sponsored overnight activities may be permitted as long as the following guidelines are met:

- All overnight activities must be pre-approved by the Ministry leader and/or relevant staff member.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in overnight events. (See Appendix H & I)
- All overnight activities should have a minimum ratio of one leader for every ten children. There must always be a minimum of two non-related leaders, and a minimum of 3, if children of both sexes are present.
- All supervising adults must be approved volunteers. Any exceptions must have the approval of the relevant pastoral staff member (ie. if a parent were to assist with transportation for a group of teens).

Child Abuse

Child abuse” is defined as follows:

- All child abuse involves the misuse of power when people take advantage of the authority or power they have over vulnerable people;
- A child means a person under the age of sixteen years;
- Abuse can be physical, emotional or sexual.

Physical Abuse is using physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child or youth. It is more than reasonable discipline Note: *Within the context of the church, it is never permissible to strike a child.*

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of hurting a child’s feelings to the point of damaging their self-respect. It includes verbal attacks on the child, insults, humiliation or rejection. A child or youth who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behaviour.

Sexual Abuse occurs when a child or youth is used by somebody else 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 can include touching and non-touching (ie exposure to pornography, verbal comments, etc.) behaviour.

Sexual Harassment occurs when someone is bothering you by saying or doing unwanted or unwelcome things of a sexual or gender-related nature. For example, someone who makes unwelcome sexual or gender-related remarks and gestures by:

- touching you inappropriately
- making offensive jokes or remarks about women or men
- making sexual requests or suggestions
- staring at or making unwelcome comments about your body
- displaying sexually offensive pictures
- being verbally abusive to you because of your gender
- denying you something important, punishing or threatening you for refusing a sexual request, or for complaining about inappropriate sexual behaviour or comments, if that person is in a position of authority or power.

Sexual harassment does not have to be sexual in nature. It can also mean that someone is bothering you simply because you are a man or a woman. Making stereotypes about one gender or the other can be a form of sexual harassment.

Symptoms of Abuse and Molestation

Church workers and staff should be alert to the physical, behavioural and verbal signs of abuse
Some of the more common signs are:

Physical signs may include:

- lacerations and bruises
- nightmares
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area

- difficulty with urination
- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease

Behavioural signs may include:

- anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- nervous or hostile behaviour toward adults
- sexual self-consciousness
- “acting out” sexual behaviour
- withdrawal from church activities and friends

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

No one profile fits the various perpetrators of abuse. Over 80 percent of the time, an abuser is known to the victim. Emphasis upon “stranger danger” is not helpful.

Liability

Churches are not “guarantors” of the safety and well-being of children. They are not absolutely liable for every injury that occurs on their premises or in the course of their activities. Generally, they are responsible only for those injuries that result from their negligence.

Incident Reporting Procedures

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 a social worker in the local office of the Family and Child Services. A person who knowingly fails to report in these circumstances is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offense. No action would be taken against a person making a report unless it is made maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief.

If you have any concerns regarding the safety of a child, you should report to your Ministry Team Leader and/or relevant pastoral staff member. He/she will then work with you in contacting the appropriate child protection agency. That pastor will ensure that the church's legal advisor is contacted. Where a pastor is involved in the allegation, the P.A.O.C. District Office will also be advised.

Responding to a Child

When a child first comes to you, be sure to take his or her word seriously. Stay calm and listen to the child. Remind the child that he or she is not at fault. Tell the child that he or she was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child you will not tell anyone.

Discuss Suspicious Behaviour Immediately

Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between adult volunteer workers and a youth or a child must be confronted immediately.

Some conduct just deserves an initial comment. Other conduct requires reporting "and further investigation".

When an allegation occurs

Document your efforts at handling the incident.

Report the incident immediately to the pastor or his designate who may in turn draw in the church's lawyer if required. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance. However, it is important to keep the information confidential and restricted to only the church leaders and professionals who need to be advised.

IMPORTANT FOR STAFF: As soon as possible after the incident comes to your attention, contact the Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region, 519-576-0540.

Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Care and safety of the victim is the first priority.

Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

Report Follow-Up

A confidential written report (See Appendix M) with conclusions and action taken should always be made by the pastor heading up that ministry following a child abuse report. These reports should be kept in a confidential personnel file.