

## Safe Place Policy: Vulnerable Person Protection & Abuse Prevention

Board Approval on the 13th day of October, 2021.

Signed on behalf of the Board by:

**Moderator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Secretary:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Treasurer:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 1.01 Preamble

#### Why have this policy?

The local church is a part of the community in which it exists and aims to be recognized as a place of love and safety. Young people are not only the church of the future; they are a valuable part of the church and community today. However, our Children, Youth and some adults are also vulnerable. Due to perceived weakness, lack of awareness, and knowledge, sometimes they are taken advantage of and become victims of abuse. Therefore, it is imperative that we proactively protect them and provide safe environments. We must also protect those who serve our Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults. Ministry Personnel need the security of knowing there are processes and procedures in place to minimize the possibility of an erroneous accusation. We love and value all who enter our churches, including the most vulnerable and, like Jesus, we will do everything in our power to protect them. This policy also exists because our insurance depends on it. It has become a requirement for all churches to implement a safe place policy to retain insurance for the conference.

## 1.02 Definitions

In this Policy, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

### **Abuse**

A non-accidental act committed by a person in a Position of Trust which harms or threatens a Vulnerable Person's physical or mental health, or welfare. Abuse is primarily categorized as being physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, or involving neglect.

### **Accused**

Individual against whom a complaint of abuse is made pursuant to the terms of this Policy.

### **Act**

The Child and Family Services Act, C.C.S.M. c80 (the "Act").

<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/c080e.php>

### **Board**

Board of Elders, or the highest functioning authority of a church

### **CCMBC**

The Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

### **Child**

Individual under the age of 18 years; see also "Youth".

### **Church Staff**

Individual employed by the church, such as a pastor, worship director, family ministries coordinator, administrator, etc. Lead Church Staff is any employee who makes executive decisions about programs/ministries.

### **Complainant**

Individual who makes a complaint of abuse under this policy.

### **Corporal Punishment**

Use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction. Under Canadian law, force must be applied with an open hand only, never above the shoulders, never resulting in marks, and never emerging from

loss of temper. The same law states that punishment may only be administered to children aged 2-12.

**Designated Screening Personnel**

Individual designated and trained to screen Prospective Ministry Personnel. Tasks include processing applications, reference checks, conducting interviews, and maintaining ministry personnel files.

**Female**

Individual distinguished biologically at birth with female sex organs.

**Gender**

Either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions.

**Hall Monitors**

Ministry Personnel whose role is to provide general surveillance and to visit rooms where Vulnerable Persons are being supervised.

**Male**

Individual distinguished biologically at birth with male sex organs.

**MB Churches**

The MB Churches of Canada include all Mennonite Brethren of Canada churches that are members of a provincial or national Mennonite Brethren conference. All churches that are members of a provincial conference become members of the national conference.

**MBCM**

The Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba.

**Ministry Lead**

Individuals who have completed the screening process and are responsible for a ministry/program; usually church employees.

**Ministry Personnel**

Individuals who have completed the screening process of this Policy and are deemed to be in a Position of Trust and may serve Vulnerable Persons.

**Ministry Personnel File**

File kept of each Ministry Personnel and Ministry Lead, including the ministry application form, police record checks, records of reference checks, and all other documents related to the recruiting and supervision of Ministry Personnel.

**Occasional Observer**

Individuals who rarely visit and observe Ministry Personnel with ministry activities. This includes Parents assisting their own children. Occasional Observers do not need to be screened or trained, but their access to minors must be limited and will never be placed in a Position of Trust.

**Parent**

The natural or adoptive Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of a Child.

**Position of Trust**

Any position where one is depended on to be trustworthy and to serve in a manner that is beyond reproach. It includes any role wherein Parents/guardians have entrusted their loved one to your care. Violation of Position of Trust refers to an instance when that trust is used to commit a crime or injury.

**Prospective Ministry Personnel**

Adults/youth who are members or regularly attend as adherents and awaiting approval to be Ministry Personnel.

**Unrelated Adults**

A pair of adults who are not married, divorced, or cohabitating.

**Youth**

Children aged 11 to 17 years.

**Vulnerable Adult**

Individual 18 years of age or older who, due to age, disability, or other circumstance (temporary or permanent), is in a position of considerable dependence on others. This includes refugees.

**Vulnerable Persons**

means persons who, because of their age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, (a) are in a position of dependence on others; or (b) are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by persons in a position of authority or trust relative to them.

### **1.03 Understanding Abuse**

Abuse is categorized as being physical, sexual, emotional, involving neglect, harassment, improper touching, and/or improper discipline. It is sometimes described as misuse of power or a violation of trust.

#### **Physical Abuse**

Any deliberate physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a Vulnerable Person. It is different from what is considered reasonable discipline.

#### **Sexual Abuse**

When a Vulnerable Person is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or a peer. Coercion is the practice of persuading someone using force or threats, and is intrinsic to sexual abuse. It may be physical, psychological, or emotional. Coercion distinguishes abuse from sexual exploration with peers. Sexual abuse of Vulnerable Persons can take many forms. This includes but is not strictly limited to: sexual intercourse, exposing private areas, indecent phone calls, fondling, watching the individual undress for pleasure, allowing a child to look at or be in pornographic pictures or videos, or engage in prostitution.

#### **Emotional Abuse'**

A pattern of behaviour that attacks the emotional development and sense of selfworth of a Vulnerable Person. It includes excessive, aggressive, or unreasonable demands of a person beyond his/her capacity. Emotional abuse includes frequently criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring, or isolation. It also includes failure of a Parent or caregiver to provide their children with love, emotional support, and guidance.

#### **Neglect**

The failure to meet a Vulnerable Person's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, sleep, medical attention, education, and protection from harm. This can occur when Parents or caregivers do not know about appropriate care for dependents, when they cannot adequately supervise or when they are unable to plan ahead. Neglect may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

#### **Spiritual Abuse**

We believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and affirm the importance of Christian evangelism. However, we do not believe this justifies any means to fulfill that end. Hence, we disavow the use of any techniques that bypass a person's critical faculties, take advantage of weaknesses, limits the capacity of or disrespects an individual's freedom to choose.

### **Harassment**

Repeated unwanted sexual, physical, or verbal action, which may be subtle or overt. Often particularly by a Person of Trust or status which causes the recipient to feel attacked, demeaned, intimidated, or manipulated. It is often also identified as bullying.

### **Discrimination**

Differential treatment based on a personal characteristic which has a negative impact on an individual or group. Examples of personal characteristics include ethnic origin, skin tone, economic status, faith/creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, or disability. It is often also identified as bullying.

### **Exposure to Domestic Violence**

Vulnerable Persons who live in homes where a parent or caretaker is experiencing abuse. Exposure to domestic violence includes but is not limited to: hearing a violent event, being directly involved as an eyewitness, intervening, being used as a part of a violent event, and/or experiencing the aftermath of a violent event.

## **1.04 General Guidelines and Principles for Reducing the Risk of Abuse\***

\*Adapted from Reducing the Risk.

The following are general guidelines and principles reflected in this document:

- 1. When risk increases, supervision should also increase.**
  - a) For the protection of our Vulnerable Persons, supervision of all Ministry Personnel will be intentional through formal and informal visits;
- 2. Risk increases as isolation increases.**
  - a) Avoid Isolation – Where possible, all meetings with Vulnerable Persons are to be with a group or in pairs.
  - b) It is preferable to have more than one screened adult present when working with Vulnerable Persons. If a second adult cannot be in the same room, it is best to have them close by and aware of your meeting, acting as a Hall Monitor.
  - c) The goal should be to meet in an open, visible space rather than a closed, private space. A hallway is better than a secluded room. An office is better than a home.
  - d) When meeting, an open door is better than a closed door; a door with a window is better than a solid door.
- 3. Risk increases as accountability and adherence to policies decreases.**

- a) Make others aware of your activities and whereabouts, particularly when meeting with Vulnerable Persons, and keep a record of the events.
- b) A strategy for program maintenance should be developed and reviewed at the beginning of each ministry year (September) to ensure training, updated files, and that the physical environment is compliant with this policy.
- c) Plan regular meetings with a Ministry Lead to discuss the ongoing nature and actions of the ministry program, including precautions taken and any concerns.
- d) When a boundary is violated, something could be misinterpreted, or where such an instance is alleged, immediately report it to a supervisor. If a Ministry Lead is unwilling or unavailable for discussion, seek out a Board Member or Lead Church Staff. Such incidents should be immediately reported to MBCM and the insurer.
- e) Activities that could easily lead to allegations are prohibited without the express written permission of at least one Parent of the Child/Youth and the Ministry Lead.
- f) All local Health and Safety Standards must be adhered to.

**4. Risk increases when there is an imbalance of power or influence.**

- a) Corporal punishment is prohibited.
- b) Report all allegations and suspicions of Vulnerable Person maltreatment.
- c) Before engaging in high risk or mentoring type activities, Church Staff must inform other Church Staff, Lead Church Staff or Ministry Lead to increase lines of accountability on an ongoing basis.

**5. Key to demonstrating due diligence is through retaining documentation.**

- a) All Registration forms, Letters of Informed Consent in which Parents give written consent, and attendance records must be gathered and kept permanently.
- b) Incident reports must be written and submitted on all accidents/injuries and kept permanently.

## **2.01 Ministry Personnel Recruitment and Screening**

### **Qualifications for Ministry**

1. Individuals wanting to work with Vulnerable Persons must be members of, or have regularly attended, a church belonging to the MB Churches of Canada for at least 6 months. Reference checks must be received from at least 2 individuals, including one from their previous pastor when applicable. A reference check from one of the church staff is a good alternative when a previous pastor reference is not available.

2. Ministry Personnel serving with Vulnerable Persons are members or adherents in good standing who support the general vision, values, and constitution of the local church. They also submit to the leadership of the Church Staff and Board.
3. Individuals who have been accused, convicted, or are under investigation for crimes against Vulnerable Persons, or who have been convicted of violent or other relevant crimes will not be involved in ministries/programs where Vulnerable Persons participate. Where such instances are unavoidable (such as a public worship service), the individual must participate with a screened adult, whose role is to provide support, accountability, and supervision. Such individuals may never, under any circumstance, participate in ministries/programs that directly serve Vulnerable Persons.

### **Process**

1. Prospective Ministry Personnel are to submit to the recruitment and screening process managed by the Ministry Lead. The recruitment and screening process includes:
  - a) Being a member or adherent of the church in good standing for at least 6 months
  - b) Ministry Personnel Application Form, which includes a signed statement of commitment to not knowingly teach against the MB Confession of Faith
  - c) Reference checks (at least 2 adults unrelated to applicant) done in person or by phone
  - d) Interview done in person
  - e) Criminal Record Check Clearance (if 18 or older)
  - f) Orientation Training
  - g) Final approval from a Lead Church Staff member
2. Prospective Ministry Personnel must complete the recruitment and screening process prior to being placed in a Position of Trust.
3. Ministry Personnel and Ministry Leads must have a personnel file kept with church records. These files must be kept permanently, preferably in multiple formats and locations.
4. Ministry Personnel who reapply after taking a break from ministry service of 3 or more years must complete all steps, excluding interview and reference checks.

### **Criminal Record (CR) Checks**

1. CR checks must be conducted on all those serving Vulnerable Persons (which include Vulnerable Sector scans). Additionally, recommended best practice would include an Abuse Registry Check through the Manitoba Government's website.
  - a) CR checks must be renewed every 5 years.



- b) CR checks are required for all Ministry Personnel and are to be kept permanently. If individuals wish to keep the original copy, the original must be scanned by a Church Staff and signed to verify they saw the original.
2. If a CR check is returned "NOT CLEAR" the prospective candidate will be asked to do one of the following:
  - a) Either commit to disclosure and verification of crimes committed and convicted of with police documentation to verify; or
  - b) Withdraw their application from serving Vulnerable Persons.

Without verification of convictions and without a clear CR check, individuals cannot serve Vulnerable Persons. Depending on the circumstances, certain security measures should be discussed and put into place.

### **Training**

1. Abuse prevention education and training is required for all Church Staff, Board members, and Ministry Personnel serving with Children, Youth, Refugees, New Immigrants, and other Vulnerable Adults. Orientation training must be completed prior to serving.
2. All Ministry Personnel are to affirm that they have read and understand this Policy, as well as the procedures that pertain to their ministry area. Ministry Personnel must be educated about their legal obligation to report suspected abuse, and to recognize the symptoms of abuse.
3. All Church Staff, Ministry Leads, Designated Screening Personnel, and Ministry Personnel are required to attend orientation training prior to ministry placement and refresher training annually after that.
4. Attendance must be taken at training events and noted in each Ministry Personnel File. All Ministry Personnel must sign an agreement form confirming they have read, understood, and are willing to comply with this Policy and its procedures annually.

## **2.02 Child Protection Procedures**

### **Supervision of Children**

1. One of the following must be in place:
  - A minimum of 2 unrelated Ministry Personnel present to supervise for every 20 children, except in the event of an emergency; or
  - 1 Ministry Personnel present with clear line of sight to Hall Monitors circulating periodically from room to room.
2. Ministry Personnel must be 18 years of age or older to supervise Children/Youth alone in a room with a Hall Monitor circulating the area. Those under 18 must be in pairs.

### **Ministry Personnel Identification**

All Ministry Personnel when serving Children are to wear an identifier (shirt, nametag, lanyard, etc.) that clearly indicates their position. It is recommended that all Ministry Personnel be identifiable whenever they are serving any age group.

### **Registration Forms and Personal Information Protection**

All effort must be made to have Registration Forms for activities where Children/Youth are participating. A release and permission statement must be included on all forms releasing CCMBC, MBCM, and the local church from unforeseen and accidental injuries, along with contact information in case of an emergency. A statement will be included on all registration forms to explain the purpose and extent for collecting personal information, as well as the commitment to protect personal information. These must be kept permanently.

### **Attendance**

1. Attendance of Children/Youth must be taken each time a program is in session. These records are to be kept permanently, preferable in multiple formats and locations.
2. Attendance records are to include the date, classroom, age/grade of students, full names of all present, including the Hall Monitor.

### **Washroom Guidelines**

Parents should be encouraged to handle their Child's toileting needs prior to each program.

#### **For Preschool Children:**

1. Preschool Children are not to go to the washroom alone.
2. The following must be adhered to when accompanying preschool Children to the washroom:
  - Ministry Personnel escort a group of Children to the washroom; or
  - 1 Ministry Personnel escort a Child to the washroom with 1 Hall Monitor supervising.
3. Ministry Personnel are to avoid being alone with a Child in an unsupervised washroom and should make all efforts to maintain visibility at all times.

#### **For Elementary Children:**

Elementary children are not to be sent to the washroom alone but should be accompanied by a buddy, with a Hall Monitor supervising the general area.

### **Architectural Precautions**

1. Door windows in Children's program areas are never to be covered in order to maintain clear sight lines into rooms.
2. All electrical outlets are to be kept covered when not in use.
3. Doors of rooms and large closets must be locked when not in use.

## **2.03 Youth Protection Procedures**

### **Supervision of Youth**

1. Programs for Youth should comply with the following established staffing ratios:
  - 2 Ministry Personnel for every 16 "Jr. High/Middle School" Youth (gr. 6 to 8)
  - 2 Ministry Personnel for every 20 "High School" Youth (gr. 9 to 12)
2. For high-risk activities, ratios should be adjusted to 2 Ministry Personnel for every 10 Youth.
3. There must be at least 2 unrelated Ministry Personnel at all events. Events with both genders must be supervised by both male and female Ministry Personnel.
4. It is recommended there be at least a 5-year age difference between Ministry Personnel and the Youth they serve.

### **Dating**

Ministry Personnel serving Youth must not pursue a dating relationship with a student. Furthermore, Ministry Personnel should not pursue a dating relationship with a student recently graduated from Youth.

### **Contacting Opportunities**

1. Ministry Personnel must not be isolated with Youth.
2. Mentoring and similar such activity must be pre-approved by the Ministry Lead.
3. Mentoring and similar such activity sanctioned by the church must be done under all of the following conditions:
  - a) Ministry Personnel and Youth (a mentoring pair) are to meet:
    - at church within sight of other adults; or
    - with another adult or mentoring pair in public within sight of one another; or
    - in a well-frequented public space between 8am-10pm,
  - b) Ministry Lead and Parent are informed of the time and place prior to the meeting.
  - c) Parental permission is granted with written documentation (kept permanently).
  - d) The One-on-One Meeting Details form is completed and submitted to Ministry Lead for each meeting.
  - e) Transportation avoids isolation.

### **Registration Forms and Personal Information Protection**

All effort must be made to have Registration Forms for activities where Children/Youth are participating. A release and permission statement must be included on all forms releasing CCMBC, MBCM, and the local church from unforeseen and accidental injuries, along with contact information in case of an emergency. A statement will be included on all registration forms to explain the purpose and extent for collecting personal information, as well as the commitment to protect personal information. These must be kept permanently.

### **Attendance**

1. Attendance of Children/Youth must be taken each time a program is in session. These records are to be kept permanently, preferable in multiple formats and locations.
2. Attendance records are to include the date, classroom, age/grade of students, full names of all present, including the Hall Monitor.

## **2.04 Vulnerable Adult Protection Procedures**

### **Supervision of Vulnerable Adults**

1. Programs for Vulnerable Adults are recommended to comply with the following ratios:
  - 1 Ministry Personnel for every 10 Vulnerable Adults for on-site programs
  - 1 Ministry Personnel for every 5 Vulnerable Adults for off-site trips and activities
2. There should be at least 2 unrelated Ministry Personnel at all events and for all visitations, or the door must remain open with others in the home or facility.
3. Events with both genders should be supervised by both male and female Ministry Personnel.

### **Personal Care**

Personal care is the responsibility of caregivers and family members, not Ministry Personnel.

## **2.05 High Risk Activities**

### **Transportation**

1. Commercial school vehicles are encouraged whenever possible for off-site trips.
2. The utmost concern in transportation is the safety of the Youth. Drivers must obey all the rules of the road, including the speed limits and proper use of seat belts.

3. All Ministry Personnel drivers transporting Youth during church activities must complete the following prior the youth event, or once at the beginning of the ministry year:
  - a) Be pre-approved by the Ministry Lead.
  - b) Provide a copy of their valid driver's license.
  - c) Provide a copy of their current automobile insurance policy.
  - d) Have a minimum of 5 years driving experience in good standing.
4. At least 2 Ministry Personnel must be in each vehicle transporting Vulnerable Persons during church sponsored activities.

Exceptions are only permitted in rare occasions and only if Ministry Leads and Parents are informed, with more than one Vulnerable Person in the vehicle. If this isn't possible, Ministry Lead and Parents must both give permission with written documentation kept permanently. This must be done each instance.

#### **Shower and Change Room Guidelines**

1. Personnel must not be alone with Vulnerable Persons in this setting.
2. Out of respect for the Vulnerable Persons, Personnel will announce their arrival prior to entering a dressing or locker room.
3. Personnel are not permitted to change or shower at the same time as Vulnerable Persons.
4. Separate facilities should be designated for both genders or, if unavailable, separate showering/changing times arranged.
5. If a Child is too young or is unable to dress him/herself, s/he should be aided by a Parent/guardian or their designate.
  - If assistance is requested, only assist within sight of other Personnel or Parents.
6. The use of photographic or video recording devices, including cell phones, is prohibited in dressing or locker rooms at all times.

#### **Retreats and Overnight Events**

1. All retreats and overnight events must be pre-approved by Lead Church Staff.
2. Written consent and medical release forms from Parents are required for each Child/Youth participating in overnight events. The originals are to be kept permanently.
3. All overnight activities with both genders must be supervised by at least 2 unrelated, adult Ministry Personnel of opposite gender. There must be a minimum ratio of 2 Ministry Personnel for every 10 Children/Youth.

4. Female and male Youth are not allowed in each other's rooms or tents during overnight events.
5. Youth should always be roomed in small groups of the same gender.
6. All Personnel travelling with Vulnerable Persons must complete the screening and training process outlined in this policy prior to departure.
7. Any individuals participating in any way with the team who are not screened Personnel must have separate sleeping arrangements.
8. When necessary for group stay in hotels, plans need to be made so that Vulnerable Persons have distinctly separate sleeping arrangements from other adults. It is strongly encouraged that:
  - Hotel rooms are all together in one wing of the hotel.
  - Rooms with adjoining doors are requested, then assign 2 or more Vulnerable Persons to one room apart from the 2 screened adult Personnel; or
  - 2 unrelated Ministry Personnel are assigned to a room with 2 or more Vulnerable Persons.
9. Screened Personnel are never to be alone in a room with a Vulnerable Person.
10. At no time should Personnel sleep in the same bed with a Vulnerable Person.

### **Billeting and Hosting**

1. All adults residing in the home where billets are provided must complete this Policy's screening process prior to hosting.
2. Youth should have distinctly separate sleeping arrangements from the other household members and should avoid being left alone.

## **2.06 Health & Safety**

### **First Aid**

1. Ministry Personnel are to be encouraged to be certified and trained in first aid. At least one Church Staff member is encouraged to be certified in first aid.
2. Ministry Personnel must be informed of any individual(s) with severe allergies.
3. Ministry Personnel generally must not give/apply medication. In cases of special programming, exceptions will be made. Written parental permission is required and a log will be kept, signed, and dated of the medication that was distributed. All such documentation is to be kept permanently.
4. In the case where Epi-pens and puffers are needed for emergencies, written instructions are to be provided by the Parent to the Ministry Lead.

### **Emergencies**

1. Evacuation procedures must be reviewed annually by Church Staff. These procedures must be posted in each classroom, stating the planned route to the nearest exit.
2. Church Staff will arrange for annual fire/evacuation drills.
3. First aid kits must be kept in each program area with Personnel educated on the contents.
4. A Parent must be contacted when an injury, accident, or medical emergency occurs. Incident Reports must be completed for any and all accidents.

## **2.07 Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination**

All Ministry Personnel will take action to prevent all forms of bullying, and support those who are being bullied. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.

### **Procedure for Dealing with Bullying:**

1. All incidents or suspicions will be reported immediately to the Ministry Lead.
2. All attempts will be made towards reconciliation and change of behavior with the bully.
3. Counselling and support will be recommended and if possible provided for the victim of bullying, as well as the bully.

## **2.08 Electronic Communication and Internet Usage**

"Electronic communication" includes all forms of social media and all forms of instant messaging, including text messaging and emailing.

1. Electronic communication with Children 12 years of age and under is prohibited with the following exceptions:
  - a) Ministry Personnel may communicate with Children electronically with written parental permission (kept permanently), and copying Parents on all messages.
  - b) Communication should also have the Ministry Lead copied, or another Ministry Personnel.
2. Telephone and electronic communication with Youths 13 years of age and older is permitted under the following conditions:
  - a) Communication with a Youth must only be used with written parental consent (kept permanently) and an accountability/monitoring plan in place which ensures appropriate one-on-one communication.
  - b) Ministry Personnel may contact Youth aged 13-17 via instant messaging with written parental permission (kept permanently) and copying another Ministry Personnel, or using a public option, such as group pages.

- c) Electronic communication must not involve video messaging, unless for practical reasons approved by Lead Church Staff and Parents (documentation kept permanently) with both screens visible to others and more than one Ministry Personnel present.
- d) Ministry Personnel must ensure all electronic communication with Vulnerable Persons avoids isolation.

## **2.09 Photography and Video Recording**

1. Photography and videotaping will be done by designated Ministry Personnel who have been screened and trained in Vulnerable Persons protection procedures.
2. For public church activities in the sanctuary that are recorded, signage must be posted notifying those in attendance of the camera.
3. Parental permission will be secured on an annual basis on the registration forms for taking photos/videos of Children/Youth. a. No photographs will be posted online without parental permission.
4. No photographs will be tagged or labeled with the name of a Vulnerable Person at any time, including but not limited to bulletin boards, newsletters, and church websites.

## **REPORTING & RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS/SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE**

If you have reason to believe that a Child/Youth has been abused, or that there is substantial risk that s/he will be abused/neglected, you are legally obligated to immediately report the matter to civil authorities. If you suspect a Child/Youth is being abused, call **(866) 345-9241**. In emergencies or instances requiring immediate response from authorities, call **911**.

This section pertains only to the abuse of those under the age of 18. In instances of Vulnerable Adult abuse, the adult must report it themselves unless:

1. It is an emergency requiring immediate response, in which case call 911.
2. The Vulnerable Adult is unable to report it, in which case call local authorities via their non emergency phone number.

## **3.01 Reporting Procedures of Child/Youth Abuse**

### **Hearing of an Allegation, Disclosure or Suspicion of Abuse:**

1. All allegations and/or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously.
2. Ministry Personnel must document all pertinent information immediately upon hearing of suspicions/allegations of abuse. Utilizing a Suspected Abuse Report Form is strongly recommended. Do not ask leading questions and document the



child/youth's exact words. Do not contact the accused. Do not contact any other parties at the point of completing the Suspected Abuse Report Form.

3. All forms must be kept permanently unless otherwise directed by legal counsel.
4. Ministry Personnel are requested, but not obligated, to notify either the Lead Church Staff or an MBCM staff that they will be making or have already made a report to authorities.

### **Reporting an Allegation, Disclosure, or Suspicion of Abuse of a Child/Youth:**

1. According to the Act, any person with a reasonable suspicion of abuse of a minor has a legal responsibility to immediately report the matter to civil authorities. Reporting must be done by telephone or in person promptly at observing signs of abuse or receiving a report of abuse. Reporting must be immediate, direct, and on-going. The report may be done in combination with Church Staff or Ministry Lead if desired.
2. A person who knowingly fails to report in these circumstances is in violation of Canadian law and may be found to have committed an offence. They may be subject to disciplinary action by the church, MBCM, and CCMBC.
3. It is recommended that when a volunteer or staff reports a suspicion or allegation of abuse to authorities, that they also notify the Lead Church Staff. It is understood that the report is to be kept confidential.
4. The Lead Church Staff or her/his designate must notify the church's insurance provider and seek legal counsel upon hearing of a suspected child abuse case in every and all instances. S/he must also notify the MBCM office (1-204-669- 6575).
5. If suspected abuse happened in the context of the church's ministries, or was committed by a church member or attendee, the Parents of the victim must be notified by the Lead Church Staff.

### **3.02 Response to Allegations**

1. Situations of abuse must be handled immediately with due respect and confidentiality. Discretion must be applied and details of the suspected abuse must not be shared. Information must only be shared on a need-to-know basis, expanding only as individuals are drawn into the response.
2. Church Staff will seek opportunities to provide individual care both for the victim and their family. Church Staff and the Board will determine the need for professional assistance, designating resources as needed and able.
3. The accused will be treated with dignity and respect. If the accused is a Ministry Personnel, that person will be relieved temporarily of his/her duties until the investigation's completion. Arrangements may be made to either maintain or suspend her/his income if employed by the church until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

4. Church Staff will seek opportunity to provide individual care both for the accused and their family. Church Staff and the Board will determine the need for professional assistance, designating resources as needed and able.
5. Anyone accused of abuse will be prohibited from having access to Vulnerable Persons until they are cleared of any and all charges. Clear written guidelines will be provided to the individual with restricted activities and areas of the church property that they are not permitted to be in or use. Anyone convicted of child abuse will be prohibited from having access to Vulnerable Persons.
6. Full cooperation must be given by all parties to civil authorities under the guidelines of legal counsel.
7. At no time should Board members or Church Staff engage in denial, minimization, blame, or admit responsibility prejudicing the case, or cause increased liability to the church, MBCM, or CCMBC.

#### **4.01 Other Users and Shared Activities**

When outside users, members, adherents, or renters are granted permission to use the facility for activities involving Vulnerable Persons that are not direct ministries and activities of the church, they must provide a certificate of insurance with no less than \$2,000,000 Commercial General Liability coverage and the church named as additionally insured.

#### **5.01 Policy Review**

This policy is to be reviewed annually, and updated every 3 years to ensure procedures are updated as needed, and the Policy aligns with applicable legislation.

#### **Addendum**

##### **Online Programming**

1. All online programs providing service for vulnerable people as defined in this policy must be pre-approved by Lead Church Staff, including small groups and mentoring one on one as defined in Item 2.08 of this policy.
2. Online programming must follow the same supervision guidelines as stated in Items 2.02 & 2.03 of this policy and all supervisors must follow the same qualification guidelines as stated in Item 2.01.
3. It is strongly recommended that online programming use organizational licensed platforms and adhere to the age recommendations. Personal platforms are considered private and therefore unsupervised.

4. Vulnerable participants under the age of 18 in online programming must have a letter of informed consent to receive all online communication associated with your church.
5. All online programming should be frequently observed by Ministry Leads.