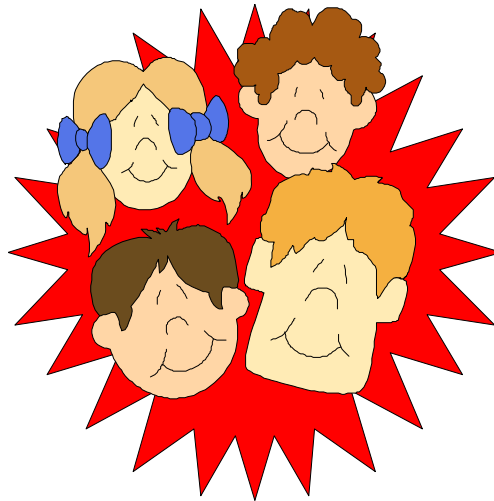


# **Safety Manual for Children's Ministries**



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**Reviewed and Reissued August 2008**

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## Introduction

In recent years, throughout our society, people have become increasingly aware of the need to provide well-trained and carefully selected workers for children's activities. Troubling events have shown how vulnerable children are to abuses of power and position. Even legal actions have pointed out the need for institutions to take more care in recruitment of those working with children, youth and the developmentally disabled.

As the communities of faith within the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada, we believe that policies and procedures around child safety are vitally important, not primarily because of the legal implications but because of the essential character of the Church of Jesus Christ. By its nature, the body of Christ is to be a place of safety and acceptance, offering our very best in service to God. Toward that end, the Bible often charges Christians to be "pure and blameless...without fault in a crooked and depraved generation." (Philippians 1:9-10) Leaders are to be people "of good reputation with outsiders so that they will not fall into disgrace." (I Timothy 3:1-7) Various passages call for our actions within the community of faith to respect the perceived proprieties of our society, so the cause of Christ will not be wrongly judged. Among these types of passages, we are called to be responsible citizens within the ruling boundaries of our society. (Romans 13:1-7) In addition, when we speak our church covenants we often promise each other that we will be communities of truthfulness and communities that promote justice. When we participate in child dedication services we commit ourselves to being places of nurture and growth for children.

Because we no longer live in communities where people are in such close contact that we know the character and background of all who would be willing to be workers with children, it is important that we use good measures to insure that these considerations are being met. For this reason, this policy manual for screening volunteers has been prepared. We invited Dr. Mark Davies, of our Carey Theological College, to provide an extensive treatment of the central challenge, the issue of child sexual abuse. This article may be used to help educate your church leadership on the extreme importance of addressing this issue. We have also provided a guide for the policies and procedures that can cover the wider issues of safety and excellence in our children's ministries. Obviously, these are only the starting point, and you must design a process which will fit your congregation or ministry setting. Our intention is not to judge or become intrusive, rather to achieve the highest level of excellence and security in all our ministries with children, youth and the developmentally disabled. In actuality, those organizations which practice such procedures have realized an added level of protection for the workers as well as for the children.

As we pursue these goals, we will also achieve the added benefit that in the eyes of the law we will have practiced due diligence, so we are less likely to face unfounded accusations. I hope that we will be known always as a group of people committed to the best standards of teaching and caring for people.

The Canadian Baptists of Western Canada  
December 2006

## Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church

By Dr. Mark Davies  
Erb-Gullison Chair of Family Ministries,  
Carey Theological College

*"It can't happen here! Not in my church!"*

For most Christians the title of this article seems profoundly incongruent. Nothing could seem more at odds with each other than the church, a sanctuary where we learn about God's love, and practice love towards one another, and sexual abuse, which is the denigration of all that is holy and right, the ultimate violation. Therefore, a typical response of most churches is that "it can't happen here, I know all these fine people". To challenge such a statement seems to challenge the very identity and integrity of the church. It is not easy for churches to face the tragic reality, that not only does childhood sexual abuse exist in alarming numbers in our society as a whole, but it also exists within the church. Canadians have become aware of the tragic story of Mount Cashel, and more recently of the stories coming out of Ontario and British Columbia. While the tendency may be to write off such incidents as something someone else has to deal with, the fact of the matter is that *every church is at risk as a place where sexual abuse could occur. Those churches who chose to ignore this risk, whatever their rationalizations, place themselves in even higher risk. What is worse, is they may unknowingly place the children God has given them to care for at risk as well.*

Nothing can adequately portray the devastation sexual abuse causes. Sadly, on a many occasions therapists hear of how the abuser was a trusted member of the church. This underscores the fact that *sexual abuse in the church is a reality with which we must deal.* It is hoped that this article will aid us as a concerned Christian community in doing so.

### **Why Churches are Vulnerable:**

**Trust:** Churches tend to be trusting, unsuspecting institutions, even when there is evidence to the contrary.

**Lack of Screening:** Often we allow individuals who have only very recently come to our churches and who we know very little about to be involved in working in the nursery or with the youth. This makes churches particularly easy targets for predators.

**Opportunity:** Unsupervised nurseries, children's time, youth events (especially overnight events), are all potential risk situations.

**Access:** It is easy for child molesters to gain access to children in a church.

**Need:** Because most churches struggle with getting adequate help and often there is high turnover in working with children and youth. Therefore, any volunteer is usually welcomed with little questions arising about his/her fitness for the position.

Churches can, at times, believe that all those who walk through their door are pure in their desire to seek Jesus. But more and more, churches are seen as "easy prey" by pedophiles. We want to believe those who come to church seeking to follow Christ. But typically, when one comes to Christ he/she is not instantly and completely healed of all his/her past sins. Forgiven, yes! Sinless, no! There is a vulnerability. Sexual sin is one of the most resistant sins there is to overcome. However, the reality that most churches have not grasped is that they are vulnerable to any accusation of sexual abuse, and that the accusation does not need to be true for it to cause great havoc. Any six year old who watches an Oprah show on abuse and then says, "my Sunday School teacher

touches me" (even if the SS teacher doesn't) begins a process that most churches are not prepared for and are often left devastated by. *Because of a lack of intentional preventative policies most churches are extremely vulnerable to any charge of abuse, real or imagined!*

### **The Devastation of Sexual Abuse**

Typically we resist dealing with those things in our lives that we find threatening or overwhelming. Often it is our resistance to dealing with such issues that ends up causing us more grief than if we had confronted the issue in the first place. In fact, if we are willing to deal with the issue in forthright manner, often it is resolved far more easily than we ever imagined.

Sexual abuse is one of those issues that most people find overwhelming. It is an emotionally charged and painful issue. One that we would never want to have to deal with in our own lives. Yet our resistance in dealing in a proactive way with the fact of sexual abuse in the church is the main obstacle in preventing it. In order to really deal with the prevention of sexual abuse, churches first must come to grips with the issue. Churches must come to grips with the consequences of sexual abuse:

- for the witness of Christ and the reputation of his Church that are severely damaged.
- for the victims who suffer (more about this in the following section);
- for congregations that can be torn in half by the issue as they take sides with the accusation, or with how the issue should be processed;
- for someone wrongly accused-wrongful accusation can leave an innocent party devastated;
- the legal and financial devastation. Most churches are not aware of (1) the law regarding sexual abuse (what is it, who must report), (2) that they can be found liable in a court of law if they have not implemented proper procedures and policies with regard to supervision of young people, (3) what their financial vulnerabilities are (many insurance policies do not cover liability with regards to sexual abuse);

### **Understanding the Church Resistance**

*"Churches have a built in resistance in addressing the problem of child sexual abuse."*<sup>1</sup>

Quite simply, most churches do not do anything with regards to this issue because:

- they are unaware of the problem, i.e. they lack education about the reality of the threat.
- they see it as something benign and it is therefore not made to be a priority;
- congregations feel threatened by the issue on many levels;
- churches believe it can't happen to them (denial)
- most churches/pastors already feel overwhelmed with business. They feel that they do not have time or resources to give to this critical issue and pastors often see it as a real hindrance to worker involvement.

Even in the face of an actual charge churches often remain in denial. The majority of complaints received against the church usually surface long after the actual abuse; often victims come forward as adults. The majority of plaintiffs have first taken their complaint to churches before they go to the courts. They go seeking some vindication, looking for the church and the perpetrator to acknowledge the wrong, repent and make amends. The fact is that typically they do not receive an adequate response from the church. *If the church has never thought through the issue the most*

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<sup>1</sup> Hammer, R., and Klipowicz, 1993. Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church. Audio Tape. Church and Law Tax Report, Matthews, NC.

*likely response to an allegation of sexual abuse will be denial and cover-up. Such a stance is not only inadequate, but can lead to devastating consequences: spiritually, legally and financially.* We need to do the right thing and attempt to minister to the victims. Unfortunately when churches deny, minimize or blame the victim<sup>2</sup> they are mimicking typical responses of an abuser. It must be remembered that while the inappropriateness of such a response by the church seems obvious, these allegations happen in the context whereby the accused is often a respected and esteemed member of the congregation (e.g. the pastor) who has many friends. On the other hand, often the victim has little power or status within the church. The response to an accusation of sexual abuse is often that of disbelief. "He couldn't have done that! She is lying!" The explosiveness of this emotional issue can often cloud any objectivity which can lead to grievous consequences. It can retraumatize the victim, and destroy a church. **While all of this is tragic, it is preventable.**

The critical problem in this area is not that there are no programs, educational aids, or help for the local church. Gathering materials and coming up with policy is the easiest part of the process. **The most difficult part of the process is that it requires real sustained change for the church, not only on how they do things, but how they understand themselves and ministry.**

### **Initiating Change**

The church has been considered a place of safety where we can let down our guard and live in trust with one another. Psychologically it is important for Christians to have a refuge from the problems and carnage that are so pervasive in our world. Church is therefore seen as a place where there is trust, safety and love. Ultimately, this is the identity we as Christians want to keep. However, we must not be naive about how to attain those things we desire. **We will not create safety within the church by denying real dangers.** Safety is desirable and can be enhanced by a strong policy on the prevention of sexual abuse.

**The only way any church will change with regards to this issue is if they come to admit that a problem exists and that it is important enough to be dealt with.** With regards to child sexual abuse within the church the typical way that the church begins to act on this issue is if:

- 1) it has experienced the problem itself (tragically, then it is too late);
- 2) churches become **educated about this issue.**

Clearly, the optimal way for change to take place in the church with regards to this issue is through education. If churches can learn what is at stake, and how they can respond in a positive manner, then real change can take place.

### **The Nature and Extent of Sexual Abuse**

In 1980 Parliament established a special committee to study the nature and extent of sexual abuse in Canada. The Report of the Committee on Sexual Offenses Against Children and Youth (Badgley Report) found<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup> Geoffery Anderson as quoted in the audio tape Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church, Church Law and Tax Report, Matthews, NC. 1993. Mr. Anderson is a civil litigation lawyer who has handled over 200 cases of sexual abuse.

<sup>3</sup>Source: Sexual Offenses Against Children, Ottawa, Supply and Services Canada, 1984. Two volumes, 1,314 pages.

- At some time during their lives, about one in two females and one in three males have been victims of one or more unwanted sexual acts. These acts included witnessing an indecent exposure, being touched on a sexual part of the body, being sexually threatened, and being subject to an attempted or actual sexual assault.
- About four in five of these unwanted sexual acts had first been committed against these persons when they were children or youths.
- Four in one hundred young females have been raped.
- Two in one hundred young persons had experienced attempted or actual acts of unwanted anal penetration by a penis or by means of objects or fingers.
- Acts of exposure constituted the largest single category of sexual offenses committed against children. Cases were documented where such acts were followed by sexual assault.
- Three in five sexually abused children had been threatened or physically coerced by their assailants. Young victims were as likely to be threatened or forced to engage in sexual acts by persons relatively close to their age as by older persons.
- Although few young victims were physically injured, substantially more suffered emotional harm.
- About one in four assailants was a family member or person in a position of trust, about half were friends or acquaintances, and about one in six were strangers.
- Nearly all assailants were males; one in one hundred was a female.
- A majority of the victims or their families did not seek assistance from public services. When they did, they turned most often to police and doctors.
- Although child sexual abuse was not typically characterized by violence, in those instances where violence occurred, it was very serious. More than two in five of all sexual assault homicides were committed against children aged 15 and younger.

What is important to note from these findings is that they do not support the common myths that are widely held regarding sexual assault. The idea that sexual assault is a rare single one time violent occurrence that takes place in an isolated area and is committed against teenage girls by a stranger is simply not true! Most assaults are committed by someone who is known to the victim or the victim's family. Its victims are boys and girls who range in age from infancy to late adolescence. The incidents often occur in familiar settings.

These findings also do not portray who has been assaulted. Therapists can cite stories of pastors, seminarians, and many lay people who have been abused, a number of whom have been abused by church leaders. I am convinced that if all victims identified themselves and their abusers, the average church would simply be in a state of shock. It happens, and it happens to people you know.

### **What Is Child Sexual Abuse?**

Often sexual abuse is understood in terms of anal, oral or genital penetration. However, in Canada there are now 16 sexual offenses in the Criminal Code that could apply to sexual abuse.<sup>4</sup>

Abuse that involves touching can include:

- fondling;

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<sup>4</sup>For a more extensive treatise see Wells, Mary. 1990. Canada's Law on Child Sexual Abuse: A handbook. Published by the authority of the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada. Communication and Public Affairs, Department of Justice, Ottawa, Ont. (613 957 4222. This is a free handbook distributed by the Department of Justice and every church should have one.

- oral, genital, and anal penetration;
- intercourse;
- forcible rape.

Abuse that does not involve touching includes:

- verbal comments;
- pornographic videos;
- obscene phone calls;
- exhibitionism;
- allowing children to witness sexual activity.

While this article focuses on the prevention of child sexual abuse, it is important that churches be aware of the broader term, “child abuse”, which encompasses sexual, physical and emotional abuse. Child abuse is defined differently by each Canadian province and these definitions can be obtained by contacting the Department of Social Services in your province. As an example, the province of British Columbia <sup>5</sup> declares that a child is in need of protection if he/she is:

- abused or neglected so that their safety or well-being is endangered;
- abandoned;
- deprived of necessary care through the death, absence or disability of their parent;
- deprived of necessary medical attention;
- absent from his (sic) home in circumstances that endanger his safety or well-being.

### **Consent**<sup>6</sup>

In Canada the law states that:

- Sexual activity without consent is always a crime regardless of the age of the individual.
- The definitions of the crimes in the new law reinforce the fact that children need to be protected. Individuals who sexually abuse children are not able to avoid criminal responsibility by claiming a child “consented” to the abuse.
- Children under 12 are never considered able to consent to sexual activity.
- Children 12 or more, but under 14 are deemed unable to consent to sexual acts except under specific circumstances involving sexual activity with their peers.
- Young persons 14 or more but under 18 are protected from sexual exploitation and **their consent is not valid if the person touching them for a sexual purpose is in a position of trust or authority over them or if they are in a relationship of dependency with that person.** (Note that this has important implications for youth pastors. As well, the law is recognizing that any sexual act that takes place in a relationship of dependency or trust, regardless of the age may be subject to civil litigation, e.g. a pastor who has sex with an adult parishioner).
- It is not a defense to these crimes for the accused to say that he or she believed that young person was older. The person accused of the crime has to prove that all “reasonable steps”, such as asking for identification showing proof of age, were taken.

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<sup>5</sup> Inter-Ministry Child Abuse Handbook, Province of British Columbia, 1988. pp. 10, 11.

<sup>6</sup>Wells, Mary. 1990. Canada’s Law on Child Sexual Abuse: A handbook. Published by the authority of the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada. Communication and Public Affairs, Department of Justice, Ottawa, Ont.

## **Effects of Sexual Abuse**

The effects of childhood sexual abuse are many and varied. The consequences of such abuse are mitigated by factors such as intensity, duration, form and frequency of the abuse. What is of particular concern is the *relationship* of the perpetrator to the child - *if the abuser is a known and trusted authority figure then the consequences of abuse increase dramatically*. Some of the effects of sexual abuse include:

- eating disorders, (e.g. anorexia and bulimia nervosa);
- loss of childhood memories - a loss of any sense of normal childhood;
- post traumatic stress disorder;
- dissociative disorders-the most severe being Dissociative Identity Disorder;
- loss of personal and sexual boundaries;
- loss of self worth and self esteem (a pervasive sense of shame and guilt).

This list is a clinical description of what happens to the victim. However, the clinical picture does not adequately describe the true devastation that is left in the wake of childhood sexual abuse. This is not merely a physical act; it is something that affects the very core of the victim's personhood. The destruction is profound and tragic. One of the most difficult questions that survivors carry is "I was only a child. Why didn't God stop it? I prayed He would." The questions become even more overwhelming when the abuse is at the hands of someone associated with the church.

## **Signs of the Sexually Assaulted Child**<sup>7</sup>

Not all children are able to tell parents directly that they have been assaulted. Changes in behavior may be a signal that something has happened:

- A child who is reluctant to go to a particular place, or to be with a particular person.
- A child who shows unusual interest in the genitals of other people, or of animals. He/she may try to express affection in inappropriate ways, such as French kissing or fondling of a parent's genitals.
- A child that is diagnosed with a Sexual Transmitted Disease (STD).
- A child who has a sleep disturbance (nightmares, bedwetting, fear of sleeping alone).
- A child who refuses to change in front of others in situations such as P.E. or swimming class.
- A child who isolates him/herself.
- A child who fears bathrooms, showers, closed doors.
- A child who exhibits loss of appetite, or a sudden decrease in appetite.
- A child with lots of new fears-needing more reassurance than in the past.
- A child who is afraid of going home after school or continually runs away from home.
- A child whose artwork involves sexually explicit body parts or contains themes associated with sexual abuse.
- Torn or bloody underclothing.
- Lacerations or bruises.
- Injury or pain in the genitals.

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<sup>7</sup> Feeling Yes, Feeling No: A sexual assault prevention program for young children. For the National Film Board of Canada. Printed courtesy of the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, Health and Welfare Canada. This is a handbook used in the Public Education System in conjunction with the National Film Board of Canada for the purpose of educating students regarding sexual abuse.

*None of these indicators by themselves are proof of sexual abuse.* Indeed, many non-abused children exhibit several of these symptoms at one time of their life or another. What is important to note is the change in behavior, with its combination, frequency and duration of other indicators.

### **Understanding Sexual Abuse Legally**

Essential to any sexual abuse prevention program in the church is an understanding of the legal aspects. The nuances of the law may vary slightly from province to province, however, pastors, board members and those working directly with youth should have a basic understanding of:

- What is the legal understanding of sexual abuse?
- What are my legal responsibilities in reporting cases of sexual abuse?
- What are our legal liabilities as a church?

Recently the Church and Law Update (June, 1994) reported,

“Increasingly and often more dramatically, church and their personnel, (i.e. staff, directors, officers and ministers) are being held accountable for the acts of individual abusers within the church even though neither the church, nor its leaders were aware of the abuse or condoned it. Churches are being sued in Civil Courts for damages sustained by victims and their families. Those victims and their families are attempting to hold churches accountable by alleging that:

- the church is vicariously liable for the acts of its personnel, be they paid staff or volunteer staff, regardless of whether the church was itself negligent or even knew of the abuse;
- the church was negligent in its hiring or accepting personnel, whether paid or volunteer;
- the church was negligent in the supervising or monitoring of its personnel or membership.

A cynic may suggest that it is the fear of legal and economic reprisal that has motivated churches finally to act. **One would hope that the main motivation for churches to begin to act in preventing sexual abuse is because this is what Christ would have us do (Luke 17:2; Matt. 19: 13, 14).** Whatever the reason, it is timely for churches to respond now.

It is critical to be informed legally of the church's position if implicated in a case of child sexual abuse. To fail to understand the legal implications of such a charge and to respond in ignorance may only serve to exacerbate the problem. It should be noted that our society is standard for what is right is the law. However, we as Christians are bound by a higher "law," that of morality and justice. Thus, sometimes churches may measure any legal advice against what is the Christian thing to do. For example, while a lawyer may suggest that the church should not financially aid a family seeking counseling for the abuse they claim to have suffered, because such aid may be used as "an admission of guilt", nevertheless the church may supply such aid because they genuinely believe that it is the "Christian thing to do."

### **Church Response**

There is no other more powerful way to state this truth: **with regards to child sexual abuse in the church, prevention is overwhelmingly the best defense.** The effort and the will the churches will need to muster in order to make changes pale in comparison to the costs associated with not doing so. We must do all that we can in order to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. This is not merely a sociological or psychological matter. It is clearly theological: Christ requires us to do all we can to care for those who are vulnerable. To institute such changes is not acquiescing to the pressures of society around us. It is part of our Christian heritage.

Options:

- Do nothing, leaving the church, and the children of the church vulnerable.
- Have a written policy that is adopted in principle but the vast majority of the church is unaware of. This is often the response of churches who feel overwhelmed with the demands of ministry. The problem with such an approach is that it is an illusion - it has the appearance of something done, but in reality nothing changes. This leaves the children and the church at risk. *It must be emphasized that this problem will not go away because of good intentions or policies that are adopted: the problem of child sexual abuse within the church is real and requires real change.*
- A calculated risk assessment and response of each church that results in real and sustained change. Pastors, leaders and workers are part of the process of design, implementation and maintenance. The problem is addressed in a realistic fashion and appropriate responses are developed and instituted in an ongoing way.
- Being proactive and making a ministry in the area of human sexuality. One of the reasons the church has been reluctant to deal with this problem is because it is one of a sexual nature. Most Christians either do not know how to address sexuality from a Christian perspective, or are uncomfortable in doing so. By choosing to ignore sex and sexuality as important topics for Christians to address we are profoundly out of step with society. We fail to make an intelligent and informed argument for the Christian sexual ethic, we fail to minister to our married couples and their children in this critical part of their lives, we fail to deal with sexual sin adequately in the church, and finally, we have failed to develop and provide ministry to a world that continues to be wounded (in shocking numbers) by sexual sin. Perhaps this issue would awake the church to its mandate to act redemptively in the area of human sexuality.

#### **Civil Liability of the Church:**

In Canada there has been a dramatic increase of churches being sued in civil court for damages sustained by victims and their families. *The courts are holding churches accountable for the acts of individual abusers in the church, even if the church or its leaders were unaware of the abuse.* Such rulings are made on the basis that:

- the church is vicariously liable for the acts of its personnel, both paid and volunteer;
- the church was negligent in its screening of workers;
- the church was negligent in its supervision of workers.

#### **Essential Elements of Effective Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs**

The purpose of any sexual abuse prevention program within the church is fourfold:

- 1) to protect the children and youth of your church from sexual molestation;
- 2) to protect church staff and volunteer workers from any false allegations of sexual abuse;
- 3) to inform the congregation about sexual abuse and its devastating consequences, thus providing possible avenues of service and ministry to victims;
- 4) to limit the extent of your church's legal risk and liability due to sexual abuse.

## A Needs Assessment Checklist<sup>8</sup>

The following checklist can help you to conduct a quick needs assessment. Check each item if it is true for your church. Items left unchecked may indicate an area where your church is vulnerable to problems of sexual or other abuse:

- We currently screen all paid employees, including clergy, who work with youth or children.
- We currently screen all volunteer workers for any position involving work with youth or children.
- We do reference checks on all paid employees working with youth or children.
- We train all our staff who work with children or youth, both paid and volunteer, to understand the nature of child sexual abuse.
- We train all our staff who work with children or youth, both paid and volunteer, how to carry out policies to prevent sexual abuse.
- We take our policies to prevent sexual abuse seriously and see that they are enforced.
- Our workers understand the law concerning child abuse reporting obligations.
- We have a clearly defined reporting procedure for a suspected incident of abuse.
- We have a specific response strategy to use if an allegation of sexual abuse is made at our church.
- We are insured for such a claim.
- We are prepared to respond to the media if an incident occurs.

## Screening of Paid and Volunteer Workers

Gary Schoener is the head of the Walk-in Counseling Center in Minneapolis Minnesota and is arguably the world's foremost expert on working with professionals (mainly psychologists, but also medical and clergy) who transgress sexual boundaries. He has found that institutions often have people who have a history of sexual boundary violations on staff because<sup>9</sup>:

- 1) negligent hiring: you must do your checks-references. Get them to sign a waiver that allows you to do a thorough check;
- 2) negligent retention: often what happens is someone does something wrong and you keep them on;
- 3) negligent supervision.

The first and most important step in recruiting and selecting church workers is to adequately screen them. **Virtually all paid employees, including clergy, should undergo a thorough screening process as part of the job application procedure. As well, it is strongly recommended that all volunteers who work with children or youth be also screened. Note that churches face the same moral responsibility and legal liability for volunteers as they do for paid staff.**

It is likely that this recommendation will be met with great resistance from the board and even pastors. To implement and enforce such a screening policy is one of the most difficult hurdles to

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<sup>8</sup>Source: Hammar, R., Klipowicz, S., & Cobble, J. 1993. Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church: A complete and practical guidebook for prevention and risk reduction. Church and Law Tax Report. PO Box 2301, Matthews, NC 28106. The written, audio and video material in this publication provide all the essentials that most churches will need to implement an effective program of child sexual abuse prevention.

<sup>9</sup>G. Schoener, Invited Address at the American Psychological Association Convention, Toronto, Ontario. August, 1996. *Prevention of Sexual Boundary Violations by Therapists.*

overcome in implementing an effective prevention program in your church. The work it takes to implement and maintain is considerable. There may be fears of losing valued volunteers. However, once again the focus of what is at stake here must be maintained - the church must affirm, "the safety of our children is worth it." If policy is implemented properly and in the right spirit, making standards more stringent, and empowering workers through education is *likely to result in an increased volunteer commitment to taking the ministry seriously*. As has been identified many times in the professional literature on the recruitment of volunteers, it is not that we ask too much of them, it is that we ask too little. The key to this important step is implementation.

The following components are recommended as part of a thorough screening process <sup>10</sup>:

- A screening form (see appendix)
- A personal interview
- Reference checks (see appendix)
- A criminal record check, and a Child Welfare Check (see appendix)

It is important to frame the screening process, not as a "which hunt" as much as it is an opportunity to get to know the individual better (i.e. the personal interview) and to ensure the safety of the children. This kind of atmosphere can be positive for those who seek legitimate ministry opportunities, while dissuading potential abusers. It is important to document all reference checks, (which must be done!), even those that refuse to respond.

Sexual addiction is the most resistant form of addiction. Recidivism rates, after years of treatment are as high as 70%. In screening any individual I would strongly recommend that **anyone who has any history of child sexual abuse (even if they protest their innocence), never, under any circumstances, be allowed to work with children. This would place the children at high risk for abuse.** To be sure, sinners can be forgiven of their sin. This is redemption, and to offer such redemption in Christ is the mission of the church. However, redemption should not be confused with restoration and the right to assume any ministry position. The urge to abuse sexually is not something that easily goes away, even for those who have found Christ. The bottom line in any assessment should be, "**Would I allow this individual to work with my child?**"

In any church, there are often "last minute volunteers" who are willing to pitch in. By the very nature of the screening procedure outlined above, it is likely that such last minute volunteering would be impossible. Thus, some churches may want to institute secondary screening measures for such individuals. Perhaps the easiest to implement is that anyone seeking church membership must complete a form that consists of personal information, church background, and the names of two references. This can be part of newcomers, or new members orientation class, whereby it is explained how the church takes the mandate of caring for its children seriously and that *all* people who work with children in the church have voluntarily allowed themselves to be screened. This can be done in a very positive and proactive way, setting a tone of excellence that the church strives for in looking after its youth.

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<sup>10</sup>Source: Hammar, R., Klipowicz, S., & Cobble, J. 1993. Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church: A complete and practical guidebook for prevention and risk reduction. Church and Law Tax Report. PO Box 2301, Matthews, NC 28106.

**Note:** Volunteers should only be permitted to work with youth or children only after they have become members or regular adherents for at least six months. This allows the church time to know the individual(s) and do further assessment.

Volunteers with criminal abuse violations should not be accepted. Any record of such behavior should automatically disqualify an individual from working with youth or children.

### **"Red Flags"**

In screening someone, some cautionary indicators include:

- many city or church moves;
- resistance to screening and/or supervision;
- wanting to work with children after only being in the church a short time;
- wanting to work with a specific age group.

### **Supervision of Church Workers**

Negligent supervision refers to a failure to exercise reasonable care in the supervision of church activities and church workers involved in those activities. The following are guidelines recommended to ensure proper supervision takes place:

#### **1. Use the Team Approach:**

Consider using the two adult rule, which says that two adult supervisors should be present for any church activity. It is wise to involve parents of the children involved, however, husband and wife teams should be avoided. It is preferable that at least one member of the team be female. One-way of implementing such a team approach is to frame it as a discipleship. Many Sunday Schools operate with a primary teacher who has an aid, whom they are discipling in teaching. Dovetailing a team approach with discipleship is only one example of some of the creative ways a system of abuse prevention can actually enhance the church's overall programs.

#### **2. Obtain Parental Permission**

If there is a situation in which there is a reason for an adult to be alone with a youth or child then permission of parents should be obtained. Even with non-churched families contact with a parent should be made. As well, the appropriate church leader should be notified in advance.

#### **3. Develop Guidelines for All Youth Workers**

It must be recognized that to become overly regimented and methodical in working with youth would be contrary to the nature of youth work. A great deal of youth work is spontaneous and, at times, crisis oriented. However, it is important that youth pastors and workers develop a set of guidelines in working with youth. Issues such as appropriate touch, counseling procedures, and being alone with a teenager should be dealt with in a realistic yet responsible manner. *Special attention must be given to overnight activities.* Volunteers who have been properly screened should be the only workers allowed and permission of parents must be sought. *All overnight activities must be approved by the church leadership.*

#### **4. Architectural Considerations**

The physical layout of the church can aid in the prevention of sexual abuse. It is strongly recommended that all Sunday School classes and offices have windows put in the doors. Nursery change tables should be open and easily visible. For toddlers who cannot go to the bathroom themselves, a small bathroom facility should be built into the classroom and should only have a half door on it.

#### **5. Discuss Infractions or Suspicious Behavior Immediately**

For most people, to confront someone is not an easy matter. When it involves sexual abuse it becomes even more difficult. Basically, a low-key approach is best, giving gentle reminder to the individual: "are you aware that what you did goes against the guidelines we've adopted as a church?" One does not want to make the church a police state, however it must be remembered that any abuser's best friend is silence. These matters should be reported to the pastor(s). If repeated infractions occur then the individual should be suspended from further ministry in working with youth or children.

## **6. Ongoing Training Programs**

Most Christian Education departments would like to have more in-services for their teachers that are informative and helpful. The prevention of sexual abuse within the church can easily become a regular part of those in-services. There is a growing amount of audio and visual material that can be used in this area. As well, incoming teachers should be given a complete orientation regarding the policies the church has established in working with children and youth.

## **Child Security**<sup>11</sup>

Any policy that is effective in preventing sexual abuse within the church will be one that deals with some very basic details of how children should be supervised. While such procedures will vary considerably from church to church, here are the essential ones that all churches should adopt in one form or another:

- names and addresses of parents should be carefully maintained;
- programs for preschool aged children should provide a sign-in sheet including the names of all staff;
- children should not be dropped off in a classroom without a teacher present and if there is only one teacher then the door should remain open;
- children must only ever be released to the parents of the child or to an identified guardian;
- diaper changing should always take place where another adult can see that the child is being changed;
- children under 14 should not change diapers;
- for washroom breaks it is strongly recommended that (i) the parents of the child take the child to the washroom just before class time, (ii) if possible the class as a whole, or in parts, take a washroom break (iii) if an individual child must go, then the adult wait outside the washroom (iv) if a child must be attended to, two adults must be in attendance, or, if this is not possible, the attending adult *be female* and that the washroom door be left open. A fundamental rule should be that an adult should never *be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and especially should never go into a washroom cubicle and shut the door.*

## **Appropriate Touch**

Touch can communicate love and affection and is often a powerful way of communicating. However, the church needs to become sensitive to what constitutes "good touch" versus "bad touch." In coming to such a definition the church and its workers need to be sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, and special needs. "Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> adopted from Plan to Protect: A protection plan of the children, a protection plan for churches. The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada National Church Education Committee, Children's Division. 105 Gordon Baker Road, Suite 105, North York, Ont. M2H 3P8. (416) 492 8775.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

Appropriate touch includes:

- taking children by the hand to lead them;
- an arm around the shoulder or hugging them to comfort them;
- patting a child on the head or hand to affirm them;
- holding a child by the shoulder in order to keep their attention.

Inappropriate touch includes:

- kissing a child or coaxing a child to kiss you;
- extended and repetitive hugging;
- touching a child in any area that would be covered by a swim suit;
- tickling;
- having older children sit on your lap;
- "cuddling" adolescents.

The difficulty with such guidelines is they can lead one to envision the church as a police state type of institution. However, there is far too much physical contact that does take place in the church that is questionable, and the problem is, no one questions it.

### **Response of Churches to Child Sexual Abuse**

If an accusation of abuse does occur the church will be forced to respond. What is important is that the church learns how to respond competently and compassionately.

Basically those participating in this program will need to be educated with regards to:

- what legally constitutes child sexual abuse;
- what the signs of sexual abuse are;
- what the legal obligation to report is;
- what the proper channels of reporting are;
- how the church will respond.

### **Reporting Procedures**

In Canada, individuals have both a **moral** and **legal obligation** to report any suspected incidents of child sexual abuse. It is important to understand that this legal obligation is based on "reasonable grounds" and that the individual making the report in good faith will not be punished or held accountable for making a report, even if the conclusion is that no abuse occurred. However, most individuals are unaware of this obligation, as well as ignorant of what should be done and how it should be done. Thus the church needs to educate its workers in these areas. What follows is an outline that churches should follow in dealing with a report of child sexual abuse.

### **Develop a Reporting Procedure**

- develop a clear policy which explains the need for proper reporting, as well as the obligations of the individuals involved. It is especially important to delineate a proper line of reporting.
- this should include the documentation that will be used. This should include a record of the entire worker's files and reference checks, as well as careful documentation of who reported what to who, including times and dates.
- state the grounds on which a report should be filed. This would include any statement of a child indicating that they have been the victim of abuse, as well as any of the signs that may indicate sexual abuse. Provincial requirements and criteria for reporting vary and the information your church needs can be found at the local Department of Youth and Family

Service. Note, it is not the responsibility of the church to investigate the validity of a verbal statement of a child, or of a witness reporting sexual abuse. Any attempt to investigate the validity of such statements may in fact hamper the investigation by the proper authorities. The church's only response in light of abuse is to report.

- a procedure that is to be followed by all involved parties. Any report of possible child abuse should quickly be communicated to the proper church leaders. Initially this should be the senior pastor or one of his/her associates. Once the report has been discussed with the pastor, he/she should assume responsibility for making the report, unless the abuse involves that of a child in the community who has no connections to the church. In the unchurched child scenario the individual coming to the pastor needs to be counseled about his/her Christian and civic responsibilities to report. Once the pastor has been informed the pastor should immediately inform denominational officials, the church's lawyers and the proper civic authorities. As soon as possible the leadership of the church should convene to be informed about the matter.

### **Responding to the Accusation:**

*Never discount a report of sexual abuse, especially because of the stature of the accused: "he/she just couldn't have done it." It is critical not to discount any report of abuse but neither should it be automatically assumed that every report of abuse is factual.* One of the major complicating factors of those who work in the field of sexual abuse is that of false allegations. While working in extremes ("if there is an accusation it must be true" versus "it can't be true, it's all made up") is easy and convenient, it is rarely helpful. Such polarization only serves to make a difficult situation even more difficult. One of the obstacles in dealing effectively with a charge of sexual abuse is that it is such an emotionally laden issue. However, what is most needed in these situations is wisdom, know how and maturity. The following guidelines should be used:

- all allegations must be taken seriously;
- situations should be handled in the most professional way possible, providing as much respect for people's privacy and confidentiality as possible;
- full cooperation should be given to the civil authorities;
- the church should call on the help of denominational authorities as well as legal advice during the crisis;
- adequate care must be shown toward the victim, *who should not be blamed in anyway for what has happened;*
- treat the accused with dignity and respect. Again it is important not to immediately polarize. If the accused is a church worker, then that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation has concluded. If they are a paid employee, then there should be a policy to ensure that the accused (remember that this is all he/she is at this point) does not suffer economic hardship.

### **Working with the Civic Authorities**

Once an accusation has been made the church has a legal obligation to call the civic authorities (police, child welfare, etc.). It is helpful to have an attorney present to advise you as to how best you can work with these authorities in aiding their investigation. While cooperating with them during the investigation will be viewed positively, *far more important will be whether or not the church has had any positive contact with their community agencies before the crisis.* While philosophies of ministry differ with regards to how involved the church should be in working with government social agencies, this is one area that cooperation should be practiced. Quite simply a social worker who has been invited to a church to speak on the prevention of child sexual abuse is not only a good resource person for the church, but someone who is likely to have a much more

favourable impression of the church. If there is an investigation, the fact that the church is seen as a "team player" in the community will make a significant difference, not only as to how it is perceived, but also how it is treated by the authorities. Conversely, churches that are seen as being in "isolation" from the community are likely to be treated with a degree of suspicion and mistrust.

### **Responding to the Media**

It is important to be sensitive to the current social climate in Canada regarding sexual abuse. Clearly this is a "sin" that our society readily recognizes and is very adamant about how wrong it is. For the church to be seen as less passionate in its response regarding child sexual abuse is quickly interpreted by the media and society as a whole as being part of a archaic and sick system that allows sexual abuse to continue. Clearly this paints the church in a very negative and hypocritical light. Therefore, in dealing with this issue it is important that the church not give any other impression than the fact that it recognizes the gravity of the issue and that it is completely aligned with society's stance against it. In other words, the church adamantly refuses to be part of any system that in any way aids or abets sexual abuse.

It is fair to say that the church is generally portrayed by the media in a negative light. The charge of sexual abuse within the church is a lightning rod for such negative press. Some assumptions that need to be kept in mind in dealing with the media regarding this issue:

- first of all if your church is involved in an accusation of sexual abuse you can expect extreme and invasive media coverage;
- do not assume that the media is after the truth; truth does not sell newspapers. They are after a story. Therefore, to expect the media to be sympathetic or even impartial is naive and unduly optimistic;
- it is critical that there only be one spokesman for the church and that individual be clearly identified (congregations must be informed about this and members must participate as fully as possible);
- that the spokesman have a *prepared response that is clear and unambiguous*. Spontaneous interviews leave too much room for distortion which can damage the church. A "no comment" stance is insufficient and leaves the public wondering about a cover up.
- it is important that any press release carefully guard the privacy and confidentiality of those involved in the case.
- any statement *should not* pronounce judgment on the innocence or guilt of an individual, but instead should focus first and foremost on the church's concern for the children ("they are our most precious resource and we recognize our responsibility to protect them"). There should also be a statement regarding the church's determination to eliminate sexual abuse within the church ("we recognize this is a real problem in our society, and one that affects churches. We are determined to make our churches as safe as possible for our children." This would be a good time to show the media the church's policies and procedures with regards to the prevention of child sexual abuse). The statement should include something about the church's commitment to finding the truth about the case and addressing any shortcomings it may point out. And finally and most importantly, the church should reaffirm its commitment to ministering to the victims of sexual abuse.
- the basic stance of the church should be one whereby it is seen as open and honest and committed to the prevention of child sexual abuse. Defensiveness will not be treated kindly by media.
- do not engage in denial, minimization or blame.

### **Recommendations Regarding the Implementation of a Program**

One can easily envision a scenario whereby an implementation of a sexual abuse policy by a church results in an atmosphere of defensiveness and fear. *This is why it is crucial that much attention be given by the church as to the "how" of any implementation should occur.* Clearly such an implementation will be facilitated by a church where there is little conflict, where the pastor and board work cooperatively, and where there is a great deal of trust between the church and its leadership. However, this is not to say that churches that are experiencing difficulties cannot implement such a program. With enough support, education and concern, implementing such a major change may in fact help a church become even more unified. The key to such implementation is that the issue not become politicized. **Churches need to be very clear that this is about the safety of the children God has given them to look after.** This must be the guiding issue throughout the process. It should be noted that many churches have implemented such policies and the boards, workers and churches as a whole have embraced the changes and have seen them as necessary and positive. The atmosphere in the church should be one whereby there is an overwhelmingly positive commitment to ensure that the youth of the church are kept safe and are cared for.

Typically it will take one or more individuals who really grab onto the issue and are willing to stay with it for some time in order to affect change. Pastors and boards may not be "on board" initially with the new program. However, if they give permission to proceed, a system of education and awareness often begins to sensitize the church to the seriousness and importance of this issue.

It would be helpful if all denominational leaders (area ministers especially), get training, and become educated with regards to this matter. Clergy needs to become informed as well as lay people. Often churches change because of lay people who see the problem, are burdened about it and end up educating the clergy. However, it is critical that the denominational leaders take a pro-active stance with regard to this. **Real lasting change does not happen overnight. It takes time.** A one session policy meeting at the board level whereby some standards are adopted does not constitute real change. It is only "pseudo-change."

Some steps that could be taken in effecting change in this area are:

- The strategy that is most effective in initiating and sustaining changes that need to be made with regard to the prevention of sexual abuse within the church is quite simply education<sup>13</sup>. Most churches are very resistant to dealing with this subject and to think that things will change because of one board meeting is naive. It is typically a long process to plant the seeds of vision regarding these policies. **Other than a crisis itself, it has been shown that education is simply the most effective motivator there is with regards to implementation church policy regarding the prevention of child sexual abuse.** In the appendix of this paper there is a reference list of such support.
- There should be an annual review of the policy by the board, in order to monitor policy, keep it up to date with regards to recent developments, to inform new board members, but most

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<sup>13</sup> Hammer, R., and Klipowicz, 1993. Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church. Audio Tape. Church and Law Tax Report, Matthews, NC.

importantly, to keep the issue alive. Any effective effort with regards to this must be systematic *and sustained*.

- An identifiable denomination clearinghouse of education material should be developed. Currently there is excellent work being done in this field and there is a wide variety of excellent materials that churches can easily use in implementing their program.
- Identifiable and available denominational support persons to aid churches in the development of sexual abuse policy.
- Identifiable experts who are available to work with churches who are undergoing a sexual assault charges.
- Identified churches and church boards who have worked through these issues and implemented a workable program within their own church. "A buddy program" can be developed so that churches who have implemented change can help those in the process. This can really help in overcoming resistance to the program.

If churches believe that focusing on this issue will divert time, energy and resources from what they consider their mission, they may have a truncated view of what their mission is. But even more dramatic, they need to understand the overwhelming time, energy and resources that are diverted once there is a charge of sexual abuse in the church. Often such charges can take **years** to process through the courts.

### **Resources and Support**

Often, in beginning to pull together policy on the issue of the prevention of sexual abuse, churches do not know where to start. This is where denominational support is important. The bibliography provided in this paper is a good source of information. The most comprehensive materials come from the Church Law & Tax Report Institute in Matthews, NC. They have put together a comprehensive program that includes literature, a strategy for educating congregations and audio video materials.

Besides these research materials congregations can find a great deal of help through local social agencies:

- Child Welfare
- Sexual Assault Centers
- Local Police Authorities
- Local Counselors and Therapists who work in this area
- Public Education

Some or all of these agencies/individuals are willing to come to your church to provide you with information, literature, and even seminars on how you can implement a policy. It is also wise to seek support from your denomination, as well as legal advice.

### **Conclusion**

No one can question the terrible devastation that can be caused by sexual abuse. And far too many of these individuals were abused by leaders in the churches they attended. Their tales are tragic.

However, I have also been the firsthand witness to the incredible healing powers of the church. Recently I watched in awe as one of my clients, who had been severely sexually abused on church premises, accepted Christ into her life and begin to experience profound healing. I have seen the church lovingly surround individuals whose lives have been torn apart by abuse, and offer the kind

of healthy love that heals. I know of perpetrators who have come to Christ, repented of their sins and found love, acceptance and even ministry in the church (though not in leadership, or with children and youth). This is a model for what the church can and should be. We are surrounded by a world that is wracked with the fallout of sexual sin. Traditionally the church has been reticent to involve herself in a redemptive way with this fallout. Yet there is a huge and incredibly relevant ministry waiting for the church in the whole area of a Christian approach to human sexuality. I hope that we could see this opportunity and seize it. What this paper presents is the outline for policy, procedure and program for the church. Yet, it is my hope that it would become more: that we would see this as part of our ministry.

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## FORMULATING YOUR OWN CHILD SAFETY ACTION PLAN

### Education and Information

It is important to understand the SPIRITUAL AND MORAL IMPLICATIONS of protecting our children from possible scenarios of abuse. As we have become aware of the possibilities of abuse within a trusting relationship, it is all the more vital to take every precaution to ensure the safety of our children and developmentally disabled individuals and also our paid and volunteer staff. The first part of this manual dealt with the background reasons for every church to develop a specific policy and procedure to follow. What follows is a quick summary of the steps your congregation should take to address these issues.

### Adopt A Plan

Once your church has used this manual to educate your leadership and congregation of the necessity of an action plan, assess your needs using the list that follows. Once you have assessed your situation, adopt a specific plan for setting the policies and making the necessary changes. This manual provides several examples of volunteer application forms, reference forms, interview suggestions, and follow-up procedures. Your church must select what works best for you, or develop our own forms. *Communicate to your congregation that this issue is not about "trusting" each other. It is about taking the necessary steps to ensure that we are the kind of community we desire to be, and that no negligence takes place in caring for our children.* A Christian community should be free from suspicion and mistrust, and we are endeavoring to show in a tangible way that this is so.

### "In A Nutshell..."

- Be educated and aware.
- Understand your present strengths and weaknesses.
- Study this Manual for what you can accept and adopt and what you would prefer to change for your own specific situation.
- Develop a simplified manual that is easy to implement in your church setting.
- Adopt the forms that you will use in all staffing situations involving children, youth and developmentally disabled adults.
- Make any physical changes necessary to your facility.
- Understand and adopt the reporting and follow-up procedures in case of an incident or allegation.
- Be consistent. Be thorough. Be fair.

### Assessment of Present Situation

Using this checklist of the ideal situation, see how your situation compares and begin to make required changes.

#### *Physical space and classroom arrangements*

- There is a window in each classroom.
- There are no hidden nooks or spots where unpleasant action could take place.
- Children are never left alone with one adult in a closed setting.
- There are two workers in every classroom.
- There is a supervisor who wanders about the premises regularly to check for indiscretions.
- There are procedures in place for medical considerations, emergency situations and for pick-up and drop-off of children.

### *Volunteer and Paid Staff*

- We have done background checks on all of our paid staff, including references, interviews, police and CWIS checks. (For information on CWIS checks, contact your local Child Welfare office.)
- We have a specific protocol for enlisting volunteer staff to work in child and youth ministries.
- Volunteer staff is well known within the congregation, having been a part of the church for some prescribed minimum period, such as six months.
- We have standard reference and interview forms in place.
- We have asked for and followed up on reference checks with phone calls and/or letters.
- We feel assured that our staff assents to our congregation's beliefs.
- We have a procedure in place which limits access to application and reference forms only to those who need to see them, to assure as much confidentiality as is possible.

### *Incident reporting and follow-up procedure*

- If an incident is reported or discovered, we have a planned procedure in place for dealing with the police, the media, the victim and the alleged perpetrator.
- We have a well-defined understanding of confidentiality and are aware of who needs to know what information.
- We understand the vital importance of dealing appropriately with allegations, and have agreed to take each incident seriously and deal fairly but decisively.

Sample of Form Letter to be used with Ministry Volunteer Application and Forms with regards to Ministries to Children.

Dear

Thank you for your interest and desire to serve our Lord at \_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church.

The church has a spiritual AND MORAL responsibility to provide a secure environment for those participating in its programs. To meet this objective, we are required to screen those to whom we entrust the care and nurturing of our children, youth and developmentally disabled persons.

In order to fulfill this task, we need you to complete the enclosed Church Ministry Personnel form. These forms will be reviewed by \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. (List positions of people, as opposed to specific names, e.g. "Children's Ministry Director")

Please return the completed forms to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the pastors or a member of the Board of Elders.

In Kingdom Service,

The Board of Elders  
(Name of Church)

**MINISTRY VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM**  
**For**  
**MINISTRIES TO CHILDREN**

**Prepared by**  
**The Canadian Baptists of Western Canada**  
**605, 999 – 8 St. SW, Calgary, AB T2R 1J5**  
**Tel: (403) 228-9559 Fax: (403) 228-9048**

We recognize that this Ministry Volunteer Application Form is extensive. We wish we did not have to ask these questions. However, in our desire to reduce the risk of abuse within our church ministries, we believe this information is necessary to protect our children and to protect our volunteers. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

**Personal Information**

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Driver's License: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: Day \_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Is your FAMILY supportive of your ministry involvement? If not, please explain.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Personal History:**

Elementary and Secondary School: Grade Completed \_\_\_\_\_

College/University: Years Completed \_\_\_\_\_

Degree Received \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation and/or Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies, Interests or Skills: \_\_\_\_\_

**Spiritual History:**

How long have you attended \_\_\_\_\_ Church?

Are you a member of \_\_\_\_\_ Church? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry Volunteer Application Form

- 2 -

If not, are you willing to attend a membership seminar? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you regularly attend (two or more services a month?)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you been baptized? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If not, are you willing to attend a baptismal seminar?  
\_\_\_\_\_

In a brief paragraph, please outline your spiritual journey: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Area of Ministry you are interested in: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you taken any courses or received any training that would equip you for Christian ministry? Explain:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you identified your spiritual gifts? Please list. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ministry Information:**

Churches I attended in the last five years are as follows.

1. Name of church \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Attended \_\_\_\_\_ Member or Adherent \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name of church \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Attended \_\_\_\_\_ Member or Adherent \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name of church \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Attended \_\_\_\_\_ Member or Adherent \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate any experience you have had working with children/youth and/or developmentally disabled persons in the last 5 years:

1. Name of Church/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry Volunteer Application Form

- 3 -

Dates and Description of Ministry \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Major Responsibility/Type of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor or Ministry Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name of Church/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates and Description of Ministry \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Major Responsibility/Type of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor or Ministry Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name of Church/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates and Description of Ministry \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Major Responsibility/Type of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor or Ministry Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Check the entire ministry positions listed below in which you have previous experience; and circle those that interest you (no experience necessary).

Teaching

- \_\_\_ Preschool
- \_\_\_ Grade 1-3
- \_\_\_ Grade 4-6
- \_\_\_ Youth
- \_\_\_ Adult
- \_\_\_ Other (specify)

Helping

- \_\_\_ Baby-sitting
- \_\_\_ Nursery
- \_\_\_ Preschooler
- \_\_\_ Children Gr.1/6
- \_\_\_ Youth Worker
- \_\_\_ Other (specify)

Other

- \_\_\_ Music- instrument
- \_\_\_ Music- vocal
- \_\_\_ Storytelling
- \_\_\_ Crafts
- \_\_\_ Games
- \_\_\_ Camp Counselor
- \_\_\_ Other (specify)

Any other information about you that we should know:

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Do you have a criminal record or have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense involving children or assaults? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No If yes, please explain on a separate sheet all such convictions.

Ministry Volunteer Application Form

- 4 -

Are there circumstances involving your lifestyle or background that would call into question your ability to work with children? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted for the use or sale of drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been accused, arrested or convicted for any sexually related OR OTHER crimes?  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you have answered yes to any of the above questions, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any physical condition that would hinder or prevent you from performing certain types of activities or working with children (lifting children, playing sports or verbally interacting with children)? If so, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**References:**

Please provide the names of three individuals, excluding relatives, who could provide a reference for you. Include at least one reference from outside the church.

1. Name of Reference \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity known? \_\_\_\_\_ How long? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name of Reference \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity known? \_\_\_\_\_ How long? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name of Reference \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity known? \_\_\_\_\_ How long? \_\_\_\_\_

**RELEASE OF INFORMATION AND DECLARATION OF INTENT**



**CRIMINAL RECORDS RELEASE**

Re: Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

Social Insurance Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Drivers License Number: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize and direct that the Police Service release any information, pertaining to any record of convictions contained in its files, or otherwise available to the Service on me to:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Church)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Address)

Dated at \_\_\_\_\_, Alberta, this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

## MINISTRY VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW FORM

Have you completed the Ministry Volunteer Application Form for Ministries to Children?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Has anyone explained the types of children's ministries, which we provide as a church and which might provide you with an opportunity for volunteer service? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

What prompted you to be interested in the ministry, which you identified on your Ministry Volunteer Form? (Indicate the ministry they showed interest in.)

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Would you be willing to attend the training session associated with that ministry? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Has the potential volunteer reviewed their spiritual journey and compare responses with those indicated on the Spiritual History of the Ministry Volunteer Application Form. Note any significant omissions or questions, which arise. THE INTERVIEWER SHOULD NOTE THAT QUESTIONS REFERRING TO THE RELIGION OF AN APPLICANT ARE EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED UNDER THE ACT.

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Ask the potential volunteer about their relationship with each reference listed on the Ministry Volunteer Application Form.

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On what date would you be available? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the minimum length of your commitment? \_\_\_\_\_

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**MEDICAL RELEASE FORM**

**Field Trips and Special Events**

Does your child have any severe allergies? (Bee stings, food, penicillin, other drugs, etc.) Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_

—

Does your child have any life-threatening allergies? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_

Is your child bringing any medication with him/her? (Antibiotics, ventilator, Ritalin, etc.)  
Please explain any instructions for staff regarding these medications. THE CHURCH AND ITS WORKERS & VOLUNTEERS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE AND DO NOT ASSUME ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING AND ENSURING THAT A CHILD PROPERLY TAKES HIS/HER MEDICATION.

\_\_\_\_\_

—

Does your child have any physical, emotional, mental or behavioural concerns or limitations that our staff should be aware of? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

—

Your child will be cared for as if (he/she) were our child. Every precaution is taken for the safety and good health of your child, but in the event of accident or sickness,

\_\_\_\_\_ Church, its staff, and its volunteers are hereby released from any liability.

In the event that your child requires special medication, x-rays or treatment, the parents will be notified immediately.

In case of surgical emergency, I hereby give permission to the physician selected by \_\_\_\_\_ Church to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for, and to order injection, anesthesia or surgery for my child as named above.

Your child must be covered by Provincial Health Insurance or equivalent medical insurance.

Alberta Health Care Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Family Physician \_\_\_\_\_ Physician's Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**MEDICAL RELEASE FORM  
Overnight Events**

Does your child have any severe allergies? (Bee stings, food, penicillin, other drugs, etc.) Yes \_ No\_  
Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child have any life-threatening allergies? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Is your child bringing any medication with him/her? (Antibiotics, ventilator, Ritalin, etc.)  
Please explain any instructions for staff regarding these medications. THE CHURCH AND ITS WORKERS  
AND VOLUNTEERS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE AND DO NOT ASSUME ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR  
MONITORING AND ENSURING THAT A CHILD PROPERLY TAKES HIS/HER MEDICATION.

—

Does your child have any physical, emotional, mental or behavioural concerns or limitations that our staff  
should be aware of? Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Check if your child currently, or within the last three months, has had any of the following:

- |                                       |  |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appendicitis | <input type="checkbox"/> Ear Infection | <input type="checkbox"/> Hay Fever        | <input type="checkbox"/> Mumps               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asthma       | <input type="checkbox"/> Epilepsy      | <input type="checkbox"/> Hepatitis        | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe Stomach Ache |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedwetting   | <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes      | <input type="checkbox"/> Measles (Red)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sinusitis           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chickenpox   | <input type="checkbox"/> Fainting      | <input type="checkbox"/> Measles (German) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tonsillitis         |
|                                       |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____         |

Date of last Tetanus Shot: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child will be cared for as if (he/she) were our child. Every precaution is taken for the safety and  
good health of your child, but in the event of accident or sickness, \_\_\_\_\_  
Church, its staff, and its volunteers are hereby released from any liability.

In the event that your child requires special medication, x-rays or treatment, the parents will be notified  
immediately.

In case of surgical emergency, I hereby give permission to the physician selected by  
\_\_\_\_\_ Church to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for, and to order injection,  
anesthesia or surgery for my child as named above.

Your child must be covered by Provincial Health Insurance or equivalent medical insurance.

Alberta Health Care Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Family Physician \_\_\_\_\_ Physician's Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

**REPORT FORM**  
**SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Filing Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of suspected abuse: (Physical, Sexual, Emotional, Neglect)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Indications of suspected abuse:

(Including facts, physical signs and course of events where necessary)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Action taken: (Including date and time)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ANY WORKER OR VOLUNTEER WHO HAS REASONABLE AND PROBABLE GROUNDS TO BELIEVE AND BELIEVES THAT A CHILD IS IN NEED OF PROTECTIVE SERVICES SHALL IMMEDIATELY REPORT THE MATTER TO THE PASTOR. ANY SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE MUST BE REPORTED TO THE DIRECTOR OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES AND WILL BE REPORTED BY THE PASTOR. All information will only be viewed by those needing to know for purposes of processing this situation.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Person Reporting Incident) (Pastor)



**REPORT FORM  
SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE  
Follow-Up Report**

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Who Filed Initial Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Conclusions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Action taken: (Including date and time)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ANY WORKER OR VOLUNTEER WHO HAS REASONABLE AND PROBABLE GROUNDS TO BELIEVE AND BELIEVES THAT A CHILD IS IN NEED OF PROTECTIVE SERVICES SHALL IMMEDIATELY REPORT THE MATTER TO THE PASTOR. ANY SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE MUST BE REPORTED TO THE DIRECTOR OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES AND WILL BE REPORTED BY THE PASTOR. All information will only be viewed by those needing to know for purposes of processing the situation.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Pastor)

MINISTRY VOLUNTEER POSITIONS  
FOR  
MINISTRIES TO CHILDREN

**APPROVAL FORM**

(To be overseen by ministry leader) Re:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

1. Ministry Volunteer Application Form: Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewed By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Interview (when deemed necessary) Interviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. References contacted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
-  
\_\_\_\_\_  
-  
\_\_\_\_\_  
-  
\_\_\_\_\_  
-  
\_\_\_\_\_  
-  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Government Records checked: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Completed Program Training: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed:  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Elder's Review Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Approved. \_\_\_\_\_

**SUGGESTED 'SCRIPT' FOR TELEPHONE FOLLOW-UP  
WHEN SCREENING APPLICATIONS**

Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_. I serve on the Children's Ministries Committee of \_\_\_\_\_ Church in \_\_\_\_\_ (location). Like many churches today, we have a screening policy for all of the people who volunteer to work with our children in Sunday School and other programs. I am calling your church because \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Applicant):

A.

1. ...indicated on his/her application form that he/she had attended your church in \_\_\_\_\_

And they indicated they were involved in (name type of ministry) \_\_\_\_\_

Can you verify this information? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How long have you known him/her? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you ever worked together with this person in ministry? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

4. What characteristics would enable this person to fulfill this position? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain:

5. Would you have any reservations about \_\_\_\_\_ working with children? (If there are reservations, note them on the form.)

6. Additional comments regarding suitability for ministry? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you affirm this person for ministry? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

OR

B.

2. ...listed you as a personal reference. How long have you known \_\_\_\_\_?

Would you have any reservations about \_\_\_\_\_ working with children? (If there are reservations, note them on the form.)

Suggested Script  
Page Two

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for your help.

Record all information on the follow-up form and return to \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: If the person who first answers your call does not know the applicant, please try to get the name and number of someone who can help you.



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7. Additional comments regarding suitability for ministry\_\_\_\_\_

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8. Do you affirm this person for ministry? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Reference Checker: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Position

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date