

Child Protection Policy

The Elders of Summerside Community Church have adopted this policy. We are committed to providing a safe ministry and ask all volunteers and staff to know and uphold this policy for all church sponsored activities. Please read this document and keep it on file for reference.

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Protection Policies

OVERVIEW

Summerside Community Church is committed to the following:

1. Obtaining a criminal background check for all workers (over 18 years of age) who work with children under age 18.
2. Implementation of a basic "two-leader" rule. Such a rule implies that at least two leaders should be present during any children's activities: a) Leader #1 must be an adult who is a member b) Leader #2 can be a member or adherent 11 years of age or older and functioning as an assistant to Leader #1.
3. The adherence to the "Twelve Month" rule: Volunteers will only be permitted to work with children after they have been members or adherents of SCC for a period of twelve months. A volunteer may be used earlier than 12 months if he or she has passed 2 reference checks.

CHILD SECURITY

1. Leaders and volunteers should be easy to identify for both parents and children as they will be wearing a church lanyard with a name tag.
2. All children from infancy to grade 5 must be registered/signed in before entering the children's program. At the time of registration, the parent must inform the check-in desk attendant of any special needs/medical issues/custodial issues of their child. We may also collect additional information such as parent's location during that period of time.
3. The child's name label with security number **MUST** remain on the child for the duration of the program.
4. Children are never to be dropped off in the nursery or a classroom without two leaders or caregivers present.
5. The child will only be released to the parent or pre-authorized designate. Doors are to be supervised so that children are not able to exit alone and so that leaders/caregivers can take notice when a parent/other person comes to pick them up.

WASHROOM GUIDELINES

1. Parents are encouraged to take their children to the washroom prior to each class or service. Communicate this strategy to parents periodically.
2. A worker should avoid being alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and only go into a washroom or cubicle with a child when assistance is required.
3. Nursery Children:
 - a) Nursery staff will not be expected to change diapers.
 - b) If necessary, diaper changing must always take place by an adult in such a way that the other adult nursery worker(s) can easily see the child that is being changed, as well as the other children and workers in the room.
4. Children Age 2 to Grade 2:
 - a) A child seven years of age and younger should not be sent to an adult washroom alone, but should be accompanied by a leader or volunteer.
 - b) If a child must go to the washroom, the leader or volunteer should check the washroom to ensure it's empty, wait outside the washroom door and then escort the child back to the classroom. If the child is taking longer than expected, the leader or volunteer should call his or her name rather than enter the bathroom to find out why.
 - c) When pre-school children require assistance in the washroom, a worker should inform another adult when they are taking the child into the washroom and when they are returning from the washroom.
 - d) In light of the fact that most abusers are male, for the protection of male volunteers, it is advisable for men to avoid assisting boys or girls of any age, in the washrooms.

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

1. Sick Children:
 - a) A child who is ill and could, therefore, expose other children and workers to illness, should not be received into the program. Potential signs of illness are unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, fever, vomiting, diarrhea etc. Upon seeing these symptoms, it is appropriate for the leader to ask if the child is ill, and if so, the child will not be allowed to stay in the program. Any child with a known communicable disease should not be received into the program.
2. Medications:
 - a) We do not administer medications; if medication is necessary, a parent must arrange to administer it.
 - b) No medication is to be left in classrooms or given to the child or teacher. In extreme cases (i.e. peanut allergies, ventilators etc.) arrangements should be made with signed, written instructions when the child is registered/signed-in.

3. Reporting Accidents and Injuries

a) It is important that parents or guardians are made aware of any accidents or injuries that occurred when their children were in your care. (i.e. being pushed down by another child, falling off their chair etc.) For every incident, proper documentation must be completed – Please refer to the white Incident Reporting Binder in each classroom and the First Aid Kit procedures.

4. Procedures for Injuries Involving Significant Blood Loss or Suspected Abuse:

a) Separate the child in question from the other children. If there is an injury, isolate the area where the blood may have dropped e.g. carpet, toys, etc. Apply reasonable First Aid measures (as per protocol) and send someone to locate parents according to classroom protocol.

b) If other children have contacted blood, the area should be cleaned appropriately and their parents should be notified when they pick up their child.

c) Latex gloves should be worn when administering First Aid and/or cleaning bloody areas.

d) Any blood on floor, toys etc. should be cleaned with an appropriate solution obtained from the custodian.

e) In the case of abuse, the victim should be wrapped in a warm blanket, but torn clothing should not be removed. Take note of any physical signs or evidence of abuse and record these.

5. Cleanliness:

a) Sanitize childcare areas regularly. Clean all surfaces, toys, tables, trays, bedding, etc.

CLASSROOM STAFFING AND SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

1. General Guidelines

a) Workers should always conduct themselves in a godly manner, being an example of obedience, respect and honesty to those in their care.

b) Programs that involve children and youth must always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should be maintained both before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents, legal guardians or authorized designate.

2. Two Leaders:

a) As a general rule, there is to be a minimum of two leaders (leader #1 must be a member and leader #2 can be a member or adherent – older child or adult), in any isolated room with children.

3. Counselling of Individuals:

a) Any one-on-one time with children or youth must take place in public areas. If such a meeting takes place outside of regular meeting times, consent from a parent or guardian should be obtained.

4. Open Doors:

a) When it is necessary for only one leader to be in a room with children (e.g. leader leaves room to escort children to washroom), the door of that room should remain open. All classroom doors must have windows.

5. Pre-school Classes:

a) All pre-school rooms are to be staffed with at least one female volunteer to better facilitate observance of washroom guidelines.

6. Discipline:

a) Consideration must be given to a child's dignity and vulnerability in exercising discipline. Actions and words must be guided by gentleness, respect, and understanding. Discipline will be carried out through instruction, training and correction. Physical punishment of any kind will not be used. Workers experiencing difficulty and lack of response with an individual child will seek assistance and advice through the program leader who will, then, seek the support and assistance of the parent.

PROPER DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate but should never occur when alone with a child or youth. The following guidelines are meant to be genuine and positive displays of God's love.

1. Appropriate Touch: Love and caring can be expressed in the following ways, by:

a) Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking or listening to him/her in a kind, caring manner;

b) Taking a child's hand and leading him/her to an activity;

c) Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting;

d) Taking both of a child's hands as you say, "You did such a good job!" or "I'm so glad to see you again. We've missed you!" etc.

e) Patting a child on the head, shoulder or back to affirm him/her;

f) Holding a child by the hand, or placing your hand on the child's shoulder, to keep his/her attention as you redirect behavior;

g) Holding a pre-school child who is crying.

2. Inappropriate Touch: You must avoid:

a) Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging or tickling;

b) Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit or shorts (except when assisting a child while using the toilet as previously outlined).

- c) Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.
- d) Youth Ministry Considerations: Anyone working with a youth group will not pursue a dating relationship with a young person of that group. Workers should always be sensitive to young people with 'crushes' and should always be aware that young persons are prone to develop infatuations towards persons in leadership. Should a relationship or situation develop, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Youth Pastor, Senior Pastor or designate immediately.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND OVERNIGHT POLICIES

Leaders are encouraged to plan special activities in their homes or involve their pupils in field trips and service projects. The following precautions need to be followed with these activities.

1. Field Trips and Special Events

- a) The staff member who oversees the ministry should approve activities conducted away from the church property.
- b) Notify parents at least one week in advance of an event and, thereby, obtaining appropriate waivers and consents.
- c) Use at least two approved adult leaders to supervise all trips and outings.
- d) When transporting children is necessary, all drivers must possess, and provide upon request, a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. Workers should avoid being alone with a child or young person in their vehicle. The number of passengers must never exceed the number of seat belts.

2. Overnight Events: Church-sponsored overnight activities may be permitted subject to the following guidelines:

- a) The staff member who oversees the ministry must approve all overnight activities.
- b) All overnight activities should have a minimum ratio of one leader for every 10 children. There must be a minimum of two leaders at all times. Male leaders will supervise only male children and female leaders will supervise only female children. Each leader should have an assigned group for which he/she will be responsible during the overnight event. All supervising leaders/volunteers must be approved by the Youth Pastor.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE (REFLECTING ONTARIO LAWS)

1. Each person who believes, on reasonable grounds, that a child (under age 18) is or may be in need of protection shall forthwith report the belief and the information upon which it is based to the local Children's Aid Society in compliance with the Child and Family Services Act. In conjunction with the report to the Children's Aid Society, the person shall also report the occurrence to the senior pastor or pastor or such other person as the board may direct in writing.
2. Each person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or has suffered abuse shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to the senior pastor or pastor or such other person as the board may in writing direct. The senior pastor or board designate shall forthwith report the occurrence to the local Children's Aid Society in compliance with the Child and Family Services Act.
3. Prior to reporting the occurrence, if necessary, and pursuant to the Child and Family Services Act, no personnel, employees or volunteers, shall, apart from complying with paragraphs 1 and 2 herein, conduct any investigation or question any individual(s) unless specifically authorized by the board of the church. Any information obtained and any report pursuant to paragraphs 1 and 2 herein shall be considered and treated as CONFIDENTIAL information by the church.
4. No investigation or inquiry shall be conducted where a report has been made to the Children's Aid Society until the Children's Aid Society or police investigation has been completed unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate civil authorities.

HANDLING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

1. If there is a written or verbal report made, alleging that any volunteer personnel has abused or threatened to abuse a child or if the senior pastor or pastor or such other person as the board may direct in writing received information about any volunteer personnel that might indicate that a child may be at risk, such volunteer personnel shall immediately be suspended from any duties or responsibilities in the children's ministry pending the outcome of the investigation and subject to any discipline policy in the church constitution or bylaw.
2. If there is a written or verbal report made by a person who is prepared to identify himself or herself alleging that an employed personnel has abused or threatened to abuse a child, such employee shall be suspended from any duties or responsibilities in all children's ministries, with pay, pending the outcome of such investigation, until otherwise notified by the board of the church and subject to any written employment discipline policy process.
3. Any notice of suspension shall be given in such a way that no investigation by the Children's Aid Society or police will be put in jeopardy and shall be done in consultation with the civil authorities. The suspension from duties and responsibilities is not and shall not be seen or accepted as the "guilt" of the individual, but only as an indication of the priority given to the need to protect our children.
4. Any personnel, volunteer or employee, who has been suspended pending the completion of the investigation shall be subject to the discipline process of the church in accordance with the church constitution or bylaw, or such other policies implemented from time to time to deal with the investigation of abuse allegations.
5. Any personnel, volunteer or employee, found to have abused a child or placed a child at risk of abuse shall, apart from any other discipline process, be prohibited from participation in any children's ministry in the church unless specifically authorized by the board of the church and then only in accordance with any and all terms and conditions determined by the board of the church.

Children's Aid Society: 455-9000; London Police: 661-5670

6. In the case of an alleged incident which occurred in the church, or involved people in the church, the following guidelines apply:
 - a) Report the incident immediately to the church C.A.S. representative (Senior Pastor or designate) who will inform the C.A.S. and/or Police. The church's lawyer should also be contacted if necessary.
 - b) Contact the victim's parent or guardian.
 - c) Document all your efforts at handling the incident.
7. As soon as possible after the incident becomes known:
 - a) Do not prejudge the situation but take allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and victim's family. Showing care and support help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed and remember that care and safety of the victim is the priority.

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

c) When the child comes to you, be sure to take his or her word seriously. Don't deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to the child. Give emotional support, reminding the child that he or she is not at fault. Tell the child that he or she was right to tell you about the problem. Do not promise the child that you will not tell anyone.

8. Response strategy to allegations of abuse should include:

a) Take all allegations seriously.

b) Situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect to people's privacy and confidentiality.

c) Full co-operation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of the church lawyer.

d) Adequate care must be shown for the well being of victims.

e) The victim should not be held responsible in any way.

f) Always have adequate records of worker's applications, references and screening forms. They should be up to date and accessible for at least 5 years.

9. **The only spokesperson for the church should be the Senior Pastor or someone designated by the Elders.**