

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

for

**The Village Church
Thorold, Ontario**

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Church has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children, youth, and vulnerable adults participating in Church programs.

This policy presents the plan of The Village Church to protect children, youth and vulnerable adults from abuse, to protect volunteers and staff from allegations of abuse, including false allegations, and to outline steps to take in response to abuse. It is hoped that the policies in this statement will further the reality of the church as a 'sanctuary' and a place of ministry. Abuse of any person will not be tolerated and every reasonable step will be taken to eliminate the risk.

Definition and Details

Child/Youth

For the purpose of this document, child/youth is any person under the age of 18. Please note, for the purposes of this policy we will define youth up to age 18. After age 18 persons are legally considered adults. We also note that the Children's Aid Society will not respond to allegations of abuse perpetrated against anyone over the age of 16. Over age 16 the police will need to be informed and they will investigate and lay charges if necessary.

Vulnerable Adult

For the purpose of this document, a 'vulnerable adult' is "a person over 18 years of age who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness. This person is or may be unable to take care of him or herself from significant harm or serious exploitation. A vulnerable adult may be a person who has a physical or sensory disability; is physically frail or has a chronic illness; has a mental illness of dementia; has a learning disability; is old or frail; misuses drugs and/or alcohol; has social or emotional problems or exhibits challenging behaviour. A person's vulnerability will depend on their circumstances and environment, and each case must be considered individually."¹

Volunteer (Leader/Counsellor)

For the purpose of this document, volunteers are those individuals 18 or older who serve in a Church program and/or have direct contact with youth in the church's programs.

Assistant

For the purpose of this document, assistants are those individuals aged 14 -17, who are working alongside an adult volunteer.

Helper

For the purpose of this document, helpers are those individuals aged 10 -13, who are working under the supervision of an adult volunteer.

Physical abuse

Is any non-accidental act that violates the dignity of the image of God in another person. Physical abuse may consist of just one incident or it may occur repeatedly. It involves deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at

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<http://www.torfaen.gov.uk/HealthAndSocialCare/ServicesForOlderPeople/VulnerableAdults/Definition.aspx>

risk of being injured. Physical abuse includes beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking or assaulting a child with a weapon. Physically abusive behaviour also includes physical neglect, which means not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care.

Emotional abuse

Is any attempt to control another person's life through threats, fears and/or deprivation in such a way that it impairs a person's God-given sense of self-worth.

Sexual abuse

Is any sexual experience forced on one person by another, which may or may not involve physical contact between people. Sexual abuse includes any inappropriate sexual encounter, even if consensual at the time (e.g. between parent and children, teachers and children, pastors and counselee). Sexual abuse can take many forms, some of these include obscene phone calls, exposure of genitalia, excessive hugging and kissing, fondling body parts, forced viewing of pornographic material, digital and penile penetration, oral and anal sexual intercourse.

Neglect

Is when a child's parents or caregiver fail to provide those things necessary for the child's emotional, psychological and physical development. Physical neglect involves a failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and protection from harm. Emotional neglect involves a failure to provide for the child's need to feel loved, wanted, safe and worthy.

Harassment

Is unwanted attention of a persistent or abusive nature which creates a negative and unacceptable psychological and emotional environment.² Examples include stalking, repetitive contact by phone, e-mail etc., and/or making one or one's family feel threatened.

Inappropriate Touching

Is any physical contact with a minor that a reasonable person would believe is not appropriate for the circumstances.

ABUSE PREVENTION GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

Abuse Prevention Team

The Governing Body of The Village Church is responsible for approving and implementing policies and procedures related to abuse prevention at The Village Church in all its ministries and programs for minors.

The Governing Body is also responsible for the maintenance of an active Abuse Prevention Team (APT) who, as a designate of the Governing Body, works for the prevention of and response to abuse within The Village Church as a community and institution. The APT shall be guided by denominational personnel and synodical decisions that may apply, and when appropriate, work with the Classical Abuse Response Panel (if available). The mandate for the Abuse Prevention Team is further developed and contained in Appendix A.

² This definition is adapted from Joanis, S., (November 1999). Canadian Human Rights Reporter as a definition of harassment for the purposes of the The Village Church Safe Church Policy and www.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/fm/pub/harassment/harass-e.pdf

Screening of Candidates for Staff and Volunteers

Screening for church staff and volunteers is our first step in minimizing abuse. Volunteers will receive initial training in the **Safe Church Policy** and are expected to participate in yearly reviews of the policies and procedures.

All candidates shall be interviewed and screened by at least two people, at least one from the Abuse Prevention Team, before they are approved to serve in children, teen or vulnerable adult ministry.

1. The Personal Information Form is the primary vehicle for screening candidates (Appendix B). Current as well as candidate personnel shall fill out the form and provide three references, who will be contacted as part of the screening process.
2. Screening documentation shall be kept in a locked file in the church to maintain confidentiality and will be kept on file indefinitely.
3. All paid staff and volunteers age 18 and over who are involved with youth must provide a Criminal Background Check. Employed staff members are required to produce a Criminal Background Check upon hiring. Volunteers are required to produce a Criminal Background Check every three years. A copy of the Criminal Background Check for the staff/volunteer will be kept securely by the Abuse Prevention Team at the church office.
4. Volunteers must be known by the Governing Body of The Village Church for at least six months prior to eligibility for participating in children, youth, or vulnerable adult programs.
5. Any individual known to have a previous history of sexual misconduct or physical assault, or a misdemeanour or felony conviction of child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse, or known to have pled no contest to any misdemeanour or felony charge will not be allowed to serve as a volunteer, staff, or assistant in ministry at The Village Church.

Guidelines for Using Discipline in Church Programs

1. Corporal punishment (e.g. slapping, hitting, and pushing) is not permitted.
2. Leaders will show self-control and common sense when dealing with misbehaving children, youth or vulnerable adults.
3. Inform and involve the parent(s) whenever a child, youth, or vulnerable adult misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehaviour increases or persists.
4. Report to the program supervisor concerns about a child's, youth's, or vulnerable adult's behaviour or the appropriate response to their behaviour.
5. Involve a parent or an additional volunteer in a classroom where misbehaviour is an ongoing problem.
6. Any violation of the disciplinary procedure is to be reported to the program supervisor or the Abuse Prevention Team.

Two Adult Rule

An important dimension of abuse prevention for the children, youth and vulnerable adults to whom we minister, and an important deterrent to false accusation of abuse, is the presence of more than one approved adult in the rooms where children, youth, and vulnerable adult ministries are taking place. For these reasons, all ministries shall implement that policy.

Where it is not practical to have two approved adults present, or if there are not enough volunteers to meet the "two adult rule", a second adult will be designated to serve as a monitor. This monitor will circulate periodically from room to room, provide surveillance, and monitor the facility for any suspicious behaviour. The designated Hall Monitor may be one of the Greeters, Ushers or Security team in place during morning services, or the Sunday School or youth program coordinator or another designated leader. When a situation occurs, where the 'two adult rule' cannot be followed, one adult or assistant shall not be in a room with only one child present.

Policies for Programs

A. Nursery/Toddler

1. Minor children may volunteer as nursery assistants at the age of 12, provided they are in the presence and supervision of an adult volunteer. At least one adult volunteer must serve in each nursery room as scheduled.
2. The bathroom door must be ajar at all times when a toddler is using the facilities.
3. A parent or guardian must sign their children into the nursery each time. They may indicate on the sign-in sheet that nursery/toddler volunteers/assistants may change diaper or take their children to the bathroom or they may indicate that they prefer to be called for that purpose. Only a parent or guardian may pick up from nursery or toddler room. They must sign their children out at that time. Each person signing in a child will be given a number to identify them in case they need to be called out of the worship service to attend to their child.
4. Volunteers may not take the children from the nursery/toddler area for any reason other than to use the bathroom or if the child becomes ill. Any medical problem should be reported immediately to the parent or guardian.
5. Volunteers of the same family are NOT allowed to serve in the nursery/toddler rooms. An assistant may be related to one of the adult volunteers as long as there is another non-related adult volunteer serving in the room the entire time.
6. Nursery area will have windows and have a clear view inside

B. Church School

1. Helpers may volunteer as Church School assistants/helpers, provided they are in the presence of and under the supervision of a non-related adult volunteer.
2. Children should be encouraged to use bathroom facilities before and after class. Children who need to use the bathroom facilities during class will be monitored by one classroom volunteer or monitor.
3. One classroom volunteer or monitor will assist a child needing medical assistance until a parent can be notified.
4. Classroom doors will be kept open, unless the room has a window, with a clear view to the inside.

C. Youth and Vulnerable Adult Programs

1. Opportunities for youth and vulnerable adults to benefit from the care and experience of adults are a priority for this church. However, one-on-one situations are also areas of vulnerability. Volunteers and program participants should avoid activities that could easily lead to allegations of abuse or harassment.
2. Youth group leaders will only meet individual members of the youth group in public places. Non-church sponsored, off-premises contact with youth is discouraged.
3. Youth leaders should provide adequate supervision of the youth in their care, following the two person rule, or using a designated monitor in lieu of a second instructor in each classroom. Activities should be cancelled if adequate supervision is not available.
4. Classroom doors will be kept open, unless the room has a window, with a clear view to the inside of the room.
5. Appropriate display of affection between leader and youth/vulnerable adults is often an expression of encouragement and support, but it can be misinterpreted and misused. For this reason, affection should be limited to a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-hand pat on the back, clasping one another's hand or a light touch to the forearm.
6. When transportation is required, ideally the family of the youth (or the youth themselves) would provide transportation between home and church or alternate site of the youth event, however, transportation may be provided by the leader if there are

at least three people in the vehicle, or with the permission of the parents of the youth involved. Due to the isolation of a vehicle, a leader should avoid being in a vehicle with one youth.

7. For activities that occur off-site or as overnight trips, a parental permission slip must be obtained before the youth may participate. For convenience, parental permission slips may be obtained for the entire church year, if acceptable to the parents. When this is the case, parents must be made aware of each activity just prior to its scheduled occurrence.
8. For overnight activities with the same gender participants, there must be a least one leader and two youth in each sleeping area, and there must be at least two leaders in supervision of the activity. For mixed gender situations, separate sleeping accommodations must be maintained for the two genders, and any common space must be supervised by at least two leaders.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Reporting Abuse of a Child

Signs and symptoms of abuse need to be taken seriously. When a minor reports that he or she has been a victim of abuse this must be taken seriously. When required, an investigation of a complaint made by a child or a symptom noted by a staff or volunteer must be made only by those trained to investigate child abuse complaints. In the case of a minor, trained investigators would mean the Niagara Regional Police (905-688-4111) and Family and Children's Services (905-937-9781).

When signs and symptoms of abuse or reports of abuse arise from a child in a church program, volunteers/staff in that program may be the ones to notice the signs or symptoms, or, the child may report complaints of abuse to the volunteers/staff. A volunteer/staff person should not conduct an investigation of the matter. Instead, they should follow an established reporting procedure as outlined below.

1. Volunteers/Staff who work with youth programs should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of abuse. (See Appendix C on "Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse")
2. As soon as possible after a staff member or volunteer becomes aware of abuse or the possibility that abuse is occurring, what the victim said or what the leader/volunteer saw must be written down as accurately and with as much detail as possible. The leader/volunteer should keep these notes for themselves. The leader/volunteer may refer to them to complete the Child Abuse Incident Report Form (found in Appendix D). This document should be completed, marked as confidential, signed and dated, and forwarded to the Abuse Prevention Team, who will later store it in a locked file in the church office.
3. Volunteers/Staff who see signs or symptoms of abuse or have an incident of abuse reported to them must notify the Niagara Regional Police (905-688-4111) within 24 hours. (The Police Department will notify FACS) They should not conduct an investigation. If the leader of the program is the suspected abuser, the volunteer/staff person should consult with the Abuse Prevention Team.
 - a. The Police should be notified if the youth is 17 years or younger and does not know the abuser, is not related to or living with the abuser, may have contact with the abuser without protection, or is under the authority of the abuser.
 - b. In other situations involving a youth aged 16 years and younger, Family and Children's Services must be notified. If the child is old enough and wishes to be involved, the volunteer/staff may support them by being in the child's presence as that call is made to FACS.
 - c. If the leader/volunteer is uncertain about whether the situation that they have become aware of is really abuse or warrants a call to the Police or to FACS, they

can consult with a member of the Abuse Prevention Team about what to do. In addition, FACS can be contacted to request a consultation on a non-identifying basis, during which they will tell the leader/volunteer whether or not a report must be made.

4. Maintain confidentiality. This means that the leader/volunteer should not tell other church members or council members, or anyone else the identity of the people involved (including the identity of the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator), other than members of the Abuse Prevention Team or the pastor (providing none of these are implicated in the allegations).
5. If the incident occurred during a church function or involves a church member who was in a position of care or leadership at the time of the alleged abuse, report the suspicion to the Abuse Prevention Team, the appropriate program supervisor, or the pastor (providing they are not implicated in the allegations) after the report to the Police and FACS is made. (See below for Suggested Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Allegations of Child Abuse against a church leader).
6. If the alleged abuse occurred outside of a church function (for example child abuse in the home), but the alleged abuser is a member of the church or has a leadership role in the church, the Abuse Prevention Team or pastor should be notified after the report to the Police and FACS is made.
7. Any volunteer or staff who is accused of abuse or harassment will be immediately suspended pending the outcome of investigation.
8. The Abuse Prevention Team will consult with a lawyer if necessary and report alleged abuse to the insurance company, if the alleged abuser is a church volunteer or staff, or if the occurrence happened on church property or in a church program.
9. A volunteer or paid church leader who confesses or is found guilty of sexual misconduct or physical assault against a child will be removed from their office/position and barred from serving in that and similar capacities in the future.
10. The Village Church reserves the right to dismiss a volunteer at any time and for any reason.

Suggested Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Allegations of Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult Abuse against a Church Leader³

1. A person who receives a report of allegations of child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse against a church leader (paid staff, office bearer, or appointed volunteer), and concludes that the allegations create a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred, should report the matter to the NRPD or FACS within twenty-four hours of receiving the information.

In addition, a person who has knowledge of any circumstances that create a reasonable suspicion that a church leader has committed child abuse also should report the matter to NRPD within twenty-four hours of coming to that conclusion.

2. As soon as possible after notifying the appropriate authorities, the person who reports the matter should contact the person (hereafter, designated person) within The Village Church who has been designated to receive any report of alleged child abuse.⁴ The person who reports the matter should describe the allegations of abuse and/or the circumstances that support the allegations of abuse to the designated person. In addition, the person who reports the matter should inform the designated person if the alleged abuse occurred in the church or in connection with a church-sponsored program.

³ The 10 points under the heading Suggested Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Allegations of Child Abuse against a Church Leader have been adopted by Synod 2004. Please note that in the event of an allegation being made, The Village Church, upon advice of legal counsel and the insurance company, will proceed immediately to step 5c and suspend the accused from office, position, or duty with pay, when applicable, and without prejudice pending the outcome of the investigation.

⁴ At The Village Church, the designated person would be one of the members of the Abuse Prevention Team.

3. The designated person should contact (1) the pastor, if the minor has not implicated the pastor; (2) a member of the church's Governing Body, if the minor has not implicated this team member; (3) the church's legal counsel; and (4) the church's insurance agent.

If the alleged victim and alleged abuser are not members of the same church, each church should appoint a designated person. Together, the designated persons should maintain contact about the progress of the investigation. Church officials may conduct their own investigation after civil authorities have begun theirs. However, church officials should not reveal the nature of the allegations to the alleged offender until the civil authorities have met with him or her.

4. If the alleged abuser admits wrongdoing against the victim at any stage of this process, the admission of guilt should be brought to the attention of the Governing Body of the church of the accused. The Governing Body should deliberate and determine outcomes according to established church policy and procedures.
5. When the designated person determines (1) that the authorities have concluded that the allegations merit serious investigation, or (2) that there is the possibility of formal charges, the designated person should notify the Governing Body of the alleged abuser's church.
 - a. The designated person should present to the Governing Body a written document that specifies the nature of the allegations and any information that is known.
 - b. The Governing Body should give the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations.
 - c. In light of the information presented, the Governing Body should implement one or more of the following actions:
 - supervised contact at church between the accused and any minors;
 - prohibited contact at church between the accused and accuser or between the accused and any minor in the congregation;
 - suspend responsibilities from office, position, or duty with pay, when applicable, and without prejudice pending the outcome of the investigation.
6. If and when the designated person learns that the authorities have filed criminal charges against the accused, then the designated person should report this information to the Governing Body of the alleged abuser's church.
 - a. The designated person should present to the Governing Body a written document specifying the nature of the allegations and any information that is known.
 - b. The Governing Body should give the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations.
 - c. In light of the information presented, the Governing Body should implement the following actions:
 - prohibit the accused from contact with minors at church;
 - suspend the accused from office, position, or duty with pay, when applicable, and without prejudice pending the outcome of the charges.
7. When criminal proceedings have concluded, the Governing Body should promptly revisit the matter, whether the result is conviction, acquittal, or dropped charges.
 - a. If the criminal charges are dropped or prosecution does not result in a conviction, the Governing Body should decide whether or not to rescind its earlier action and/or take additional action.
 - b. If the accused whom the Governing Body has previously removed or suspended from office is found not guilty of the allegations, the Governing Body should not reinstate the accused

to his or her previous position of leadership until they, in consultation with the police and/or child-protection authorities, legal counsel, and child abuse experts, deem it safe and proper to do so.

- c. If the accused is found guilty, the Governing Body may (1) subject a determined abuser (hereafter abuser) to further suspension, deposition, or termination of employment, or (2) take such other action against the abuser as the circumstances may dictate.
8. A church leader (1) who has made a confession of child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse, (2) who has been convicted of child abuse in a court of law, or (3) whom the Governing Body has adjudicated guilty of abuse of a minor should not be reinstated to the position from which he or she has been removed or suspended without the advice of the church's legal counsel.
9. The Governing Body should notify the congregation when a church leader is removed or suspended from office, position, or duty pending the outcome of an investigation into an allegation of child abuse. This notice should be in writing and should protect the identity and confidentiality of the accuser. This disclosure should be pastoral, objectively factual, and not exceed the scope of the information known about the matter at that time. In addition, the Governing Body should not attempt to state any legal conclusions about the guilt or innocence of any person unless and until the Governing Body determines that a church leader is an abuser.
10. Subject to the best interest of the abused, the Governing Body should notify the congregation in writing if they conclude that a church leader is an abuser. This notice should protect the identity and confidentiality of any innocent parties, including the abused person. This written communication should be pastoral and objectively factual.

APPENDIX A: Abuse Prevention Team

ABUSE PREVENTION TEAM (APT)

A. Accountability

The Abuse Prevention Team (APT) is directly accountable to the Governing Body of The Village Church and shall provide regular reports to the Governing Body.

B. Membership

The APT consists of three to four members appointed by the Governing Body to a three-year term. Team members will designate a chairperson. One member may be a Governing Body member. The terms of the first team should be staggered, so that there is not an entirely new APT every three years.

C. Mandate

1. To facilitate ongoing mandatory education and training regarding abuse, abuse prevention, and the creation of a safe church for The Village Church.
2. To assist and be available as a resource to child and youth group leaders in the screening procedures.
3. To determine on an annual basis those persons for whom documentation (Criminal Background Checks, and signed Volunteer Form-Appendix B) is required, and to maintain the documentation in a confidential manner.
4. To assure serious and compassionate response to allegations of abuse, and provide direction and support to those involved without admitting legal liability or making public statements (without legal counsel).
5. To ensure that reference materials concerning abuse issues are available in the church. Their content should be Christian and Canadian if such is available. These may include copies of our Safe Church Policy, the Christian Reformed Church's Handbook for Leaders, and a copy of Beth Swagman's Preventing Child Abuse: A Guide for Churches.
6. To work toward ensuring that relationships be carefully and prayerfully restored if allegations of abuse are found to be groundless.
7. To ensure that the information being handled is maintained with confidentiality for both the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator.
8. To consult with a lawyer as required and to report incidents to the insurance company.

APPENDIX B: Volunteer Form – Serving in Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Programs

This form must be completed by all applicants 18 years of age or over of any volunteer position where that position involves working with persons under 18 years of age or with vulnerable adults in a supervisory or leadership position.

Please complete this form and return it in a sealed envelope addressed to the Abuse Prevention Team, putting the envelope into the Abuse Prevention Team mailbox folder.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number (H) _____ (W) _____

Fax _____ E Mail _____

How long have you attended The Village Church? _____

In which program(s) are you interested in serving? _____

List previous work and programs involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults identifying place/organization and type of work:

References: It is the policy of this church to contact references. Please provide the names, positions and phone numbers of three people we may contact as a reference. Examples include employers (past or present), friends, colleagues and previous pastor, provided the pastor is not a relative.

1. Name: _____

Position: _____ Phone: _____

2. Name: _____

Position: _____ Phone: _____

3. Name: _____

Position: _____ Phone: _____

The information I have provided is accurate and correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the listed references to give you any information (including opinions) they may have regarding my character and fitness for child, youth, or vulnerable adult work. I waive any right I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person identified in this application, as well as any right to civil action or retribution regarding any information they might provide. I release any references from and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family on account of compliance or attempt to comply with this authorization.

I understand I will be required to provide a Criminal Background Check if I am accepted as a volunteer.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C: Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse⁵

Note: Children rarely exhibit just one sign that they are the victims of abuse. Some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes or the after-effect of traumas in their lives other than abuse. Conversely, it is possible for abuse to be taking place without the appearance of noticeable symptoms because of the child's ability to mask or deny what would otherwise be very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, several signs observed over a period of time suggest that a child may be suffering from abuse. This highlights the need for training among volunteers, staff, and program leaders.

A. Infants and Preschool Children

1. Regression to an earlier stage of behavioural development such as baby talk, thumb sucking, or bedwetting
2. Change in social behaviour--excessive crying or clinging, becoming aggressive or withdrawn -- which is not associated with normal developmental stages
3. Physical manifestations such as loss of bowel control, bed-wetting, frequent urination, headaches, stomach aches, breathing difficulties, sore throats accompanied by gagging, stains in the child's underclothes
4. Exhibiting signs of fear around a family member or a familiar person, or fear of a familiar place or object
5. Fear of being touched, shying away from physical contact. Resistance to being diapered or assisted in the bathroom.
6. Use of explicit language or sexual behaviour that is beyond the child's comprehension or life experience
7. Attempting sexual behaviour with other children or attending adults
8. Unexplained injuries and/or bruises, repeated injuries blamed on the child's carelessness, multiple bruises sustained in one event, or bruises to child's midsection, back, head, or back of thighs; signs of scalding, burning, or distinctive bruising, such as in the shape of a belt buckle; multiple bruises in various stages of healing
9. Name-calling toward other children, bullying behaviour, sulking/brooding
10. Fascination with fires; playing with matches, lighter, etc.

B. School-Age Children

1. Physical manifestations as above with the addition of complaints of pain, irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom, smearing feces on walls or objects
2. Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck, failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort
3. Unusual fears: a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences
4. Poor concentration in classroom
5. Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviours, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing.
6. Engaging in self-injury; engaging in excessive masturbation or masturbation in public setting
7. Acting enraged and out of control; expressing anger through destruction
8. Shyness about physical touch
9. Exhibiting sexual behaviour beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in sexual manner with other children or adults
10. Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations; bullying others
11. Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions

⁵ Appendix C is taken from Swagman, (1997) *Preventing Child Abuse*. Appendix B Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse (pp. 141-144). Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications.

12. Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting
13. Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events either because of being punished or to hide bruises
14. Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism
15. Hyper-vigilance--excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled
16. Preoccupation with fire and setting fires

C. Adolescents

1. Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight
2. Change in sleep patterns, including excessive sleeping, sleeping during the day, and insomnia
3. Performance in school plunges
4. Perfectionist behaviour, excessive self-criticism, attempting to please adults, overreacting to any form of criticism or complaint
5. Sexually provocative or asexual behaviour, denial of body changes and sexual development; for females, seeking affection from older adult males
6. Experimentation with drugs and alcohol
7. Self-abusive behaviour including cutting self, preoccupation with danger and weapons, suicide attempts
8. Truancy from school
9. Cruelty to animals, bullying younger children
10. Emotional numbness, inability to be emotionally supportive to others
11. Having few friends, changing friends often
12. Depression and other signs of withdrawal and avoidance
13. Pregnancy
14. Refusing to attend to basic hygiene
15. Rectal and vaginal infections
16. Hyper-vigilance --excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled

D. Neglect

1. Appearing to be underfed, constantly hungry, underweight for size and age
2. Begging for food, stealing food, hoarding food
3. Lack of supervision, underage child supervising another child/children
4. Chronic absenteeism from school, unattended educational needs
5. Unattended medical, dental needs
6. Consistent or frequent lack of hygiene, poor hygiene, or lack of cleanliness resulting in odours
7. For infants, failure to thrive

E. Parental Behaviours and Home Life

1. Not attending meetings about the child, not showing an interest in the child, critical of the child, uncomplimentary
2. Constantly putting child down, using harsh words to describe the child, using threats and unflattering language
3. Describing the child as underachiever, complaining that he/she lets people down, is unmotivated, achieves less than brothers and sisters
4. Speaking of child in way that sounds romantic, too grown-up, too sugary, too perfect
5. Hostile, closed-minded, overprotective, isolating, doesn't let others in the house, won't participate in activities with other parents, makes excuses about failing to do tasks, talks about things not being good at home
6. Reports of past/other suspicious behaviour, reports that an older brother or sister may have been mistreated
7. Chemical dependency by one or both parents
8. Sudden and dramatic changes in family's financial security

APPENDIX D: Child Abuse Incident Reporting Form

THIS FORM TO BE COMPLETED IMMEDIATELY AND GIVEN DIRECTLY TO THE ABUSE PREVENTION TEAM

Date:

Child's name:

Church Program:

Program Leader:

Occurrence of Abuse:

Date of alleged Abuse:

Observations of Signs or Symptoms of Abuse:

Child's Comments/Response of Sign or Symptoms of Abuse:

Niagara Regional Police and/or Family and Children's Services Contacted By:
Date:

Date of notification to the Abuse Prevention Team:

Reporter's Signature:

APPENDIX E: Disclosure Policy

Any disclosure to the congregation of allegations of abuse or of charges laid against a member of the congregation in the event the abuse occurred during ministry time within a program will be done with due care and diligence.

The rights of minors and young offenders will be respected as defined by law.

Any ecclesiastical action taken by the Governing Body of The Village Church will be disclosed to the congregation in due time. All appropriate consideration will be given to the work of the police or FACS.

No disclosures will be made without consultation with the Police/FACS and no public statements will be made without legal counsel.

Confidentiality will be kept in order to protect the victim.

APPENDIX F: Responding to Parents Who Are Notified of an Abuse Report⁶

- Remain calm and non-judgemental.
- Anyone who makes a report to the police or child protection authorities is usually granted anonymity; do not identify the reporter unless you are given permission to do so.
- Do not share any statements made by the child to a parent or relative who is implicated by the child as an abuser. It is advisable not to share the child's statements with anyone other than the authorities until the identity of the abuser can be determined and authorities have determined whether or not the child can be protected from contact with that person.
- Do not attempt to convince a parent that the alleged abuse happened or did not happen; do not attempt to discredit the child nor cast suspicion on the alleged abuser.
- Do not investigate with a parent what may be happening in the home; and do not share information with a parent that has not been shared with the authorities.
- Do not make promises to a parent about the outcome of the investigation.
- Listen to any information the parent may offer about the incident and record it immediately after the conversation; report additional information to authorities through the reporting procedures outlined in the church's policy.
- Offer parent(s) support.
- Suggest resources for the parent(s) including books or literature that may be helpful to them.
- Allow the parent(s) to express the disbelief, anger, and grief (parent(s) may be in shock or denial at the mention of abuse allegations).
- Do not minimize the type of abuse, its impact on the child, or its harm to the child.
- Assure the parent(s) of the confidential nature of the report and the need to maintain confidentiality unless disclosure is necessary to protect the well-being of other children.

⁶ Appendix F is taken from Swagman, (1997) *Preventing Child Abuse*. Appendix E Responding to Parents Who are Notified of an Abuse Report (p. 149). Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications.

REFERENCES

The following is a list of references and resources drawn upon in the development of this policy.

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