

The Gospel Chapel Child Protection Policy

A Safe Place For Kids

A program for Staff and Volunteer
Screening and Risk Management

Revised March 2007

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THE GOSPEL CHAPEL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Foundation

We have an obligation to look after the welfare of all the members of our community, especially those who are vulnerable through age, infirmity or particular circumstances of dependency. This is a sacred trust that must be responsibly and safely managed.

Those who offer themselves for ministry in this church must have an attitude of servant hood and be willing to be trained, mentored and possibly reassigned, as needs dictate.

The Purpose of the Policy is to

- Provide as safe an environment as possible for children and youth to experience God's love through our church's ministries.
- Ensure that the individuals we place in positions of power and trust are selected, trained and supported so that their ministry is life-giving.
- Fulfill the Duty of Care. Duty of care arises out of legal doctrines dealing with negligence. Everyone has a general obligation to conduct themselves in a manner that does not cause damage to other people or their property. Our Christian values are consistent with this legal concept.
- Protect our workers from false allegations.

Types of Liability

Organizations are considered "persons" in terms of liability listed below. The main types of liability that organizations face are:

- **Direct Liability** deals specifically with fault. The person directly at fault for causing harm may be found directly liable. Forms of direct liability include negligent hiring, negligent retention, and negligent supervision. Negligence is unintentional harm suffered because of the action or inaction of another.
- **Vicarious Liability** is where one person causes harm to another, and a third person is held liable for that harm. For example, an organization may create the conditions or give people the authority that results in someone being harmed.
- **Occupier's Liability** means that the person in possession of a premise owes a Duty of Care to those who come on their premises and who participate or are involved in other ways.

Steps of Screening

These steps apply to all staff and volunteers under the jurisdiction of this church who, by virtue of their ministry or work, are in positions of trust.

Screening policies and practices are a significant strategy to reduce risk. The prime goal of screening is to keep program participants, other volunteers, staff, and the church safe. We also screen in order to:

- Meet our spiritual, moral, ethical and legal responsibilities
- Avoid problems that arise from poor recruiting and placement

- Reduce our liability around the work that is done on behalf of the church
- Remain accountable
- Make decisions and judgments based on clear values and principles
- Protect, as best we can, the people who are involved in our programs

Ministry Position Descriptions

Written descriptions will be in place for all positions that work with children and youth in this church.

Ministry position descriptions will specify standards of performance and the method that will be used to evaluate the worker's performance. Descriptions will be updated regularly to ensure that they reflect current duties, responsibilities, boundaries and expectations of the position.

All positions will be designed in a way that reduces the potential for risk and injury to participants and workers.

Workers must stay within the boundaries of the ministry position description when relating to participants. Because workers are in a position of trust and are perceived as having a position of authority it is important to minimize any chance of participant exploitation.

Application

Prior to being assigned or appointed to a ministry, all applicants will complete a formal application form and be interviewed to ascertain their suitability for and interest in that ministry.

Applicants are responsible for providing suitable/appropriate references with their application. The Supervisor may contact these references.

Volunteers who have not reached the age of majority (19) must provide the written consent of a parent or guardian prior to volunteering.

Police Record Checks

Applicants will not be appointed to a ministry if a police record check reveals past offenses that, based upon bona fide requirements of a specific ministry position description, may put the participants at risk of harm.

If a ministry position is determined to be low risk no police record check is required.

If an individual changes from a low risk position to a high-risk position, a police record check would be required.

Should a fee be charged by the RCMP for completion of a PRC, The Gospel Chapel will cover the cost for each applicant. Volunteers will be expected to complete a PRC every three years while in ministry.

If the PRC shows a conviction, the following guidelines will be used in assessing the applicant's suitability for ministry with children:

Lifetime ban	Any type of sexual assault Invitation to sexual touching Sexual interference or sexual exploitation Procuring sexual activity Indictable criminal offences for youth abuse Court order forbidding the individual to have contact with children under the age of 14 Any convictions related to child pornography
Consideration of the Leadership Team	Any assault Any weapons offence Conviction under The Controlled Drugs and Substance Act or the old Narcotic Control Act Criminal driving offense
Banned until resolved through the judicial system	Outstanding charges pending for any of the above offenses Outstanding convictions or charges pending for criminal driving offences, including but not limited to impaired driving

If it is confirmed that a criminal record is not addressed in the table, the Leadership Team or their designate will assess whether the offenses(s) are relevant to the position and whether the interest of the church would be prejudiced as a result of appointment. The criteria that must be considered when evaluating a criminal record that is not addressed in the table will be:

- The number and type of offenses.
- The age and circumstances of the offender at the time of the offense.
- The length of time between past criminal activity and the present.
- The conduct and circumstances of the individual se the offense.
- The likelihood of the individual repeating the offense.

Acceptance and Appointment

No person shall be officially accepted until they have completed all necessary screening and paperwork. Appointment is confirmed by the signing of the Church Ministry Agreement.

Orientation

All volunteers and staff must attend a general orientation session that will cover our church's guidelines for their ministry. Every church worker must receive a copy of the church's Handbook for Ministry Workers.

Training

When required, volunteers and staff will receive specific on site training that will provide them with the information and the skills necessary to perform their assignments.

All active children/youth workers will attend an annual review of the church's abuse prevention plan.

Supervision

The church will regularly monitor and evaluate the work performance of all volunteers and staff.

A supervisor will be clearly identified for each volunteer and staff. This supervisor is the worker's main contact person and responsible for their direct supervision, day-to-day management, feedback, consultation and assistance.

Where a problem is identified, the supervisor must address it promptly with the worker.

When a complaint (other than harassment or sexual abuse) is made against a worker, the supervisor should do the initial investigation and attempt to bring reconciliation between the individuals. If the situation cannot be resolved, the supervisor should speak to the Leadership Team Chairperson so that the issue can be addressed and resolved.

Supervisors should follow the Steps of Progressive Discipline for any worker who does not adhere to the rules and procedures of the church or who fails to satisfactorily perform their ministry assignment. The Steps are: 1) A verbal warning; 2) A written warning; 3) Disciplinary probation and, if there is no change; 4) Dismissal. This intervention is applied in Christian love and confidentially. All interventions must be documented and the Leadership Team Chairperson kept informed of the progression.

Workers who pose a risk to the health and/or safety of others—including program participants, community members, staff or other volunteers—may be subject to immediate dismissal.

The church will provide a training session to all supervisors to explain the scope of their responsibilities.

Evaluation

The Supervisor will conduct an evaluation based upon the standards outlined in the ministry position description. The evaluation may include information gathered from other volunteers, staff (including on-site supervisors) and program participants.

Volunteers should be evaluated at the end of their ministry or yearly around the anniversary of their start date.

Records

All screening documents must be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the church for an indefinite period of time. Access to the filing cabinet shall be limited to the Director of Children's Ministry, the Youth Director, and the Leadership Team Chairperson. Confidentiality will be maintained by those who have access to the files. Only documentation that is necessary to the screening process should be kept in the file.

Modifying or altering premises

The church will regularly monitor our premises to ensure that our building prevents or discourages abuse incidents. Examples: windows in classroom doors, controlled access/entry

for signing children in and out of sponsored activities; adequate lighting inside and outside of the building.

Emergency Preparedness

Fire emergency and earthquake procedures will be established in consultation with professionals and should be reviewed semi-annually with all workers. These procedures and the planned escape route to the nearest exit will be posted in a visible place in each classroom. Fire drills will be conducted once annually.

First Aid Kits will be located in the church office (main floor), the Sunday School office (basement), and the Awana Game Box (gym). The Director of Children's Ministry will maintain the kits. Whenever first aid is administered the details should be recorded on the report form inside the First Aid Kit. These report forms will be collected regularly and kept in a locked cabinet for one year in the event they are needed for insurance purposes.

A portable First Aid Kit will be available for all church activities that occur off-site.

Outside Groups Using Church Property

Due to vicarious liability, the church could be named in legal action should there be charges of negligence or abuse against a group that uses the church's property. It is therefore necessary that the church inquire into the screening policies and procedures of any group wishing to use our facilities. Where the screening procedures of an outside group does not meet the standards outlined in this policy and our procedures, a discussion will take place between the church board and the user group to determine an appropriate course of action. If the user group ministers to children and/or youth and is unable or unwilling to undertake proper precautions in terms of risk-reduction and/or screening procedures the church must consider terminating the relationship for safety reasons.

An Accusation of Sexual Abuse

If someone from the church is accused of sexual abuse, the church will:

- Take all allegations seriously.
- Complete a written Incident Report Form.
- Fulfill statutory reporting obligations to child protective agencies or police authorities.
- Maintain confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator.
- Consult with a lawyer and report the incident to our insurance company.
- Assure serious and compassionate response to allegations without admitting legal liability or making public statements (without legal counsel).
- Immediately suspend the alleged perpetrator pending the outcome of the investigation.
- Care for the well being of the victim/s and their families.

The church will avoid any undue interference when a report of child abuse has been filed with the Ministry of Children & Families or the police. The church will ask the Ministry how it can assist in helping and supporting the hurting child and their family. The church will maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with those suspected or guilty of child abuse as long as these persons exhibit a willingness to listen.

The Leadership Team Chairperson or designate will be the **only** spokesperson for the church at this time and should consult with a lawyer before making any public statements. The church community should know who the designated spokesperson is and **refer all inquiries** to this individual. Only this spokesperson will speak to the media and the congregation regarding the matter and they will do so in a discreet, informed, truthful and diplomatic way. This is an opportunity to influence public opinion positively by emphasizing an awareness of the problem of child abuse, a concern for victims, and the extensive steps we have taken to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for children. We want the public to know that we take the risks of child abuse seriously, and that we have acted responsibly. This will not be the time for silence or “no comment”. We will not surrender the pulpit to those who will criticize or condemn the church.