

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

EAST HILL COMMUNITY CHURCH

MAY 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SAFE CHURCH POLICY	
A. Statement of Purpose	3
B. Definitions	3
C. General Safe Church Guidelines	4
D. Church Staff Guidelines	5
E. Nursery	5
F. Sunday School	5
G. Boys and Girls Clubs	6
H. Youth Group	7
I. Friendship Services	7
J. Coffee Break: Story Hour and Nursery	7
DISCIPLINE POLICY	8
HALL MONITOR POLICY	9
TRANSPORTATION POLICY	10
SCREENING POLICY	11
REPORTING AND RESPONDING POLICY	12
APPENDICES	
A. Volunteer Application Form	
B. Hall Monitor Incident Report Form	
C. Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader	
D. Responding to Child Welfare Concerns	

A. Statement of Purpose

The Christian community has recognized that the Church is not immune to instances of abuse. Society as a whole acknowledges the problem of abuse and the devastating effect it has on its victims. Our responsibility as a Christian Church is to do what we can to minimize the risk of abuse by persons in positions of trust who conduct church activities that involve children, youth and adults. The policy will prevent abuse, heighten sensitivity and increase awareness of this issue.

B. Definitions

Emotional abuse is the systematic diminishment of another. It is a pattern of destructive behavior and/or verbal attacks designed to reduce a person's self concept to the point where the victim considers him/herself unworthy of respect.

Physical abuse is any non-accidental injury inflicted on another person. It is sometimes a single event but more often a chronic pattern of behavior. It may result from over zealous discipline or severe punishment.

Physical neglect occurs when the caregiver does not do what is required to meet someone's physical needs and this interferes with or prevents a child's normal development.

Sexual abuse is exploitation of a person regardless of age, gender or circumstances for the sexual gratification of another.

Children, youth, or minors are individuals under the age of 19 years.

Volunteers are non-paid individuals of any age who serve in a child, youth or persons with disabilities program and/or have direct contact with minors in their care or supervision.

C. General Safe Church Guidelines

1. Before becoming a volunteer in any church program involving children, youth, or persons with disabilities, the volunteer must read, understand and comply with the East Hill Community Safe Church Policy.
2. While the appropriate display of affection between volunteers and participants is often part of conveying support and encouragement, such displays can be misinterpreted. Displays of affection must be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, a pat on the back, a handclasp, or a light touch to the forearm. Restrict these displays to a public area. A volunteer's or participant's right to refuse such a display of affection shall be respected. Volunteers in Preschool programs and Nursery care may be required to comfort little ones by holding and consoling.
3. Volunteers must notify a parent or guardian before a planned one-to-one contact with a minor and ask for his/her permission to meet alone and must meet in a public place.
4. In the event of suspected emotional, physical, or sexual abuse by a person in a position of trust within the church, the Safe Church Team is to follow the guidelines entitled "Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader" (see Appendix). The guidelines should be adapted as necessary to the situation at hand. Legal advice should be sought immediately. The guidelines are very detailed and are designed to protect the rights of both the alleged victim and the alleged accused.
5. All church staff, council and program leaders and helpers must attend a Safe Church Training seminar as presented by the Safe Church Team (SCT) of Classis BC-SE. They are encouraged to attend refresher courses as they become available.

D. Church Staff (includes paid staff such as youth pastor, worship director, pastor(s))

1. Staff should require advanced notice prior to an office visit.
2. When staff meet with youth:
 - a) the meeting should be in a suitable public place, or;
 - b) in an office at church with the following conditions:
 - i. the office door must be open if there is no viewing window
 - ii. another staff or a council member must be present or nearby
 - iii. another staff must be aware of the meeting

E. Nursery

1. At least two volunteers must serve in nursery whenever it is scheduled and one of those must be an adult. There must be a volunteer for every four children. If there are more than the eight children an additional volunteer is required for every four children beyond the initial eight.
2. Only the volunteers and the children are allowed in the nursery at any time. The only exceptions are the parents/caregivers who may want to stay with their child. Anyone not scheduled to be in the nursery must be asked to leave.
3. Volunteers may only take the child(ren) from the nursery for good reason which must be reported immediately to the parent/caregiver.
4. Diapering must take place in the nursery bathroom under the observation of another volunteer. If children require assistance, the bathroom door must remain ajar. For children who do not require assistance, the volunteer must remain outside the bathroom.
5. Only one adult member of a family may serve in the nursery at a given time. A couple (husband and wife) may not serve in the nursery at the same time unless other adult volunteers are present.

F. Sunday School (programs offered during worship)

1. Only one adult member of a family may serve in a classroom at a time.
2. Whenever a Sunday School class is in session, two volunteers, including at least one adult, must be present.**
3. Children may not leave their classroom except for bathroom use, illness, or other compelling reason and must be accompanied.**

4. Whenever Sunday School is in session, there must be an unobstructed view of the room by way of the door's viewing window or the door must be ajar.
5. If a child requires bathroom assistance, the helper must leave the door ajar. If the child does not require assistance, the volunteer must remain outside the cubicle door.
6. The Discipline Policy applies to Sunday School programs.

**Should there be occasions where a second volunteer is not available for each classroom, a "hall monitor" will provide the required supervision (see Hall Monitor Policy, page 9).

G. Boys' and Girls' Clubs

1. Volunteers must identify bullying behavior among minors in their program and have a policy to discourage these behaviors.
2. Volunteers must provide adequate supervision of the participants. Each club function must be supervised by at least two persons, an adult and another volunteer at least four years older than the oldest club member.***
3. If a child needs significant medical attention, the parents(s) must be notified immediately.
4. Group participants must not arrive more than ten minutes before the start of the class, nor may they stay longer than ten minutes after the class.
5. Churches that plan club activities away from the church facility, out of town or overnight must conduct them in general compliance with the aforementioned policies and adequate supervision.
6. The Discipline Policy applies to club programs.

*** Should there be an occasion where a second volunteer is not available for each classroom the program leader will take on the role of "hall monitor" (as described in Hall Monitor Policy, p. 9).

H. Youth Group

1. Each year, the youth worker must sponsor a class about abuse for members of the youth group. Topics for this class might include date violence, biblical guidelines for dating relationships, awareness of signs of abuse, a teenager's response to a teenage victim or abuser, or prevention of abuse.
2. Regardless of the relative ages, it is never appropriate for the youth worker and a youth group member to date each other. Similarly, the youth worker may not date the close friend of a member of the youth group.
3. There must be two youth group volunteers present at all youth group functions. If the volunteers are a married couple, a third adult must be present as well.
4. In the context of group activities, both at the church and at off site activities, youth group volunteers must provide adequate supervision of the youth in their care.****
5. No gifts, phone calls, or letters of a personal nature may be directed to a youth group member by the youth worker.

**** Adequate supervision of premises, youth's coming and going must be overseen by "security" as per Hall Monitor Policy (page 9).

I. Friendship Services

1. Volunteers may not hold functions without appropriate or sufficient supervision.
2. Volunteers ordinarily may not physically restrain any participant. They must ask for assistance if a participant behaves in a manner that seems to require restraint. If the caregiver determines that restraint is needed, assistance will be given by church volunteers if requested.

J. Coffee Break: Story Hour Program and Nursery

1. For the Story Hour program, see Sunday School policies above.*
2. For the Nursery program, see Nursery policies above.

* If during this program there are no hallway monitors, at least 1 adult and 1 helper must be present in the Story Hour Classroom.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

1. Corporal punishment is not allowed. (slapping, hitting, pushing)
2. Abusive verbal discipline is not allowed. (yelling, insulting, threats)
3. Concerns related to a child's behavior or questions regarding an appropriate response to a child's behaviour must be brought to the program supervisor.
4. Parents/guardians must be informed and involved if a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehaviour continues.
5. An aide or a parent/guardian should be involved in classrooms where misbehavior continues.
6. Expectations of children's/youth's behavior must reflect their age and level of comprehension. The discipline must also reflect their age and level of comprehension.
7. Children are to be reminded of behaviour expectations. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.
8. **Appropriate forms of discipline are to be reviewed with volunteers/staff before church sponsored programs begin a new season. Then periodic reminders are to be given as needed.**
9. Whenever possible, volunteers must avoid having to discipline a child/youth by choosing one or more of the following options:
 - distract with another activity
 - help child focus on another more acceptable behaviour
 - isolate the child from others if another volunteer/staff is available to supervise
10. Time-outs for young children may not last longer (in minutes) than the age of the child. **Time-outs must be supervised.**
11. Volunteers must get help before "losing their cool."

HALL MONITOR POLICY

1. Hall monitors will be screened according to established policies before they are appointed to serve.
2. Hall monitors will wear identification to indicate that they are hall monitors.
3. Hall monitors report to the appropriate ministry leader.
4. At least one hall monitor will conduct checks whenever a child/youth program is in session. A substitute must be another hall monitor.
5. Duties of the hall monitors:*)
 - i. Periodically check all the classrooms in session until the program ends and all children/youth are gone. Look in through the door window.
 - ii. Periodically check bathrooms until the program ends and all the youth are gone. Open the bathroom door.
 - iii. Periodically check unoccupied classrooms until the program ends and the children/youth are gone. Open the door and turn on the lights.
 - iv. Hall monitors may escort a child to the bathroom.
 - v. Hall monitors will direct children/youth found in hallways back to their classroom or to their parents/guardians.
 - vi. Hall monitors must immediately report urgent concerns or suspicions to the appropriate ministry leader. Hall monitors must fill out an Incident Report Form within four hours of the concern or suspicion.

*Duties of Hall Monitors can be taken on by program leaders (Gems leader) or “security” in the case of youth group (outdoors is also periodically checked).

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

1. This policy applies to adults while serving in ministry to children, youth, and disabled adults who may transport non-related individuals in church-sponsored programs.
2. Adults must have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance (with \$3000000 liability) before transporting; drivers who **routinely** transport must obtain and present a driver's abstract at the beginning of each church year.
3. Drivers need to abide by provincial requirements for car seat use, seatbelt use and air bag safety.
 - youth are to wear seat belts whenever the vehicle is in service; drivers may not transport more youths than available seatbelts.
 - car seats must be available for younger children.
 - youth under the age of 10 may not sit in the front seat if there is a passenger-side airbag.
4. Adults or minors who transport related youth to church-sponsored events is a private arrangement and is not subject to this policy.
5. Parents or guardians who request or give permission for a minor with a valid driver's license to transport non-related youth is a private arrangement and is not subject to this policy.

SCREENING POLICY

1. All paid staff and volunteers serving in ministry to children and youth will submit to screening.
2. All volunteers must complete an Application and have a Criminal Record check completed before commencing service. **The Criminal Record check will need to be completed every five years.**
3. Extra screening steps may be necessary when a volunteer changes to a different position.
4. All volunteers must submit application material when requested and may not serve in ministry until approved by the Safe Church Team and recommendation to the Church Council.
5. Any applicant for a volunteer position may withdraw without prejudice from the application process.
6. The church reserves the right to deny an applicant a volunteer position.
7. Any applicant with a history of sexual misconduct or physical assault will not be allowed to serve in ministry to children, youth, or persons with disabilities.
8. Volunteers who have a criminal record of abuse related charges whether against adults or children shall not be permitted to work in any of the church's child, youth, or persons with disabilities programs despite a subsequent religious conversion. They may be invited to volunteer in other church programs not involving such vulnerable groups.

Screening Steps

	Complete Application	Reference Check	Interview (with program leader)	Criminal Record Check
Paid Staff				√
Hall Monitors	√	√	√	√
Program Leaders	√	√	√	√
Volunteers *	√	√	√	

*The Safe Church Team will determine which Screening Steps are required for specific volunteers (i.e. Youth cooks may be exempt).

REPORTING AND RESPONDING POLICY

If a leader or helper involved in a children's, youth, or persons with disabilities program suspects that a person is the victim of abuse he/she must report the suspect incident in a confidential manner to the program leader who must then inform the Safe Church Team immediately. The person contacted must notify authorities within twenty-four hours of receiving the report of an allegation of abuse. In case of any uncertainty about the legal reporting requirements, see "Responding to Child Welfare Concerns" (included). If required, an attorney with expertise in the area shall be consulted.

Should there be an allegation of abuse against a church staff person or volunteers, the local Safe Church Team must contact and communicate with the B.C. Classis Safe Church coordinator who will then advise as to appropriate procedure.

EAST HILL COMMUNITY CHURCH

Hall Monitor Incident Report Form

Date _____

Program _____

Describe incident: _____

Describe action taken: _____

Hall Monitor (name) _____

Report Received by _____

East Hill Community Church
VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

*ALL volunteers who will be involved in the supervision or instruction of minors must complete this form.
A safe and secure environment for children and youth must be ensured.*

A. PERSONAL DATA

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Date of Birth _____ Circle: Male or Female

Where you currently attend church _____

Criminal Record Check Completed (circle) YES or NO

Have read and will comply with the Safe Church Policy (circle) YES or NO

B. CHURCH HISTORY and PRIOR YOUTH WORK

List churches you have attended regularly during the past five years:

If you have changed churches, please indicate why. _____

Please list all previous church work involving children, youth, or persons with disabilities:

Please list all previous non-church work involving children, youth, or persons with disabilities:

How do you communicate your authority to children, youth or persons with disabilities:

What methods of discipline might you use in your position with children, youth, or persons with disabilities?

What training have you received in the care and nurture of children, youth or persons with disabilities?

List any gifts, education, or other factors that have prepared you for this work.

Describe how you best like to be supervised. _____

Have you ever been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest to charges of child abuse and/or neglect? Circle: YES or NO

Have you ever been dismissed or terminated from a volunteer or paid position for charges of child abuse and/or neglect? Circle: YES or NO

D. PERSONAL REFERENCES

(non-relatives, employers, supervisors, or church coworkers may be included)

Name _____ Phone # _____

Name _____ Phone # _____

Name _____ Phone # _____

The information in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the listed references to give you any information they have regarding my character and fitness for volunteer positions in this church.

Applicant's Signature _____ **Date** _____

Safe Church Team Training Sessions attended *(program leader to complete)*

Seminar: _____ date _____

Seminar: _____ date _____

Seminar: _____ date _____

Seminar: _____ date _____

**PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING ABUSE
ALLEGATIONS AGAINST A CHURCH LEADER**

Advisory Panel Process
Procedures and Guidelines
For Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader

RESPONDING TO CHILD WELFARE CONCERNS

Responding to Child Welfare Concerns **Your Role in Knowing When and What to Report**