

DAC Child & Youth Safety Policy

Last Review: July 2013

“People were bringing little Children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little Children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it’. And he took the Children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them”

Mark 10:13-16

“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea” Matthew 18:6



Introduction

At Devon Alliance Church (hereafter referred to as DAC), we take our responsibility to care for Children and Youth very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which Children and Youth can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for DAC volunteers and staff members.

These policies are intended to:

- 1) Create a safe environment for Children and Youth;**
- 2) Protect our Children and Youth;**
- 3) Protect our volunteer workers; and**
- 4) Support the mission of DAC.**

Policies & Procedures for Children and Youth Ministries

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Mission Statement

We exist to demonstrate and declare the hope of Christ to Devon, our nation and our world. Lord, by your spirit, empower us to be the church: spiritually-vibrant, passionately-devoted, wholly-transformed. Our desire is to create a safe, relevant, and fun atmosphere that will help Children and Youth move toward becoming fully devoted followers of Christ.

Spirituality

“He [Jesus] said to them: let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for them the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” - Mark 10:14b

Kids matter to God. At Devon Alliance Church we are helping children, youth, and their parents move toward becoming fully devoted followers of Christ. Our desire is to make church significant in the lives of children and youth who attend it, and allow their parents to fully engage in the worship service.

It is the responsibility of every person participating in the children and youth ministries to pray for, and guide, these young people in the knowledge of the Lord.

Descriptions and Definitions

A **Child** is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 13th birthday.

A **Youth** is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday

An **Adult** is defined as anyone who confesses salvation in Christ as 18 or above.

Safeguarding; covers vetting and safer recruitment, safer working practices, responding to concerns, working with partner agencies, dealing with allegations against those responsible for children and youth, and other matters that may be relevant.

Child Protection is used for responding to concerns where it appears that a child may have been harmed. Effective child protection is essential as part of wider work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and youth. However, all agencies and individuals should aim proactively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and youth so that the need for action to protect Children and Youth from harm is reduced.

Church Officer is used for anyone appointed by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.

Certified Volunteer is a person that has been screened through the DAC volunteer application process.

Prohibited Act is the actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct, physical abuse, or child abuse

Overview of the DAC Safety System

Because we love children and youth and desire to protect them, DAC requires all volunteers working with children and youth (and other vulnerable populations) to complete 3 safety steps.

STEP ONE: Screening Process

- Elders and persons in authority shall have a completed background check on file, updated every four years.
- Volunteers shall complete the DAC Screening Process, which requires a volunteer to:
 - complete Children and Youth Ministry training, certification, and application form
 - complete a face-to-face interview with the relevant ministry leader
 - provide confidential references (suggested three on file)
 - complete a criminal background check or verification of clear criminal record for those under the age of 18.

A volunteer must have been actively attending DAC for at least six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to children and youth or vulnerable populations, except with approval from the Children and/or Youth Ministry leader and/or Elders Board.

STEP TWO: Training

DAC requires all volunteers to complete training, including sexual abuse awareness, and other topics. This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Leaders are required to review the policies contained in this policy and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

Child Safety Policy

DAC has **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at DAC to act in the best interest of all children and youth in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any potential injury involving children and youth (where the child may or may not have actually been injured), inappropriate behaviours (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual), it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to their Lead Teacher, the Children and/or Youth Directors, or a member of the Elders Board.

Parents who leave a child in the care of DAC volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in children and youth ministry programs.

REPORTS OF SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

DAC is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children, youth, and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviours or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported to the Senior Pastor, Children and/or Youth Directors and/or Elders Board and, if necessary, to the appropriate authorities.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or a member of the DAC Children and Youth Ministry Committee. Volunteers are asked to report any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviour to a supervisor, a member of the DAC Children and Youth's Ministry Committee, or a member of the Elders Board. Reports will be kept confidential within the Elders Board unless authorities need to be notified.

INCIDENTS AND ACCIDENTS

An incident report shall be completed by the on-duty Children and/or Youth Ministry Leader. The report will be shared with the Senior Pastor and/or Elders Board and retained on file for a minimum of 25 years.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

DAC leaders and the Elders Board are charged with the diligent enforcement of all DAC policies. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Elders Board.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal or reassignment from Children and Youth Ministry positions for volunteers. Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Children and Youth Ministries. This suspension will continue until the completion of a full investigation.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act **shall** be prohibited from future participation as a volunteer in all activities and programming that involves Children and Youth or vulnerable populations at DAC.

REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Volunteers at DAC are required to report suspicions of child abuse, neglect, or any inappropriate behaviour to the Children and Youth Ministry Directors or any member of the Elders Board.

Any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been, or may be, adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the

appropriate law enforcement agency. A volunteer *may* report to the Children and/or Youth Ministry Directors or the Elders Board and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies.

Volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to the Children and/or Youth Ministry Directors and/or the Elders Board as soon as possible after the incident.

After receiving a report from a volunteer in Children and Youth Ministries, the Children and Youth Ministry Directors and/or the Elders Board will speak with the person or volunteer in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Elders Board will be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

The Elders Board will determine the necessity of reporting any incident to the appropriate authorities and/or local officials.

SUSPECTED ABUSERS and KNOWN OFFENDERS

Any person known to have committed a prohibited act **shall** be prohibited from participation as a volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children and youth or vulnerable populations at DAC.

RECORD KEEPING

All documentation relating to Children and Youth Safety at DAC shall be kept on file for a minimum of 25 years in a secure location.

DAC Children and Youth Ministry Committee

Recognising the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children and youth, DAC will appoint and maintain a Children and Youth Ministry Committee which will meet annually or as needed.

COMPOSITION

The Children and Youth Ministry Committee will be comprised of a minimum of the following members:

1. The Children and Youth Directors
2. A member of the Elders Board

MEETINGS

The Children and Youth Ministry Committee will meet annually to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Children and Youth Ministry Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Children and Youth Ministry Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing DAC policies and procedures related to Children and Youth Ministries and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Children and Youth Ministry programs for ongoing compliance with DAC policies.
3. Making recommendations to the DAC Elders Board regarding Children and Youth Ministry issues.

Children and Youth Ministries Ongoing Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe any volunteer interactions with Children and Youth.

1. The Children and Youth Ministry Directors conducts periodic evaluations, which include items that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
2. The Elders Board will meet with the Children and Youth Directors annually to discuss Children and Youth Ministry.
3. The Children and Youth Ministry Directors conduct an unscheduled observation at least once each month for programs occurring weekly. Each unscheduled observation shall be documented.
4. Each Children and Youth Ministry will develop and maintain a training manual specific to the needs of that program in adherence to this policy document.

Building Safety

The Children and/or Youth Directors, or a designated representative, will be responsible for ensuring that the DAC Children and Youth Classrooms are monitored during programming. This will include monitoring of volunteers, children and youth in classrooms, as well as the following measures:

- No child will ever be left unattended in the church building or on the playground during any program.
- Children and Youth Ministry volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a volunteer finds him/herself alone with a single child, that volunteer will take the child to a room or location occupied by others, or easily observed by others.
- After any programming event, Children and Youth Ministry volunteers or a designated person must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.
- DAC will endeavour to make all areas of the church building 'visible' through structural changes.

FIRE POLICY

In the event of a Fire all children will be moved to a specified muster point. The details of the fire policy will be specified in the training and in the specific ministry's manual.

Ratios

DAC is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children and Youth Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child ratios will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	1	3
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	1	5
Elementary	1	7
Youth	1	8

Children

If a Lead Teacher is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the Children and/or Youth Directors accordingly. The Children and/or Youth Directors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers or combine classes to immediately bring worker to ratios into compliance with Church policy.

- One worker should never be alone with a class regardless of ratios. There should always be at least two (2) certified volunteers present at all times.

In the event that only one worker is available the classroom door shall remain open for the duration the programming.

- There should never be 1 worker to 1 student. Classes should be combined if the number of workers required can not be maintained.

Youth

- a) A minimum of two (2) adults should be present at every youth event.
- b) Every effort will be made to have both male and female sponsors for activities, overnight events, or outings involving male and female youth.
- c) For safety's sake, events where large numbers of youth are anticipated, an adult to youth ratio should be no less than 1 to 9.
- d) An adult is defined as anyone who confesses salvation in Christ age 18 or above.

Discipline

It is DAC policy that volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioural management of children and youth.

No form of physical discipline is acceptable.

Uncontrollable or unusual behaviour shall be reported immediately to the parents and the appropriate Children and/or Youth Directors accordingly.

Bathroom Supervision and Assistance Guidelines

Because nursery Children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all volunteers will observe the following policies:

Nursery

1. Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
2. Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
3. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards

Pre-School

1. Parents will be called to bring pre-school aged children to washrooms
2. Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
3. For young children between the ages of four and five, who are generally potty trained but still need restroom assistance, may be taken to the washroom in groups of 2 (minimum)

The remaining ratios must still be maintained in the classroom.

School-Age Children

1. It is recommended that school age children be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.)
2. Volunteers should never take a single child to the restroom unless there are special circumstances present.
3. The volunteer should wait outside the restroom. If a volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should knock and ask if the child needs assistance.
4. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, all while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

5. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another volunteer.

Special needs

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

One to One Interactions

Volunteers should never conduct one-to-one unobserved meetings or interaction with children and youth while participating in any DAC Children and Youth Ministry program. Another adult who has completed the DAC application and screening process should always be present.

Transportation

Volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children and youth. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in their transportation:

1. Children and youth should be transported directly to their destination.
Unauthorized stops to a non-public place will be avoided. Volunteers will avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
2. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving for DAC unless in an emergency.
3. No drivers under the age of 25 may drive for a DAC event.
4. All driving laws will be strictly adhered to.

Release of Children

At any time that a child has been entrusted to DAC volunteers, the church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of Children in their charge.

Children Ministry volunteers are responsible for releasing Children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up the child.

In the event that volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their Lead Teacher or the Children's Directors before releasing the child.

DAC Related 'Field Trips'

Participants in major youth activities must have health/accident insurance.

DAC will not provide health/accident insurance for youth participants in major activities, nor will it pay any expenses related to illness or injury which may occur during the activities. A waiver is expected to be completed prior to participating in any off site event.

- a) It is expected that families of children and/or youth will possess Canadian health policy for events, out-of-town youth gatherings, other long distance events, or high risk events (ie. paintball, ski trips, etc.).
- b) Children and youth without coverage will not be allowed to participate in the scheduled events, unless approved by the Senior Pastor and/or Elders Board.

Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Devon Alliance Church's (DAC) Children & Youth Ministry Safety Policy & Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving at DAC.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by DAC.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my voluntary service at DAC at any time but need to clearly communicate in advance so as not to leave the program without the correct amount of staff.

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual relationship between me and DAC. Applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of DAC Policy & Procedures manual.

Leaders name (please print)

Leader's signature

Date: _____

DAC Self-Disclosure Questionnaire

No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct, physical abuse, or child abuse has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.

True Not True

No civil lawsuit alleging financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.

True Not True

I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position nor had my employment, professional credential, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct, physical abuse, or child abuse.

True Not True

I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credential, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to financial misconduct.

True Not True

(Complete only if the position requires driving as part of the job duties) With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.

True Not True

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

 Yes  No

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this questionnaire is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

_____ **DATE** _____
(PRINT NAME & SIGN)

_____/_____
CITY Province