

Nelson Avenue Community Church

Safe Church Handbook



Loving God | Loving Others | Doing Justice

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Responsibility of the Church

Abuse is a growing phenomenon in our society and sadly, the church is not exempt from the pain of such tragedies. The development of policies and guidelines for a safe church in the ongoing ministries under the umbrella of Nelson Avenue Community Church (NACC) has a two-fold purpose: (1) to increase our awareness and understanding of abuse and therefore be able to implement steps for prevention; and (2) to outline necessary procedures by which to respond and report a suspicion or allegation of abuse, should the need arise.

The church is responsible for being a safe community that confronts sin, including the sin of abuse. The church is called to bring healing and justice to victims and perpetrators as it consciously works for the prevention of all abuse. The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) Synod supports its church Councils “to help their congregations publicly acknowledge that the sin of abuse exists among us [and] to support efforts that such abuse be addressed promptly - so that the abused and abusers may experience the power of God's grace; and to take positive steps to make their congregations safe for all persons” (Acts of Synod 1992, page 673).

All ministry personnel are entrusted with authority, which comes from Jesus Christ. As the 2023 Codes of Conduct for Ministry Leaders says,

Ministry Leaders have a significant amount of authority and spiritual influence over the people who participate in the ministries of the church. People extend a great deal of trust to Ministry Leaders, inviting them into their lives at times and on occasions of significant vulnerability: birth, death, sickness, times of fear, doubt, joy, and suffering. It is a rare privilege to come alongside and support someone in their faith journey, being the presence of Christ to them. The stewardship of such power is a great responsibility—responsibility to use this power in ways that lead to shalom.¹

Ordained and non-ordained persons appointed by Nelson Avenue Community Church provide pastoral care, spiritual direction, guidance and leadership. Any form of abuse by this leadership is always abuse of the power invested in them by the church as well as a serious betrayal of the trust invested in them by those who rely on their leadership and seek spiritual direction. The responsibility for the behaviour of ministry personnel always belongs to the ministry personnel, since they have perceived and real power.

¹ Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). (2023). *CRC Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders*. <https://www.crcna.org/synodresources/crc-code-conduct-ministry-leaders>

Consent is never a justification. Provocation is never a defense. The use of Scripture to rationalize abusive behaviour compounds abuse. As Christians, we denounce such use of Scripture.

We condemn all forms of abuse. We recognize that in addition to the needs of survivors and alleged offenders, the congregation and those employed and/or volunteering in leadership positions are also affected whenever abuse occurs. We believe that we must do all that is within our means to protect all entrusted to our care, children and adults. We commit ourselves to the policies contained in this handbook as a framework for carrying out our responsibilities as the Church of Jesus Christ.

B. What is Abuse?

Simply defined, abuse is a misuse of power over another person. Abuse is the act of inflicting or allowing injury through various means, including physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual. Though physical abuse and severe neglect are more observable than injuries resulting from other forms of abuse, all forms of abuse endanger and impair one's emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being, ongoing development, and results in trauma.

Grooming is a form of abuse that involves manipulating someone until they're isolated, dependent, and more vulnerable to exploitation. The hallmarks of grooming are:

- overt attention
- verbal seduction (flattery / ego stroking)
- recruitment
- physical isolation
- charm
- gift-giving
- normalizing
- gaslighting
- secrecy
- threats

Abusers who groom their victims often claim to have a special connection with the abused. Grooming is a method used by offenders that involves building trust with a targeted child or adult as well as the people and community around them in an effort to gain access to and time alone with them. In extreme cases, offenders may use threats and physical force to sexually assault or abuse the targeted individual(s).

The Government of Canada provides the following definitions for forms and types of violence². As the Government of Canada does not address spiritual abuse, the Spiritual Abuse section has been adapted from WebMD³. This is not an exhaustive list of all forms of abuse.

What Is Spiritual Abuse?

Any attempt to exert power and control over someone using religion, faith, or beliefs can be spiritual abuse. Spiritual abuse can happen within a religious organization or a personal or familial relationship. Spiritual abuse is not limited to one religion, denomination, or a specific group of people. Spiritually abusive tactics are found both in large, well-recognized faith organizations and in cults. Spiritual abuse includes:

- Using scriptures or beliefs to justify other kinds of abuse (physical, sexual, financial, etc.)
- Using scripture or beliefs to humiliate or embarrass someone
- Using scriptures or religious beliefs to control someone's clothing, behaviour, sexuality, decision making, choice to have children, finances, etc.
- Coercing someone into giving money or other resources that they didn't want to give
- Shaming, making fun of, or ridiculing someone's religious beliefs or practices
- Demanding that someone's children be raised with/without a certain religion

Religion and spirituality should be a source of comfort, peace, community, and inspiration in your life. If that is not the case, it might be an indicator of spiritual abuse.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse, including assault, is the intentional use of force against a person without that person's consent. It can cause physical pain or injury that may last a long time. Physical abuse includes:

- pushing or shoving
- hitting, slapping or kicking
- pinching or punching
- strangling or choking
- stabbing or cutting
- shooting
- throwing objects at someone
- burning
- holding someone down for someone else to assault

² Department of Justice Canada. "About Family Violence." Family Violence. Government of Canada, accessed June 15, 2023, <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/fv-vf/about-apropos.html>.

³ "Signs of Spiritual Abuse." WebMD, accessed Sept 3, 2024. <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/signs-spiritual-abuse>

- locking someone in a room or tying them down
- killing someone

All of these acts are crimes in Canada.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse of an adult can include:

- sexual touching or sexual activity without consent
- continued sexual contact when asked to stop
- forcing someone to commit unsafe or humiliating sexual acts

All sexual contact with anyone without consent is a crime. This includes sexual touching or forcing sexual activity on a spouse, a common law partner or a dating partner. Even when married, a spouse cannot be forced to have sexual contact.

There are also special laws to protect children from sexual abuse and from sexual activities that exploit them. Child abuse is discussed in the section on Family Violence.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse happens when a person uses words or actions to control, frighten or isolate someone or take away their self-respect. Emotional abuse is sometimes called psychological abuse. It can include:

- threats, put downs, name calling or insults
- constant yelling or criticism
- controlling or keeping someone from seeing friends or family
- making fun of preventing someone from practicing their faith or religion
- destroying belongings, hurting pets or threatening to do so
- bullying: intimidation or humiliation (including on the Internet)

Many forms of emotional abuse are not crimes but can be signs that the abuse might get worse.

Some forms are crimes such as:

- threats to harm the person or someone else
- criminal harassment (stalking) which involves following or repeatedly contacting a person when they don't want contact and they are afraid.

Financial abuse

Financial abuse happens when someone uses money or property to control or exploit someone else. It can involve:

- taking someone's money or property without permission
- withholding or limiting money to control someone
- pressuring someone to sign documents
- forcing someone to sell things or change a will

Most forms of financial abuse are crimes, including theft and fraud.

Neglect

Neglect happens when a family member, who has a duty to care for you, fails to provide you with your basic needs.

This can involve:

- not providing proper food or warm clothing
- failing to provide adequate health care, medication and personal hygiene (if needed)
- failing to prevent physical harm
- failing to ensure proper supervision (if needed)

Spouses and common-law partners have a duty to care for each other. Adults have a duty to care for their dependent children as well as their dependent parents.

Some forms of neglect are crimes in Canada, including failure to provide the necessities of life and child abandonment. If a child is neglected, child protection authorities could intervene and remove the child from his or her parents.

Family Violence

Family violence is when someone uses abusive behaviour to control and/or harm a member of their family, or someone with whom they have an intimate relationship.

Family violence includes many different forms of physical and emotional abuse, as well as neglect carried out by family members or intimate partners. It may include a single act of violence, or a number of acts that form a pattern of abuse. Family violence can have serious-and sometimes fatal-consequences for victims and for those who see or hear the violence.

Intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence is violence or abuse that happens:

- within a marriage, common-law or dating relationship
- in an opposite-sex or same-sex relationship
- at any time during a relationship, including while it is breaking down, or after it has ended

Not all intimate partner violence is the same. In some cases, one person may want power and complete control over their partner and will use different ways (including physical violence) to get it. For example, they try to control things such as:

- what that other person can wear
- when and where that person can go out
- who that person spends time with
- when that person can talk to family and friends
- what that person can spend money on
- whether that person can work or take classes
- all aspects of that person's sexual activity

This type of abuse almost always gets worse over time. It often leads to serious physical violence and can cause you to have lasting health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In other cases, both partners may abuse each other. Conflict happens in every relationship, but there are healthy ways to solve problems. Sometimes people use violence instead of solving their problems peacefully. It can be hard to break the pattern of abuse, but it is possible.

Child abuse and neglect⁴

Child abuse includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse. It also includes neglect, and any violence that children see or hear in their families. The person who abuses the child can be:

- a parent
- a brother or sister
- another relative
- a caregiver

⁴ For more information on child abuse and neglect see: [Child Abuse is Wrong: What Can I Do? \(Government of Canada\) https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/caw-mei/index.html](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/caw-mei/index.html)

- a guardian
- a teacher
- another professional or volunteer who works with children (for example, a doctor or coach)

Abuse may take place in a child's home, or it may happen in other places, like other people's homes, schools, community centres or places of worship.

There are federal, provincial and territorial laws to protect children from abuse in the home. Some types of abuse are crimes and are listed in the Criminal Code which is a federal law that applies across Canada. Even if the abuse is not a crime under the Criminal Code, provincial and territorial child protection laws could be used to stop the abuse. There are also special laws to protect children from sexual abuse and from sexual activities that exploit them. Child sexual abuse happens when a person takes advantage of a child for sexual purposes. Sexual abuse of a child includes:

- any sexual contact between an adult and a child under 16 years of age
- any sexual contact with a child between the age of 16 and 18 without consent
- any sexual contact that exploits a child under 18

Any sexual contact between an adult and a child under 16 is a crime. In Canada, the age of consent for sexual activity is 16, but there are some exceptions if the other person is close in age to the child. In addition, children under 18 cannot legally give their consent to sexual activity that exploits them. Sexual activities that exploit a child include prostitution and pornography. They also include situations where someone in a position of authority or trust, or someone the child depends on, has any kind of sexual activity with the child. A person of authority or trust could be a parent, step-parent, grandparent, older sibling, teacher or coach.

If a child is sexually abused at home, child protection services could intervene and remove the child from his or her parents.

Children who witness family violence are at risk for both short and long-term harm. Even if they don't see or hear the violence, they can be affected by hearing or seeing the results of the violence. They can have emotional, behavioural and developmental problems. These problems can last a long time. They are also at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder.

Exposing a child to family violence can be grounds for child protection intervention under provincial and territorial child protection laws.

Elder abuse

Elder abuse is any action, behaviour or failure to act, by a person in a position of trust-like an adult child, family member, friend or caregiver-that causes or risks causing harm to an older adult. Elder abuse includes:

- physical, sexual or emotional harm
- damage to-or loss of-property or assets

Elder abuse covers a whole range of behaviours including

- hurtful comments
- dominating or controlling an older adult's activities
- isolating an older person from family, friends or regular activities
- unduly pressuring older adults to sign legal documents that they do not fully understand
- misusing a power of attorney
- not providing appropriate medication or medical attention
- any form of physical abuse

Elder abuse may take place in the home, the community or in an institution.

Violence based on so-called "honour"

Violence based on so-called "honour" happens when family members use violence to protect the family's honour. The victim, who is usually female, has behaved in ways that the family believes will bring shame or dishonour. For example, the family might not approve of:

- dating or talking to boys
- having sexual relationships outside marriage
- wearing what the parents believe is the wrong clothing
- refusing a forced marriage

The family members believe that using violence will restore the family's reputation. The types of violence the family uses can include:

- beatings
- forced confinement
- threats
- counselling suicide
- killing

These actions are all crimes, and crimes committed in the name of so-called "honour" are often planned in advance with other family or community members. This violence is not limited to any particular ethnic or religious community.

Forced marriage

Forced marriage happens when one or both people do not consent to the marriage. Forced marriage is not the same as arranged marriage, where people consent to the marriage. Family members sometimes use physical violence, abduction, forced confinement or emotional abuse to force the person into the marriage. Even if parents try to force their child to marry because they think it is good for the child, using threats or violence to do this is a crime.

Children might also be the victims of forced marriages. Sometimes their families take them out of school to force them into marriages. This violence can occur in many ethnic or religious communities.

Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation is any procedure that injures or removes all or part of the external female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It has no health benefits and it can cause pain and serious long-term health problems. Female genital mutilation of a child is a crime in Canada and should be reported to the authorities.

Also, any person who helps mutilate a female child's genitals could be charged with a crime. This includes parents, doctors, or nurses. Even the person who asks someone else to do this to a child commits a crime. It is also against the law to take a child out of Canada to have this procedure done in another country.

Impact of Family Violence on Canadians

All members of society are affected by family violence. There can be long term impacts of violence on victims' physical and emotional health that can result in their inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities and limited ability to care for themselves and their children. Children may suffer long-term emotional, behavioural and developmental problems that can even lead them to be violent later in life. The financial consequences and the effects stretch far beyond to the victim's family, friends, and communities.

There are also social costs. A considerable amount of Canadian resources are directed to address this issue including health care costs, costs to the justice system, to employers and businesses, and to social and community services.

C. History of Abuse of Power at NACC

Why is it important to talk about past abuse?

The survivors of NACC's past abuse matter. What happened to the survivors matters. Their experience and the harm that was caused matters; harm that remains to this day.

Abuse is not private. Abuse happens in secret, but it is not private. It is the secret, hidden nature of abuse that allows it to happen at all. Abuse needs to be exposed. We need to be a place and a people who do not shy away from discussing what happened, how it happened, and the ongoing personal and corporate impacts of what happened. This is part of how we prevent it from happening now.

It's the truth. It is painful to accept this truth about our church's past. We need to carry the pain along with those who were victimized by abuse within our church. We need to know this thing along with them, carry this burden together, walk the long road of healing together.

What happened?

In the late 1960's, the pastor at that time abused the spiritual authority and power of his office of Pastor to commit sexual assault on a, then, sixteen year old girl from the congregation. Over time, it was revealed that there were seven other women who were also abused. In early 1995, this pastor was convicted of criminal sexual assault in the BC courts.

In the early 1990's, the senior pastor at that time abused his spiritual authority and power of his office as Pastor to commit abuses during pastoral counselling of several women in the church. Some of these women are those who had come forward about the abuse that had occurred in the early 1960's, and were meant to be receiving pastoral care from this pastor.

Are there more details?

There are two official statements written by our church leadership from the early 2000's which describe in more detail what happened and the church's response to the disclosures of the abuse. You may request these documents if you would like to have more details.

How did this happen?

The abuse happened because those two men were abusers who were looking for opportunities to commit their abuse, and they were able to get away with it. The question we need to keep asking ourselves is "How did they get away with it?" In the early 1960's, society at large and the church in particular did not discuss "these kinds of things". There was deep shame for the victim, and fear that she likely would not be taken seriously. Even if the abuse was disclosed, the abuser was not likely to be exposed nor his reprehensible behaviour condemned. By the time the first abuses were disclosed two

decades later, there was more awareness and acceptance of supporting abuse victims. Tragically, the second abuser took advantage of the vulnerability of some of those same women, and they were re-victimized. This second time, disclosure was swift, and action to remove this pastor was also swift.

A civil law suit brought by one of the past abuse survivors against the church in 2002 prompted serious efforts towards addressing the injustices around the past abuse. This resulted in the creation of abuse prevention policies, which have been in place and functioning since 2004. While current attitudes about abuse and the need to stand up for survivors of abuse have improved, victims of abuse are still afraid to come forward out of shame of what someone else did to them, and fear that they will not be taken seriously.

What else can we do to make sure this doesn't happen again?

The best way we can make sure abuse does not happen is to unrelentingly pursue healthy relational habits and practices in our congregation, such that an abuser would find our community to be inhospitable. This means we work at it. Any relationship that includes really connecting with each other requires honesty, vulnerability, personal boundaries, a tolerance for disagreement, mutual respect, and accountability. We don't shy away from difficult conversations. If there's a problem, we try to work it out. If we need help, we ask for it. Some things are private, but nothing is secret.

Rather than giving a limited and narrow point-form answer to this question, we have instead named a few general ideas of what a healthy community does. Underneath each idea is a list of questions for reflection using your current context as a case study. Individuals, leaders and groups are invited to take time to reflect on one or all of the below concepts of a healthy community, and apply it to their current situation as a health check; a way to uncover something that might need attention. Perhaps you have your own insights into good questions that need to be asked for your particular situation.

Cultivate a culture of open, honest and courageous dialogue around difficult subjects, leading with compassion, humility and mutual respect.

No "elephants in the room", nothing gets "swept under the rug".

- What are the issues that seem "okay" to bring up in the church?
- What are the issues in the church that seem to be "taboo" and like they should not be brought up?
- What important conversation is being avoided because of fear and discomfort right now?
- What are the personal risks to yourself or others of having that conversation?
- What are the risks of not having the conversation?

Continue to discuss the differences between healthy relationships, and those in which one person is misusing their power for selfish gain.

Use specific interactions or relationships from your experience as your case study for reflection.

- Whose needs are being met in the interaction/relationship? (Mutual needs being met, or just one person?)
- Whose needs are supposed to be met in the interaction/relationship? (Mutual, or is there one person who has authority and responsibility, and one person who is meant to be cared for?)
- Who holds the power in the relationship?
- How are personal boundaries established, communicated, maintained and respected in this interaction/relationship? How are they not?

Encourage individuals, starting from a very young age, to trust their instincts when something doesn't feel right, and to protect our precious selves with good boundaries, getting support as needed from someone who has proved themselves trustworthy.

- How do we respond to people, young and old, when they share that they don't feel right about something that's happened or is happening?
- What expectations do we have when anyone, young or old, says "no" to something that is being asked of them or imposed on them?
- When we've noticed that something doesn't feel right, how do we move towards each other to resolve misunderstandings and conflict, or hold each other accountable, while maintaining good boundaries and protecting the dignity and safety of each person?

Preach a gospel that emphasizes God's good intention for his good creation and creatures, that each person is created in the image of God and is not to be used or misused, but delivered from evil, and set free so that we can be free to enjoy God's gift of ever increasing and ever-expanding life.

- What elements of what we profess as truth is cultural and traditional, rather than pure messages of love from God through his actions, his creation, and his word?
- What theological ideas do we hang on to that put limits on God's immeasurable grace and mercy?
- What ideas do we espouse which suggest that it is godly to allow others to mistreat us?

D. Definitions

Throughout this document the following terms may be used.

Roles within the Church

APPROVED ADULT: An Adult volunteer who has completed all Safe Church requirements to be able to fulfill a position of spiritual leadership: Children's Church, Youth, Small Group Leader, Worship Team

Leader, and any role in which people are gathered under their leadership, teaching, guidance or instruction

CHURCH LEADER: Staff, Volunteers, Ministry Leaders and Council Members.

CONGREGATION: the whole group of people at NACC gathered for worship and church related activities made up of visitors, regular attenders, baptized members, and professing members.

COUNCIL: volunteers who serve on the church's governing Council. This group also serve as the Directors of the Society.

ELDERS: volunteers who oversee the church's ministry of spiritual care

DEACONS: volunteers who oversee the church's ministry of mercy to those with practical needs.

MINISTRY LEADER: person(s) who is (are) officially called to, and are responsible for, the functioning and oversight of a particular ministry area.

STAFF: all individuals who are employed by the church according to a specific job description.

VOLUNTEER: anyone working/serving on behalf of NACC who is not an employed staff person.

Member Status

BAPTIZED MEMBER: A member who has been baptized and has not yet made public profession of faith.

PROFESSING MEMBER: A member who has made public profession of faith.

REGULAR ATTENDER: A non-member who regularly attends worship services and/or participates in the life and ministry of the church.

VISITOR: A person who visits worship services and/or church activities on occasion.

E. Accountability

The Church Council is responsible to oversee the Safe Church policies of NACC, and ensure that at all times a functioning Safe Church Team (SCT) is in place.

The Safe Church Team

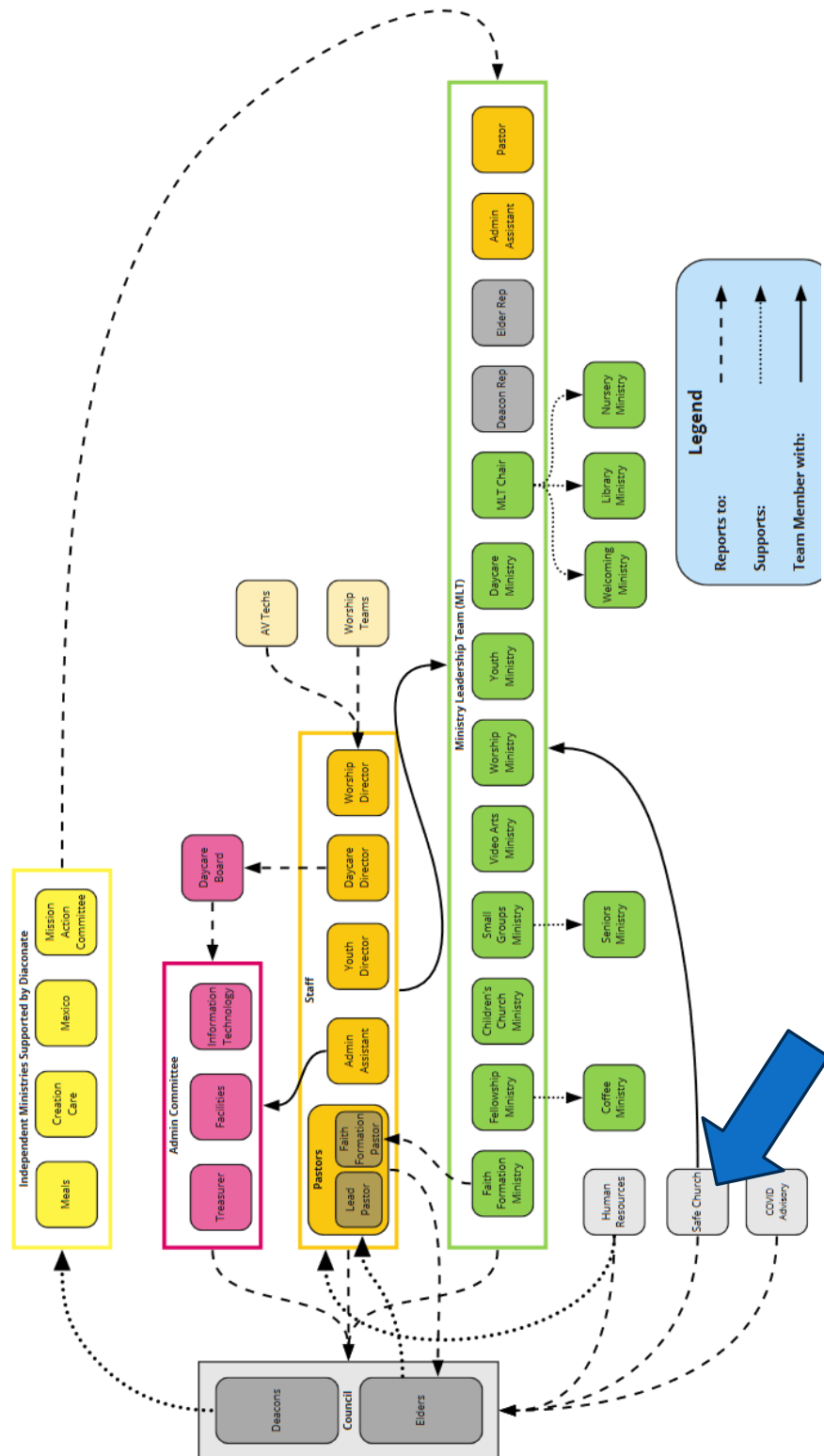
1. The SCT shall submit a written annual report to Council, indicating the status of Council's goal "to develop a Safe Church policy and educational guidelines for all ministries and ministry personnel" of NACC (approved 22/5/96.) It shall also assess the effectiveness of the policies, and specify any non-compliance with screening and training requirements.

2. The SCT is also responsible for the following: (a) ongoing policy development and review covering all ministries, (b) initial Safe Church training and annual training, (c) maintenance and distribution of Safe Church compliance documents and forms, and (d) responding to allegations of abuse in line with approved procedures.
3. The SCT shall advise and support Ministry Leaders in the interpretation and implementation of Safe Church policies and procedures found in this Handbook.
4. The SCT is responsible for the administration of all Safe Church Ministry application and related forms. These forms will be available upon request.
5. The SCT, working with the Administrative Assistant, will see to it that all documentation is treated as privileged information. Original copies of physical forms will be kept in the church office under lock and key. Online forms and scanned copies of physical forms will be kept in a closed Safe Church Sharepoint Group with limited access. Only designated SCT representatives and staff, authorized by Council, may have full access to physical and online files. Ministry Leaders will only have access to documents that relate to their respective ministry area.

Ministry Leaders

1. Ministry Leaders shall ensure each volunteer in their respective ministry area fulfills the Safe Church screening and training requirements for their ministry area.
2. Ministry Leaders shall ensure all volunteers comply with the preventative and related policies. Anyone who refuses to comply with Safe Church procedures or violates safe Church policies will be removed from their role.
3. Ministry Leaders shall develop and maintain appropriate Safe Church procedures for their ministry areas.

F. Ministry Structure



II. SCREENING REQUIREMENTS

All staff and volunteers who work with children and youth, as well as those in care giving positions (see Appendix), must submit to a screening process prior to beginning their work. If at any stage of the screening process it becomes known that there is a history of abuse attributed to an applicant, the applicant will be denied from participating as a volunteer in any capacity at NACC.

Adult volunteers who have completed all Safe Church requirements to fulfill positions of spiritual leadership (Children's Church, Youth, Small Group Leader, Worship Team Leader, and any role in which people are gathered under their leadership, teaching, guidance or instruction) are considered **APPROVED ADULTS** for the purposes of following the preventative policies found in this Handbook.

A. Application

APPLICATION FORM: reviewed by the Ministry Leader of the ministry area being applied to. Application forms of volunteers who have served previously in another ministry will be made available to the Ministry Leader

INTERVIEW AND SUMMARY: performed by the Ministry Leader. A subsequent interview form may be required for each new ministry that a person is applying for. The purpose of the interview will be to assess the applicant's skills and suitability for the position, and to communicate the expectations and responsibilities the position carries. Upon completion of the interview, the interviewer shall summarize the applicant's responses and include it with the application.

REFERENCES CHECK: contacted by the Ministry Leader in order to further assess the applicant's suitability. Upon completion of the reference checks, a form shall be completed by the Ministry Leader. Volunteers who have served in another ministry area, have reference checks on file, and are applying to serve in another ministry may be asked to provide the name of at least one additional reference – preferably someone who can provide input regarding suitability for serving in the new ministry area. For example, a volunteer working in adult ministries applying to work in children's ministries will be asked to provide a reference for their ability to work with children.

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK: required of all staff and volunteers serving in care-giving positions designated by the Council (see Appendix). It shall be carried out only after the first three screening steps are completed. Applicants to these positions will be asked to submit an online request to the RCMP. In some cases, fingerprinting may also be required (see the appropriate Appendix for more information). Criminal Record Checks expire after 5 years and must be renewed at that time.

B. Approval

Upon completion of the application process, the Ministry Leader(s) will assess the applicant's suitability, and make a decision whether to approve the applicant for the specific ministry position.

Any reservations or reluctance to approve the applicant will be discussed with the pastor or an elder. Together they shall decide on approval.

Anyone with a history of, or conviction of, child abuse/neglect or maltreatment will not be approved for service in any capacity. The church reserves the right to reject any applicant for any reason.

C. Training

All staff and volunteers in care-giving positions, must attend safe church training.

INITIAL TRAINING: must be completed prior to beginning ministry work. Initial training is requested by the Ministry Leader to the SCT on behalf of their volunteers.

The church's required Safe Church training shall include a discussion of the common indicators of abuse as well as required reporting procedures. Signs and symptoms suspicious of abuse, as well as reports of alleged abuse, must be taken very seriously. The appendix section of these policies provides a specific list of signs and symptoms of suspected abuse, as well as additional information about this important matter.

ANNUAL TRAINING: must be completed once within each ministry year. Volunteers joining between annual training sessions must attend at the earliest possible time.

CODE OF ETHICS: All volunteers and staff of NACC approved to serve in ministry positions shall sign a "Code of Ethics" form upon completing initial and every subsequent annual training. A separate Code of Conduct is utilized by the Daycare, which is appropriate for that setting (see Appendix).

III. VOLUNTEER AND STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

All volunteers and staff persons must meet the following requirements for each ministry area in which they serve:

- be a minimum of 19 years old
- agree to be supervised by the designated Ministry Leader
- successfully fulfil all screening requirements
- complete the education/training requirements as set out in this handbook

All minors must serve under the direct supervision of an adult.

In order to serve as **HELPERS** or other similar positions within a ministry area, all volunteers (including minors) must be:

- a baptized or professing member of NACC
- have attended NACC for a minimum of six months

In addition, NACC has mandated the following position specific qualifications as minimal requirements. Exceptions to these can be found at the end of this section.

A. Nursery and Toddler Care (Infant through age 2)

In order to serve as **NURSERY DIRECTORS**, all volunteers must be:

- a professing member of NACC
- be a regular attendee at Nelson Ave for a minimum of six months

In order to serve as an **ATTENDANTS**, all volunteers must either:

- be a professing member of NACC
- be a regular attendee at Nelson Ave for a minimum of six months

OR

- be a regular attendee at Nelson Ave for a minimum of one year
- be unanimously approved by Council

B. Children's Ministries (Age 3 to Grade 5)

In order to serve as **DIRECTORS, TEACHERS, COUNSELORS, FLOATS** or other similar positions, all volunteers must be:

- a professing member of NACC
- have attended NACC for a minimum of six months

Two minors may co-teach Children's Church if other requirements are met, they are deemed qualified by the Ministry Leader, and have unanimous Council approval.

C. Youth Ministries (Grade 6 to Grade 12)

In order to serve as **DIRECTORS, LEADERS, COUNSELLORS** or other similar positions, all volunteers must be:

- a professing member of NACC
- have attended NACC for a minimum of six months

In addition to the above requirements, all volunteers must be a minimum of three years older than the oldest participant of the group they are leading.

D. Adult Ministries

In order to serve as **LEADERS** (including Council), **ASSISTANT LEADERS**, or **SMALL GROUP HOSTS**, all volunteers must be:

- a professing member of NACC
- have attended NACC for a minimum of six months

All volunteers who carry out **PERSONAL HOME VISITATION** in an official capacity of NACC, as requested by the Elders, Deacons or Pastor must be:

- a professing member of NACC
- have attended NACC for a minimum of six months
- be approved by the Council or Elders of NACC

This includes care elders, prayer coordinators and similar positions.

E. Pastor and Other Staff

Pastor and staff positions who directly serve the membership of NACC must fulfill the core qualifications:

- be a minimum of 19 years old
- agree to be supervised by the designated Ministry Leader
- successfully fulfill all screening requirements
- complete the education/training requirements as set out in this handbook

F. Membership Exceptions

It is the normal policy of NACC to approve only members of NACC to serve in care-giving ministry areas. Non-members may serve, providing that they meet the non-membership position-specific requirements listed above and the following additional requirements:

- are a baptized or professing (whichever matches the position-specific qualification) member of another Christian church
- are an active participant in NACC or this ministry area for a minimum of six months
- must submit an additional written reference for their character and faith from a pastor or an elder of the church that holds their membership
- is approved by the Council of NACC to serve in this ministry. This approval includes
 - a written letter of request to Council from the Ministry Leader outlining the need, qualifications of the applicant, and circumstances for the request
 - unanimous NACC Council agreement

NACC Council may approve an individual for service for a period not to exceed one year initially. A resubmission after one year will require another current reference letter. NACC Council may grant this second approval for a period up to three years.

IV. PREVENTATIVE POLICIES

Preventative policies are based on the following principles:

1. Staff and volunteers of NACC are invested with authority by the church which inevitably creates a power imbalance within ministry. There may be times when staff or volunteers unwittingly cross a personal boundary of someone they are serving. It is the person being served in any ministry who decides what their personal boundaries are, whether they have been crossed, and whether harm has been done.
2. In their role given to them by the church, staff persons relating to volunteers and participants in programs at NACC always have the greater power. Therefore, it is the staff person's responsibility to ensure that boundaries are not crossed, regardless of who initiated what behaviour.
3. In their role given to them by the church, volunteers relating to participants in programs at NACC always have the greater power. Therefore, it is the volunteer's responsibility to ensure that boundaries are not crossed, regardless of who initiated what behaviour.
4. Intimacy in ministry is not appropriate. Intimacy is a close, private, exclusive connection and/or behaviour between the staff or volunteer in the position of perceived or actual power and the person whom they are serving.
5. Legally, a minor is defined as anyone under the age of 19 years. We desire to create a safe environment for both the minor volunteers and the minors being served.
6. We desire our policies to be legally sustainable in the event of an allegation of abuse against any volunteer or Ministry Leader in our church.

A. Children's Ministries, Nursery & Toddler Care

For all Children's Ministries, an adult **MUST** be present in the room with the children at all times.

TWO-ADULT RULE: supervision of children in Children's Ministries must be carried out by two Approved Adults present in the vicinity and line of sight of ministry activities such that any activity can be easily observed at any time.

1. Bathroom Assistance Policy

- 1.1 Infants and toddlers requiring diaper changes must be diapered in such a way that the other caregivers can easily observe them.
- 1.2 Children under 6 years old must be accompanied by an Approved Adult when using bathroom facilities.

- 1.2.1 **SINGLE USE BATHROOMS:** the adult shall remain outside the bathroom door (unless assistance is required) which is left ajar, allowing appropriate privacy and/or assistance for that particular child.
- 1.2.2 **STALLED BATHROOMS:** children will enter and use the stall independently and the adult will wait outside the stall door, allowing appropriate privacy for that particular child. If assistance is needed, the main bathroom door and the stall door will be left ajar.
- 1.3 Children aged 6 years and older may go to the bathroom unaccompanied.
- 1.4 Children with special needs will be assisted as prearranged with parents/guardians or a parent/guardian-approved caregiver.

2. Dismissal Policy

- 2.1 Children under 6 years old must be picked up by a parent/guardian or other previously authorized adult. Children age 6 and older may be dismissed at the end of the class.
- 2.2 No child shall be removed or allowed to leave their group except for illness or other compelling reason. When leaving, an Approved Adult must accompany the child.

3. Discipline Policy

- 3.1 No volunteer shall physically harm a child for any reason. Physical acts such as hitting, spanking and shaking are strictly forbidden.
- 3.2 If there is a situation requiring discipline, an Approved Adult shall:
- Talk to the child and/or redirect the child.
 - Use a “time-out” chair.
 - Call upon another Approved Adult to assist by separating the child from the group.

When both adults feel it appropriate, the child may be returned to the group.

- 3.3 If a child has been removed from the group, an Approved Adult will record the situation on an attendance record or similar document, which is kept on file.
- 3.3.1. An Approved Adult must contact a parent/guardian to inform them of the incident(s). All efforts shall be made to arrive at a common understanding of how future incidents should be dealt with. The outcome of this discussion must also be documented.
- 3.4 If a child has been removed from the group and needs to be returned to a parent/guardians for any reason, an Approved Adult will escort the child back to the parent/guardian.
- 3.5 If a child continues to require discipline:
- 3.5.1. An Approved Adult must discuss the problems with their Ministry Leader or a SCT member. The Ministry Leader must also be advised of the situation.
- 3.5.2. An Approved Adult must contact the child’s parents regarding possible solutions.

3.5.3. Ongoing discipline situations must be documented. Dates and decisions shall be recorded and kept on file.

3.6 Approved Adults are responsible:

3.6.1. To inform the appropriate Ministry Leader of ongoing discipline problems and/or any special needs a child may have. Note: in some cases the Approved Adult will also be the Ministry Leader.

3.6.2. To inform subsequent persons responsible for such a child regarding specific needs the child may have, so as to provide the best consistent care.

4. Online Platforms

4.1 The Two-Adult rule applies to online ministry as well as in-person ministry. Whenever Children's Ministry activities are provided online, one Approved Adult will be present on screen with their group at all times. Another Approved Adult will enter into the online space(s) at random and frequent times while children are in attendance at online ministry activities.

B. Youth Ministries

TWO-ADULT RULE: supervision of youth in Youth Ministries must be carried out by two Approved Adults present in the vicinity and line of sight of ministry activities such that any activity can be easily observed at any time.

1. General Youth Ministry Policy

- 1.1 At the beginning of each ministry year, a parental release form will be completed for each youth. This will include release of liability, medical information, and permission to provide medical care.
 - 1.1.1 All activities will have the approval of the Ministry Leader and appropriate notification will be given to parents/guardians.
 - 1.1.2 Parental/Guardian consent and medical cards, along with travel First Aid Kit, must be taken on all off-site activities and trips.
 - 1.1.3 Newcomers and guests are welcome to participate in off-site activities provided that a parental release form has been completed for that activity.
- 1.2 During over-night activities, male and female youth will sleep in separate areas. Interactions between boys and girls is not permitted after bed time.
- 1.3 A minimum of two Approved Adults will remain after a meeting or activity until all the youth have been picked up to go home.
- 1.4 In case of an emergency, the parent/guardian will be notified immediately.
- 1.5 All one-to-one contact between youth leaders and youth will be limited to public places.

2. Transportation Policy

- 2.1 Avoid transporting a minor alone unless written parental consent is received.
- 2.2 Approved Adults who provide transportation and/or supervision must complete the appropriate form.
- 2.3 Written permission (written or verbal) from the parent/guardian is mandatory for an adult leader to pick up or bring a child home.

3. Youth Visitation Policy

- 3.1 Meeting with youth in grades 6 to 8 will be done only with consent from a parent and in the presence of a parent or other Approved Adult.
- 3.2 Meeting with youth in grades 9 to 12 will be limited to public places and/or in the presence of another Approved Adult.

4. Online Platforms

- 4.1 The Two-Adult rule applies to online ministry as well as in-person ministry. Whenever Youth ministry activities are provided, one adult leader will be present on screen with their group at all times. Another Approved Adult (leader, parent) will be in the vicinity and line of sight of the group on screen such that on-screen activity can be observed at any time.
- 4.4.1 When chat/text communication occurs between a leader and youth, it will be limited to brief check-ins and passing of information.
- 4.4.2 There will be a second Approved Adult included in group chat platforms related to Youth Ministry and/or all chat/text communication records will be retained for reference.

C. Adult Ministries

1. Meetings

- 1.1 Meetings in the NACC church building must be held in common areas. If a closed-door meeting is necessary, all parties must be in line of sight of a window.

Advice to volunteers and staff (including pastors) serving adults

- Speak clearly without innuendo or hidden meaning.
- Convey care by way of a handshake or elbow bump.
- Visitation/One-on-one Meetings
 - Keep a record of all one-on-one meetings and visitations. Be accountable for these with a colleague and/or peer in the same ministry area.
 - Inform a colleague and/or peer in the same ministry area ahead of time of the date, time, and duration of the visit.
 - Home visits are best done accompanied by another person.
 - Avoid sitting in parked cars with another person one-on-one.

Additional advice to pastors

- The pastor is responsible for even the appearance of impropriety. Avoid creating an atmosphere of affection and intimacy.
 - Be accountable to the Elders, colleagues or peers to ensure that you are maintaining proper boundaries and if you are feeling any threats or weakening of boundaries.
 - The use of one's first name as a church professional may in some cases signal an intimacy and/or familiarity that is not appropriate. Keep your title whenever appropriate in order to clearly define your role in the relationship.

- As a pastor, your relationships are held accountable to a different degree than others within the church. For example, asking someone else for a favour may imply a personal involvement that is not intended.
- Visitation/One-on-one Meetings
 - Whenever meeting one-on-one with a person in a possibly vulnerable position, both the Administrative Assistant and a designated Elder should be informed ahead of time of the place and time of the meeting. If any of these persons express reservations about the propriety of the meeting, it should not be done alone.
 - Location
 - By default, book appointments in an office
 - Office doors should be left open except when verbal privacy is needed. If verbal privacy is needed, all parties must be in line of sight of a window.
 - Home visits
 - There should ideally be a minimum of three people present at each home visit. If there is only one person home at the time, take someone with you. If this is not possible, make someone aware of your appointment and how long you plan on visiting.
 - Other one-on-one visits should always be done in a public place.
 - Avoid sitting in parked cars with another person one-on-one.
 - Times
 - Set specific office hours and try to book appointments during those times.
 - Set time limits for meeting times and telephone calls.
 - One-on-one appointments in-office should be booked when other staff members are also in the church office.
- Pastoral counseling sessions should be limited to three sessions. If more counseling is required or requested approval must be given by the Elders. If approval for further pastoral counseling is not given, professional counseling will be recommended.

V. REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

As a covenant community of God's family, we are equally concerned about any allegation of abuse involving a child or adult of our community. Members of NACC who hear of or are aware of an allegation are required to report it as outlined below.

A. Against Minors (Child Abuse)

According to the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA), "anyone who has reason to believe that a child or youth has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, and that the parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child or youth, must report the suspected abuse or neglect to a child welfare worker."⁵ Therefore, volunteers or staff who observe signs and symptoms suspicious of abuse or who hear of or are aware of an allegation must report it to a child protection social worker at the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The volunteer who has received first-hand information leading to a reasonable suspicion of child abuse is legally responsible to make a verbal report within 24 hours of receiving information leading to a reasonable suspicion.

In most circumstances the identity of the person making a report will not be revealed without consent unless required for the purposes of a court hearing. Therefore, the volunteer with first-hand information must fill out the appropriate incident report and report to Ministry of Children and Family Development.

In addition to the above verbal reporting procedure, written documentation of the allegation is required, normally within 2 - 4 hours of the verbal report. Each individual involved in the reporting procedure is responsible for their own written record of events, as they understand them to have occurred. This includes volunteers, supervisors, Ministry Leaders and staff. Specific, factual details of the alleged incident, the date of the child's report and/or when signs and symptoms were noticed must be included in the written report.

After making a report to Ministry of Children and Family Development, the volunteer should then contact, as soon as possible, his/her program supervisor/leader who will in turn notify a member of the Safe Church Team.

⁵ Government of British Columbia. "Reporting Child Abuse in BC." Accessed Nov 7, 2023.
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/protecting-children/reporting-child-abuse>

In the event a volunteer is uncertain as to whether a reasonable suspicion of child abuse has occurred, the volunteer:

- May contact Ministry of Children and Family Development regarding the uncertain nature of the complaint, or
- The volunteer may contact his/her Ministry Leader or a member of the Safe Church Team. This meeting should take place as soon as possible⁶ after the volunteer hears information or witnesses behaviour causing them to consider whether or not a reasonable suspicion of child abuse has occurred.

Upon conclusion of the meeting with the Ministry Leader or SCT member, the volunteer with first-hand information is responsible to report a reasonable suspicion of child abuse. The volunteer cannot be prohibited from reporting what he/she may believe is a reasonable suspicion of child abuse even if the Ministry Leader or Safe Church Team does not concur.

It is the responsibility of the civil authorities to notify the alleged offender of the allegations against him/her. Neither the first hand reporter nor the Safe Church Team should engage the alleged offender in an investigative process until he/she has been interviewed by civil authorities.

The Safe Church Team shall:

1. Meet with any volunteers or staff who have questions about a possible report of child abuse.
2. Notify pastor/Council representative of any reports the SCT receives.
3. Ensure that the church's insurance agent and legal counsel are notified whenever a reasonable suspicion of child abuse is reported to police officials or Ministry of Children and Family Development.
4. Direct Council to assign a media liaison to be prepared to respond to any media requests.
5. Notify the elders of the need for pastoral care for the individuals and families who are party to the allegations.
6. Advise Council to assign members to conduct an internal review to evaluate procedures and policies and/or enlist the resources of the Abuse Response Team (ART) of Classis BCNW (British Columbia North West) as appropriate.
7. Assign a support person for the first-hand reporter dealing with police officials or Ministry of Children and Family Development.

⁶ Authorities MUST be notified within 24 hours.

B. Against Adults

If an adult alleges to be a victim of abuse by a volunteer or staff, the adult can bring these allegations forward to a member of the SCT, a member of NACC Council or the pastor of NACC.

Any of the above may assist/support the adult accuser depending on the support they are requesting:

- The accuser may be only seeking support without confrontation, litigation, prosecution, etc.
- The accuser could request a mediation-type meeting between him/herself and the offender in the presence of Council members.
- If the accuser seeks ecclesiastical censure, he/she can be directed/supported in reporting the allegation to NACC Council for investigation. Council is responsible for determining the veracity of the allegations and will request that the ART form an Advisory Panel to investigate and report back to Council. On receipt of this report, Council will decide upon a course of action, which could include discipline and/or censure.
- If the accuser seeks legal redress, they can be directed and supported in making a report to the police for criminal investigation.

The Safe Church Team shall:

1. Notify a pastor or Council representative of any reports the SCT receives.
2. Ensure that the church's insurance agent and legal counsel are notified whenever a reasonable suspicion of adult abuse is reported to police officials.
3. Notify the Elders of the need for pastoral care for the individuals and families who are party to the allegations.
4. Advise Council to assign members to conduct an internal review to evaluate procedures and policies and/or enlist the resources of the ART as appropriate.
5. Ensure that the accuser has support through any of these processes.

VI. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

A. Responding to Alleged Offenders of Minors

If at any time, regardless of whether an allegation is made, a church leader admits sexual misconduct or physical assault against a minor, the admission of guilt must first be brought to legal authorities, and then to the attention of the Council.

If a church leader confesses or is found guilty of sexual misconduct or physical assault against a minor, he/she must be removed from office/position and barred from further service in that or a similar capacity.

If the Council learns from police officials or Ministry of Children and Family Development that allegations of abuse merit serious investigation or there is the possibility of formal charges:

- a. The Council should gather information from reliable sources (preferably written documentation) specifying the nature of the allegations and the information known at this point.
- b. The Council shall give the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations on approval from authorities.
- c. In light of the information presented, the Council shall enact one or both of the following:
 - limit the contact between the accused and accuser and all other minors in the congregation
 - remove the accused from office/position (with pay when applicable) and without prejudice pending the outcome of the investigation.

If the Council learns from Ministry of Children and Family Development or police officials that criminal charges have been filed against the accused, follow steps a, b, and c above, and at step c, enact both limited contact and removal.

If the Council learns from Ministry of Children and Family Development or police officials that criminal proceedings have concluded, the matter should be revisited as follows:

- a. If criminal charges are dropped, or the result is either no conviction or acquittal, the Council should decide whether to rescind its earlier action and/or take additional action.
- b. If prosecution results in conviction, the abuser is subject to deposition (if earlier suspended) or termination of position and denied reinstatement to any office or a position serving minors.

Note: Council should contact legal counsel before approving any one's request for reinstatement or re-entry to office or position.

B. Responding to Alleged Offenders of Adults

If at any time, regardless of whether an allegation is made, a volunteer or paid church leader admits sexual misconduct or physical assault against an adult, the admission of guilt should be brought to the attention of the Council, which deliberates and adjudicates the matter.

If a volunteer or paid church leader confesses or is found guilty of sexual misconduct or physical assault against an adult, he/she must be removed from office/position and barred from further service in that or a similar capacity.

If the Council learns from police officials that allegations of abuse merit serious investigation or there is the possibility of formal charges:

- a. The Council should gather information from reliable sources (preferably written documentation) specifying the nature of the allegations and the information known at this point.
- b. The Council shall give the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations.
- c. In light of the information presented, the Council shall enact one or both of the following:
 - Limit the contact between the accused and accuser.
 - Remove the accused from office/position (with pay when applicable) and without prejudice pending the outcome of the investigation

If the Council learns from police officials that criminal charges have been filed against the accused, follow steps a, b, and c above, and at step c, enact both limited contact and removal.

If the Council learns from police officials that criminal proceedings have concluded, the matter should be revisited as follows:

- a. If criminal charges are dropped, or the result is either no conviction or acquittal, the Council should decide whether to rescind its earlier action and/or take additional action.
- b. If prosecution results in conviction, the abuser is subject to deposition (if earlier suspended) or termination of position and denied reinstatement to an office or a position the same as or similar to the previously held one.

Note: Council should contact legal counsel before approving any one's request for reinstatement or re-entry to office or position.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Safe Church Forms

Ministry Application Form for Volunteers (pink form)

Name: _____ Today's Date: _____
Last Name Given Name(s)
Date of Birth: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____ City: _____
Postal Code: _____ E-mail: _____

☐ Professing Member (adult) ☐ Professing Member (under 18)
☐ Baptized Member only ☐ Not a Member

If not a member, are you: ☐ A Regular Attender ☐ An Occasional Attender

How long have you been attending NACC? _____

If less than one year, please list other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years (church name, location and pastor) _____

List previous church work (if not at NACC, please indicate where) _____

Please list any training or education you've had that applies to this position _____

Please explain why you want to work with children/youth/adults in this position. Please list any previous experience relevant to this position. (Feel free to continue your answer on the back.) _____

Please provide the names and phone numbers of three references; neither may be an elder or pastor.

Name: _____ Phone Number(s): _____
Name: _____ Phone Number(s): _____
Name: _____ Phone Number(s): _____

I hereby give permission to my three designated references to speak with a NACC representative for the purpose of assessing my suitability for working or volunteering at NACC. I am aware that my references may be asked regarding their knowledge of any abuse history relating to myself. I hereby release my reference checks from any liability regarding information released, and NACC from any information received. I agree that the above information is accurate and true to the best of my knowledge. I consent to a criminal records check if required for my position.

Signature of Applicant

Date

5 year review date: _____ Signature of Applicant: _____

Signature of Ministry Leader: _____

Interview Form For Ministry Positions (green form)

Name of Person Being Interviewed (First) _____ Last _____

Name of Person Conducting Interview (First) _____ Last _____

What ministry is this person applying for? _____

A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions must be included in the questions used to interview an applicant for a volunteer or staff position at NACC. There is space after each question for the interviewer's notes as the interview is being conducted. Please turn the page over if additional space is needed.

1. What ministries have you most recently been involved with?
2. What does it mean to you that you know Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?
3. What are the particular strengths or gifts that you bring to this position?
4. What age groups do you prefer to work with?
5. Are you comfortable working with a co-worker or in a team setting?
6. What challenges do you see in managing this position?
7. List any other volunteer organizations that you presently work for or have worked for in the past three years.

Additional questions/comments:

Signature of Interviewer

Date

B. REFERENCE AND RECORDS CHECKS

None of the references provided may be from an elder or pastor. For each additional ministry that a person is involved in, an additional reference is required. **The interviewer must inform the references that the applicant has signed a waiver consent and is aware of the content of the interview.**

Reference #1:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Last Name Given Name(s) Phone #: _____

Address (optional): _____

Relationship to applicant: _____

How long has the reference person known the applicant: _____

One question that should be included is: Is there any reason you would not recommend this person to this ministry?

Comments:

Reference #2:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Last Name Given Name(s) Phone #: _____

Address (optional): _____

Relationship to applicant: _____

How long has the reference person known the applicant: _____

One question that should be included is: Is there any reason you would not recommend this person to this ministry?

Comments:

Reference #3:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Last Name Given Name(s) Phone #: _____

Address (optional): _____

Relationship to applicant: _____

How long has the reference person known the applicant: _____

One question that should be included is: Is there any reason you would not recommend this person to this ministry?

Comments:

Reference #4: (required only if a person is applying for an additional ministry):

Name: _____ Date: _____

Last Name Given Name(s) Phone #: _____

Address (optional): _____

Relationship to applicant: _____

How long has the reference person known the applicant: _____

One question that should be included is: Is there any reason you would not recommend this person to this ministry?

Comments:

C. CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

Was a criminal records check required for this position? (see page 30 of Appendix for a detailed list as to when this Check is required.) _____ No _____ Yes

Results should be disclosed on a separate piece of paper and kept in a sealed envelope.

D. INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Please answer the following questions keeping in mind your ministry's mandate, and the Prevention of Abuse guidelines.

1. What is your overall assessment of the interview?
2. What kind of attitude did you sense from the applicant?
3. Do you have any misgivings from either the interview or reference checks (responses, demeanor, attitude) about this person for serving in this position? _____ No _____ Yes
If yes, please clarify.

E. RECOMMENDATION Do you recommend this person for this ministry at NACC? _____ No _____ Yes

Please give your reasons:

Subsequent Interview Form (blue form)

This form shall be completed for all persons involved in more than one ministry. The green interview form must be completed for their primary ministry, and this blue form must be completed for any subsequent ministry that the person is involved in.

Name of Person Being Interviewed (First) _____ Last _____

Name of Person Conducting Interview (First) _____ Last _____

What ministry is this person applying for? _____

A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions must be included in the questions used to interview an applicant for a volunteer or staff position at NACC. There is space after each question for the interviewer's notes as the interview is being conducted. Please turn the page over if additional space is needed.

1. What ministries have you most recently been involved with?

2. What does it mean to you that you know Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?

3. What are the particular strengths or gifts that you bring to this position?

4. What age groups do you prefer to work with?

5. Are you comfortable working with a co-worker or in a team setting?

6. Do you have any misgivings about your ability to manage this position?

Additional Questions/Comments:

Signature of Interviewer

Date

B. REFERENCE AND RECORDS CHECKS

None of the references provided may be from an elder or pastor. For each additional ministry that a person is involved in, an additional reference is required.

Reference #1:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Last Name

Given Name(s)

Phone #: _____

Address (optional): _____

Relationship to applicant: _____

How long has the reference person known the applicant: _____

One question that should be included is: Is there any reason you would not recommend this person to this ministry?

Comments:

C. INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Please answer the following questions keeping in mind your ministry area's point of view, and the Safe Church point of view.

1. What is your overall assessment of the interview?

2. What kind of attitude did you sense from the applicant?

3. Do you have any misgivings from either the interview or reference checks (responses, demeanor, and attitude) about this person for serving in this position? ____ No ____ Yes
If yes, please clarify.

D. RECOMMENDATION Do you recommend this person for ministry at NACC? ____ No ____ Yes
Please give your reasons:

Code of Ethics for Ministry Volunteers (yellow form)

Believing that God is calling me to serve others in our congregation:

1. My first priority is to represent the unconditional love of Jesus Christ to others. I will, to the best of my ability do this by seeking the physical, social and spiritual well being of those entrusted to my care.
2. I will respect and try to understand each person's cultural background.
3. I will not do anything to damage a person's trust in me. I will try to protect the person from all forms of abuse while he or she is in my care.
4. If I wish to talk to a child alone, it will be within the **SIGHT AND SOUND** of other people.
5. If a person is distressed, I will try to offer appropriate comfort and help.
6. If I suspect that a child has been hurt through the abusive actions or attitudes of another person, I will report that suspicion, in confidence, to my program supervisor or another appropriate person in a leadership position at NACC. I also understand that is my legal responsibility to report any suspected abuse of children to Ministry of Children and Family Development within 24 hours.
7. I will commit to pray for the ministries of our church.
8. I will work cooperatively with the other adults in my particular ministry as we provide care and supervision, and together abide by this code of ethics.

I have received the required training and will abide by the above Code of Ethics as well as the Safe Church Policies set out by NACC.

Full Name of Volunteer _____

Signature _____

Date _____ Supervisor _____

Incident Reporting Form

NAME OF CHILD: _____

BIRTHDATE (IF KNOWN): (D) _____ (M) _____ (YR) _____

ADDRESS OF CHILD: _____

DAYCARE/SCHOOL: _____

NAME OF POSSIBLE ABUSER (IF KNOWN): _____

BIRTHDATE (IF KNOWN): (M) _____ (D) _____ (Y) _____

ADDRESS: _____

DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS: (explain how you came about knowing the information that you are going to disclose. If it is based on verbal information try to use the words exactly.)

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Ministry Lead Notified (Y) _____ (N) _____

SCT Member Notified (Y) _____ (N) _____

Reporting abuse: 310-1234 (604 is not needed), 24 hour per day

Appendix B. Safe Church Training Summary Tables

Training will be required as indicated of persons who fill the following positions:

Position	Example	Training Required
Paid Staff	Pastor Daycare Director Administrative Assistant Worship Director Youth Director/Pastor Daycare staff*	✓
Children and Youth Ministries Directors	Nursery/Toddler Director(s) Children's Church Director(s) Daycare Board chairperson* Story Hour coordinator Community Night children's coordinator Junior Youth coordinator Senior Youth Director	✓
Children and Youth Ministries Teachers and Leaders	Nursery attendants All classroom teachers Children's Church floaters Community Night teachers Story Hour leaders Youth small group leader Youth off-site leaders	✓
Children and Youth Ministries Helpers	Nursery assistants Classroom helpers Youth ministry helpers Community Night children's helpers Off-site helpers	✗ (but strongly recommended)
Council and Other Care Givers	Elders Deacons Small group leaders Coffee Break leaders Other care giving leaders Ministry Leaders	✓
Others**, Teachers, Administrative leaders and Committee members (not in a care giving role)	Administrative Committee members Facilities chairperson and members Treasurer Non care-giving group leaders	✗

* Daycare workers will receive annual refresher training by the daycare director according to an outline prepared by the SCT.

** Such as ESL teachers, ushers, community night cooks unless you fit into a care-giving role or work with children and youth.

Appendix C. Criminal Records Checks Summary Table

Criminal Records Checks will be required as indicated of persons who fill the following positions:

Position	Example	Criminal Record Check Required
Paid Staff	Pastor Daycare director Administrative Assistant Worship Director Youth Director/Pastor Daycare staff* Custodian	✓
Children and Youth Ministries Directors	Nursery/Toddler director(s) Children's Church director(s) Daycare Board chairperson Story Hour coordinator Community Night children's coordinator Junior Youth coordinator Senior Youth director	✓
Children and Youth Ministries Teachers and Leaders	Nursery attendants All classroom teachers Children's Church floaters Community Night teachers Story Hour leaders Youth small group leader Youth off-site leaders	✓
Children and Youth Ministries Helpers	Nursery assistants Classroom helpers Youth ministry helpers Community Night children's helpers Off-site helpers	✗
Council and Other Care Givers	Elders Deacons Small group leaders Coffee Break leaders Alpha leaders Other care giving leaders**	✓
Others**, Teachers, Administrative leaders and Committee members (not in a care giving role)	Administrative Committee members Facilities chairperson and members Treasurer Non care-giving group leaders**	✗

*as a provincial requirement, licensed daycare workers have CRCs done every five years.

**such as ESL teachers, ushers, community night cooks unless you fit into a care-giving role or work with children and youth.

All persons who carry out a ministry that places them in the proximity of Daycare children shall have a criminal records check. This is a licensing requirement that we fully support.

A criminal records check will be required of all those whose ministry role gives them opportunity for one-on-one care giving (at the church or in another environment). This may apply to some ESL teachers and similar positions.

The criminal records check will provide the church with a record of any conviction for either a misdemeanor or a felony committed in B.C. It will involve the following (or similar) steps (in line with RCMP - or city police procedures): the applicant goes to the police station in their city of residence with a cover letter from the church identifying the applicant as a volunteer in our church (this letter may enable them to waive the processing fee; in case of a fee, a receipt may be submitted to the church office for reimbursement) and a form called Consent for Disclosure of Criminal Record Information. The applicant must bring along two pieces of ID, one of which must have their photograph. Also the applicant must have a piece of ID with their address on it. Once the check is completed and the applicant is "cleared", the police will return the Disclosure form to NACC. If, however, criminal information is found about the applicant, the RCMP will contact the applicant and determine if the applicant wishes to proceed with the application.

Fingerprinting

As a church, NACC may ask, although cannot insist, that an individual also submit to fingerprinting by the police. Individuals, who by their job description would have frequent and long-term or one-to-one contact with children or youth, may be asked to be fingerprinted. The RCMP, however, will require fingerprinting when the Criminal Record Information reveals evidence of criminal conviction.

Appendix D. Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

Children rarely exhibit just one sign that they are the victims of abuse. Some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes or the aftereffect 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 children'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.

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, or becoming aggressive or withdrawn – that is not associated with normal developmental stages.
3. Physical manifestations such as loss of bowel control, bedwetting, frequent urination, headaches, stomach aches, breathing difficulties, sore throats accompanied by gagging, and 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 older 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 shapes 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, or lighter.

School-age Children

1. Physical manifestations as above with 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 a 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; behaviour in sexual manner with other children or adults
10. Exhibiting signs of need to be in control of others or situations; bullying others
11. Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions
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

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

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, of lack of cleanliness resulting in odours
7. For infants, failure to thrive

Parental Behaviours and Home Life

1. Not attending meetings about the child, not showing an interest in the child, critical of child, uncomplimentary
2. Constantly putting the child down, using harsh words to describe child, using threats and unflattering language
3. Describing 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 (From [Preventing Child Abuse](#) by Beth Swagman.)

Appendix E. Reporting to the Authorities

In British Columbia any suspicion of child abuse must be reported by law (Section 14 of the Child Family and Community Service Act.) The names of those reporting are kept confidential.

The number in BC to report Child Abuse is **310-1234** (no area code required).

When making a report, be as factual as possible, using objective observations. Try to stay away from making conclusions, only report what you have seen or heard. If you are reporting verbal conversation report them as accurately as possible.

END OF POLICY