

PROTECTION PLAN

**FOR THE CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND
LEADERS OF RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY
CHURCH**



About this Document

Be in Christ Church of Canada congregations' endeavor to provide safe and secure environments for children and youth that participate and for volunteers that serve.

We desire to inspire confidence within the community to care for and teach children and youth [Matthew 18:1-6]. We will exercise all appropriate steps to keep children, youth, and volunteers safe through training, and by following policy guidelines.

Volunteer Requirements to be considered a Screened Volunteer

- Attend the church regularly for 6 months (or transferring in from another Be in Christ Church of Canada congregation with reference from a pastor)
- Complete a Volunteer Application form and covenant
- Provide a current Police Background Check & Vulnerable Sector Search (required at age of 18 and renewed every 5 years unless you report a change in your police check status)
- Provide 2 references who will be contacted by a form e-mail or phone call
- Complete a conversation related to – why you want to volunteer and other matters deemed appropriate with the leader responsible for the area you will volunteer

Please Note:

No person who has been convicted of a sexual offence, or convicted of an assault in which the victim is under the age of eighteen and at least two years younger than the accused, or has been a custodial parent of a child for which there has been a finding that the child is in need of protection, shall work with children/youth even though such person has since become a Christ follower.

Volunteers will

- Submit to the teaching and instruction from leaders of the church
- Be open to ongoing training and attend meetings related to their volunteer area(s)
- Abide by and accept the signed covenant

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Spiritual and Moral Responsibility of the Church

Here at Riverside Community Church, under the umbrella of BIC Canada, we believe that anyone who participates in any form of service to this body no matter how menial it may be, is involved in ministry leadership. We also believe that God intended these ministries to be carried out in the spirit of a servant. Although we vary as individuals, Scripture clearly teaches a leadership style that is uniquely Christian. Jesus has demonstrated this leadership style, and commands us to do likewise.

Staff and volunteers who teach, help, care for or have access to children and/or youth between the ages of birth to Grade 12 are required to follow the guidelines and procedures defined in this document. Every activity involves some risk, but this plan is designed with the safety of the children and volunteers in mind, and the goal of making all programs and activities as safe as possible.

“We have a spiritual, moral, and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children participating in church programs that are under the auspices and authority of the church. Child abuse is a criminal act as well as a violation of human conscience and dignity. It is a violation of God’s moral law within the trusted context of relationship. It is criminal behavior that causes emotional, physical and spiritual trauma to victims, and has destructive consequences for abusers. The devastating effects on the credibility of the church ministry and the name of Christ make it essential that the church take all appropriate steps to prevent abusive incidences from occurring.” (BIC Canada *Child and Youth Ministries -Plan to Protect*; February 2013)

The Gospel of Mark records that when people brought children to Jesus, He took them in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. As a church, it is our desire to bring children to Jesus too.

In the church we recognize that we reflect God’s love to those in our care and we take that responsibility seriously. In our ministry to children. We must follow carefully what the scriptures teach:

Avoid every kind of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:22

But among you must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Ephesians 5:3

But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Matthew 18:6

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Believing that God is calling me to serve children/youth.

- As a church, we desire to bring children and youth to Jesus.
- We recognize that grace abounds in our experience with Christ, but also acknowledge the need for those in ministry to exhibit personal morality and character consistent with Biblical principles.
- Our priority in working with children and youth is to seek the welfare of the children and youth physically, socially, educationally, and spiritually.
- We try to understand and respect the cultural backgrounds of the child and youth.
- We give parents full information about the programs, including time it begins and ends.
- We will do nothing that will harm the trust of a child or youth and protect them from all forms of abuse while they are in our care.
- We are responsible to report suspected abusive actions or attitudes of another person to ministry leader.

These guidelines are therefore set forth to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we can bring

our children to Christ. We view ourselves as partners with parents and guardians, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in our ministry to the family.

CHILD ABUSE

Understanding the Need:

Incidents of abuse or molestation can occur in any church. We want to inform you of the definition of abuse, the policies we follow and the importance of child protection procedures to keep our staff, volunteers, children and youth safe. Churches are uniquely susceptible in that they have large numbers of children, usually a great need for volunteers, and have a culture of trust that assumes no Christian could be suspected of such exploitation.

The impact of abuse is devastating. Child abuse can potentially leave scars that last a lifetime. In addition, we want to protect our workers and volunteers from false accusations, litigation, and potential loss of ministry/ career, as well as legally protecting the congregation and Conference.

Definition:

“An act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust which is not accidental, which harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical or mental health or a child’s welfare. It can be physical, emotional, sexual, or involve neglect. All child abuse involves the issue of power, when people take advantage of the authority or power, they have over vulnerable people (vulnerable people include adults with physical or mental disabilities and children; in this training a child is defined as someone under the age of 18).” (BIC Canada *Child and Youth Ministries -Plan to Protect*, February 2013)

Types of Abuse:

Physical – involves physical force or actions that result, or could result, in bodily harm to a child by a caregiver.

Sexual – is any sexual activity (touching or non-touching) with a child by a caregiver including fondling, sexual intercourse, or exposure to sexual activity.

Emotional – occurs when there is an absence of a nurturing environment for the child. It can also occur when the caregiver continually treats the child in a negative or demeaning manner.

Neglect – failure to provide the child’s physical and emotional needs, attention, and supervision. It can also mean a failure to provide for the child’s emotional needs, attention, and supervision.

Harassment – involves persistently and wrongfully badgering a person with annoying, offensive, or troubling behavior.

Symptoms of Abuse:

Physical signs may include:

- Lacerations and bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty controlling urination and defecation
- Discomfort sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal or sexually transmitted

infection

Behavioral signs may include:

- Anxiety when approaching a child care area
- Nervous, hostile, or rejecting behaviour toward one or more adults
- Sexual self-consciousness; acting out of sexual behaviors or other expression of sexual knowledge beyond that appropriate for the child's age
- Withdrawal from friends, family, church, school, or sports activities
- Poor social boundaries
- Suicidal feeling or attempts

IF YOU RECOGNIZE ONE OR MORE OF THESE SYMPTOMS, OR HAVE CAUSE FOR CONCERN, REPORT IT IMMEDIATELY.

Reasonable Grounds – are what an average person, given his or her training, background and experience, exercising normal and honest judgment, would assume to be an action that needs attention. No action would be taken against a person making a report unless it is made maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief.

The Church's Legal Vulnerability & Responsibility:

While our church is not absolutely liable for every injury that occurs on the premises or in the course of our activities, we are generally only responsible for injuries that would result from our negligence.

However, we are challenged to take not only such precautions as the law of negligence requires, but all possible precautions to prevent abuse.

Consistent with Scripture (2 Corinthians 6:3; Matthew 5:48), our standard is not the letter of the law, but the perfection of God.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Two Leader Rule:

A minimum of two unrelated adult ministry personnel should be present during any child's activity or transportation. This rule helps reduce the risk of child abuse and reduces the risk of false accusations made by children or youth towards staff or volunteers.

Open Door Policy:

If it is necessary that only one adult be along in a room with children, the door of that room must always remain open.

Occasional Observers:

Occasional observers who join a class will have their attendance recorded and kept on file with the classroom attendance for that day. Visitors will be clearly identified and will not be placed in a position of trust with the children who are not their own.

Annual Registration:

All parents who choose to have their child(ren) participate in Riverside Community Church's Children's and Youth Ministry programs need to complete an application form for each individual child every year.

If a child enters the program midway through the year, the application form will be completed upon their

arrival into the program.

No child is allowed to enter into any Sunday morning or midweek programs without the consent of their parent or guardian by way of an application form.

Application forms must be completed in full and signed by a parent or guardian.

Infants/Crawlers (Nursery)	1:2
Walkers-2s (Nursery)	1:4
3-Grade 1 (Riverside Kids)	1:6
Grade 2-5 (Riverside Kids)	1:10
Grade 6-12 (JR & SR High)	1:15
Overnight Grade and under	1:5
Overnight Grade 6-12	1:10

Adult to Child Ratios:

This is in compliance with established ratios set by the government and applies to all classroom activities, off-site activities, and trips.

***Highlighted denotes current ages of children and youth we serve in 2023**

Volunteers under the age of 16:

Will NOT be responsible for the following:

- Diaper changing or toileting
- Recording attendance
- Releasing children from the classroom and checking parents' ID
- Being the lead teacher in a classroom

Family Teams:

Are encouraged to serve together, but for the protection of the family unit, it is required that at least one unrelated ministry personnel serve alongside.

Receiving and Releasing Children:

For all ministry volunteers with children, infants to Grade 12

- Volunteers must wear a nametag which identifies them accordingly
- The names and addresses of parents and children must be carefully maintained, updated annually and kept permanently
- Attendance of both children and volunteers (including first and last names) will be taken in each classroom every time a program is in session. This includes events and retreats. These records will be kept on file permanently

Procedures for all children, infants to Grade 5*

Only adults are permitted to drop off and pick up children.

Parents are not to enter the nursery or classroom when picking up their child unless requested to do so. This better enables the child-care volunteers to maintain order and provide a safe and secure environment.

*Youth (Grade 6-12) do not need to be signed in/out by parents. However, their attendance at events will be recorded and kept on file permanently (off site or overnight trips require parent/guardian consent).

Washroom Procedures:

Please encourage parents to care for their child's washroom needs prior to the beginning of class time

Riverside Kids

Volunteers are not allowed to be in a washroom with a child and shut the door, but must stand in the doorway in clear view of another volunteer.

When assistance is needed, the volunteer must alert the parent to come and provide help.

Proper Display of Affection:

Appropriate Touch:

All touch with children should be age and developmentally appropriate and must be done in view of others. We encourage volunteers to:

Preschool

- Hold a preschool child who is crying.
- Speak to a child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
- Hold a preschool child's hand when speaking, listening, or walking to an

activity. Grades 1-5

- Speak to a child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
- Hold a younger child's hand when speaking, listening, or walking to an activity.
- Gently hold the child's shoulder or hand to keep or redirect their attention.
- Put your arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting.
- Pat a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or

her. Grades 6-12

- Gently tap a student's shoulder to get their attention.
- A side hug or an arm on their shoulder is appropriate when greeting or comforting a student.
- Give a student a high-five, fist bump, or a pat on the shoulder to affirm

them.

Inappropriate Touch:

All ministry personnel are not to be alone with a child/youth for any reason. The following actions are deemed inappropriate and will not be permitted.

Examples of Inappropriate touch:

- Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling.
- Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit.
- Holding a child's face when talking to or disciplining them.
- Carrying older children or having them sit in your lap.
- Prolonged physical contact, seductiveness or suggestive contact with any child/youth.
- Physical contact of any kind that's done for the pleasure/satisfaction of the volunteer.
- Any touching used to express power or control over a child.

Discipline & Classroom Management:

In NO circumstances is corporal punishment to be used in any way by ministry personnel. Information on Discipline and Classroom Management can be found at the church office or from office staff.

Bullying:

Our children and youth have a right to a caring, respectful and safe church environment at all times. Anti-bullying will be communicated and enforced at all times among the children and youth. All ministry personnel will do whatever is necessary to prevent bullying, teach against it and provide assistance to youth or children who are being bullied. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.

SAFETY PROCEDURES:

Fire Safety:

At Crystal Ridge Community Centre:

Exit signs and Fire Safety plans are throughout the building.

In case of emergency requiring evacuation of the building, remain calm. Teachers are to exit the building with children/students in single file, with any available attendance sheets in their possession.

Take children/youth to designated evacuation location (public library front doors).

Do not allow parents of children Grade 5 and under to pick-up their children until all children have been accounted for. Parents must follow normal sign out procedures.

At The Hub:

Exit signs and fire safety plans are throughout the building. In case of emergency, please use the same precautions as above. Take children to the far end of the main parking lot, to the grass until their parents or safety personnel arrive. Please ensure that children do not leave this area. If necessary, send a runner to Douglas Memorial Urgent Care for emergency assistance.

Health & Safety:

Incidents reports must be completed for all incidents.

Parents will be notified in case of an incident and must sign the submitted report.

Medicine SHOULD NOT be given or applied by a volunteer, unless otherwise directed with written parent/guardian consent and explanation, or in extreme cases (ie. Epi-pen or inhaler)

If a student needs over-the-counter medications during a youth program (eg. Advil), a Youth Coordinator/Pastor may give (but not administer) it to them *after obtaining verbal permission from the parent/guardian*. Verbal permission must be documented alongside an age appropriate incident report. . In the special case of a retreat or event, the ministry leader will help the student find proper storage for medication, but will not administer unless specifically requested by their parent/guardian in written form.

SPECIAL EVENT & MEDIA PROCEDURES

Special Outings & Events:

- All activities off church property will be pre-approved by ministry leadership.
- Parents must be notified at least one week prior to the outing.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in trips and special events. (Forms to be kept in the ministry lead's possession during trips and events with a copy of the completed forms filed in the church office. Originals to be kept on file permanently.)
- All trips and outings will be supervised by a minimum of two approved, unrelated adult ministry personnel and they need to follow the staff to child ratio as stated earlier.
- Attendance of all ministry personnel and youth must be recorded and forms must be filed in the church office and be kept permanently on file.

Connecting Outside of Regular Programs:

- When a staff member or volunteer recognizes the need to meet with a student, written or verbal consent from the parent/guardian must be obtained prior to the meeting. The appropriate ministry staff will be informed of and approve of all meetings in advance.
- Leaders will not meet with individual children Grade 5 or younger.
- Meetings must take place in a public space and be clearly visible to other adults.
- Leaders will never be alone with a minor or minor/child.

Transportation:

- Leaders will NOT drive students whenever possible. Preference for any event is that parents drop off/pick up their child at the event location.
- All drivers must be pre-approved by the ministry leader, provide a photocopy of their license, and sign a volunteer safe driving statement.
- All drivers must be at least 21 years old, have a valid Driver's License, current insurance coverage, minimum 3 years of driving experience. We recommend at least 25 years old and at least 5 years driving experience.
- Will have no more than 2 minor traffic violations in the past 3 years and no at-fault accidents or major traffic violations in the past 5 years.
- The vehicle used must be well-maintained and should NOT have any unrepaired accident damage, cracked windshields or missing safety equipment.
- The number of persons per vehicle must never exceed the number of seat belts, and they must be worn by everyone when the vehicle is in motion.
- A proper written consent form must be signed by parents prior to the outing. This form will be specific to one driver.
- All drivers must obey the rules of the road, including speed limits.
- Children/youth will not be left unattended in a vehicle.
- Trips and off-site travel forms will accompany the vehicle which the specified child is in.
- If necessary to transport students, teams of 2 preapproved unrelated ministry personnel may pick up and drop off children/youth.
- We do not transport individual children alone with adults. Two children or more in the car or two or more adults if only one child. Rule of Three applies.

Online & Media:

- Online communication (email, Facebook, texting, etc.) is NOT permitted with children Grade 5 & under.

- No child/youth will be photographed, videotaped, or audiotaped by ministry personnel without prior written consent from a parent or guardian; **they cannot be posted on a personal account.**
- It is recommended that online communication with students take place through official church Facebook pages.
- Leaders should NOT initiate text messaging conversations with students and should move text messaging conversations to public Facebook whenever possible, or include a second leader in messages.
- Leaders are not permitted to use services with disappearing private posts to connect with students (eg. Snapchat).
- When communicating with students through social media, email, or text messaging always include a second leader or a parent in all online conversations.
- Ministry personnel must save all correspondence in the event that any of the content is called into question.
- Ministry personnel will not post comments, content, or photographs that are not conducive to the integrity of the ministry, or that may be considered a contradiction of beliefs and core values of the church.
- If children or students attempt to converse or exchange information of an inappropriate nature, the staff or volunteer will screen shot the conversation and contact their ministry supervisor immediately.

INCIDENT REPORTING

Realistically, no practical prevention strategy is 100% effective in preventing abuse. An accusation of child sexual abuse may occur in any church.

- All allegations are to be taken seriously.
- False allegations of abuse made by children are relatively low.
- All allegations must be handled immediately with respect for the privacy and confidentiality of both the victim and perpetrator.

Suspected abuse:

- Discuss suspicious behavior immediately with the pastoral leadership
- If you are unsure whether to report an incident, contact the SMARRT (Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Resource Response Team) toll free at 1-800-313-6226 with a “hypothetical” situation.

Obligation to Report:

- Any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child (or children) needs protection is legally required to report the matter to the appropriate government agency. This is not an optional report. It is a criminal offense to not report. A person who knowingly fails to report in these circumstances is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offense.
- The law across Canada provides protection from civil action to an individual who makes a report on reasonable grounds. Protection is not offered if the report is made in malice.
- The law across Canada requires all individuals to report all cases where there are reasonable grounds

to believe that a child needs protection. Only attorney-client privilege is exempt from this. Pastors do not have confidentiality and ARE required to make reports.

Reasonable Grounds:

Reasonable grounds are those which have a rational foundation. Any of the following would be considered reasonable:

- An actual complaint from the child
- Circumstantial evidence such as cries for help, unexplained and in ordinary physical injury
- A statement of credible eyewitness or credible witness to a recent complaint
- A credible witness who corroborates the statement of another

However, the following would always be excluded as providing reasonable grounds:

- Gossip
- Unsubstantiated conclusions

In short, “reasonable grounds” have a rational basis. They are not based on intuition, feelings, emotion or the uncritical acceptance of another’s view if they are unsupported by other facts.

When to Report:

A child needs protection if:

- You suspect the child has suffered physical or sexual harm
- You suspect the child has been harmed due to lack of adequate care
- You suspect the child has been abandoned
- You suspect the child has been harmed emotionally
- You suspect the child is at risk to suffer sexual, physical or emotional harm
- You suspect the caregiver is unable to protect the child
- You suspect the caregiver has a problem that interferes with their ability to parent (ie: drug or alcohol abuse, mental illness)
- You suspect the caregiver lacks adequate parenting skills
- A child under 12 commits a serious act such as assault or excessive damage to property

Abuse or neglect need not have already occurred for a child to be in need of protection; it is not necessary to wait until a child has been harmed to intervene. When abuse or neglect can be reasonably anticipated and there are reasonable grounds to believe the child is in need of protection, the legal obligation to report applies. Historical abuse or neglect, which occurred in the past, must be reported.

Important to Note:

- As soon as possible after the incident comes to your attention, contact the appropriate people and/or agency.
- Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases, and you may be hindering their investigation.
- When a child first comes to you, be sure to take his or her word seriously. Do not deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to them. Give emotional support, reminding the child that he or she is not at fault.
- Tell the child that he or she was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child that you will not tell anyone.

- Do not prejudge the situation but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim, showing care and support to prevent further hurt. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accuser is a church volunteer/employee, the person should be relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished.

How to Make a Report:

- Any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child needs protection must make a report to the appropriate government agency.
- All allegations must be fully reported to the supervising leader or pastor within one hour of coming to your attention.
- It is requested that you speak to the Senior Pastor to get their assistance in the procedure of reporting and ensuring that everyone concerned is notified – government agencies (varies depending on province but includes the police services), the denominational office, and potentially church lawyers and insurance company. They will assist in all paperwork that is associated with reporting and give guidance on your responsibilities.
- The Senior Pastor will be the only spokesperson to deal with media and any information given to the congregation. They will also do this only on advice from the denomination and legal counsel.
- It is the stand of the Be in Christ Church of Canada to not deny, minimize, cast blame, or accuse in allegations of abuse
- If a child discloses an allegation of abuse take the allegation seriously. Do not ask leading questions or attempt to investigate the incident yourself.
- Document all interactions, comments, and observations clearly and precisely. FORMS ARE IN THE “CLASSROOM PROCEDURES” BINDER IN EACH CLASSROOM’S SIGN-IN BIN.
- Once the supervising leader or pastor is informed, it is their responsibility to make sure that the proper procedure has been implemented

