



# Abuse Prevention Policy

April 2025

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

At creation, God bestowed upon the human race an inherent dignity since we have been created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27 – Genesis 5:1; Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). Among other things, this dignity implies a mutual responsibility to care for and protect one another. Jesus, himself, showed a special concern for all whom he met, including children and vulnerable members of society (Matthew 18: 2, 10, 14). The Church has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a safe and secure environment for all who participate in its ministries.

This policy is intended to assist in:

- Making Community CRC of Kitchener a safe place to be involved;
- Protecting the minor/vulnerable person from abuse;
- Protecting the staff, volunteers and helpers from false accusation, litigation, and/or possible loss of ministry/career;
- Protecting the Church from litigation and loss of testimony. (spacing changed here)

### **A. COMMITMENT TO REVIEW**

Amendments will be made to these policies and procedures at the discretion of the Council of Community Christian Reformed Church in order to maintain its legal compliance, operational effectiveness and obligations to various ministries. On behalf of the Council of Community Christian Reformed Church, the Safe Church Team will review this policy on an annual basis.

### **B. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1. “Church” is Community Christian Reformed Church of Kitchener.
2. “Adults” are individuals 18 years of age or older.
3. “Minors” are individuals under the age of 18 years (as per law in Ontario).
4. “Elderly” are individuals 65 years of age or older.
5. “Volunteers” are non-paid adult individuals (age 18 years of age or older) who serve in a ministry and/or who have direct contact with Minors or Vulnerable Persons.
6. “Vulnerable Persons” include, but are not limited to, Minors, Disabled Persons (cognitively and/or physically), those with mental health concerns and the Elderly.
7. “Helpers” are Minors aged 12-17 years who assist Volunteers.
8. “Member” is any baptized or confessing member of CCRC.
9. “Adherent” is a non-member who is a supporter of the life, belief, and ministries of the Church.

10. "Staff" are individuals paid by the church to fulfill a specific mandate.
11. A "Friend" is a person with disabilities participating in the Friendship Group.
12. A "Caregiver" is someone assigned by the residence (e.g. group home) of a Friend.
13. A "Guardian" is person who is legally responsible for the care of a Minor or Vulnerable Person.
13. "Ministry area" is the space within the church property used by a ministry during a regular scheduled meeting or special event. It may consist of one or more rooms or hallways and may be entirely within the building or extend outside the building yet within the confines of the property of the church.
14. "Nursery area" is the specific space within the church property used by the nursery ministry during a regular scheduled service, ministry meeting or special event providing supervised care for minors up to the age of 5 years of age. It may consist of one or more rooms or hallways and may be entirely within the building or extend outside the building yet within the confines of the property of the church.
15. "Police Check" means either a "Criminal Record Check" or "Vulnerable Sector Check" obtained by the local police service to where a Volunteer or Staff lives. A "Vulnerable Sector Check" is what will be required by most, as it is for those who work or volunteer with Minors and/or Vulnerable Persons. A "Criminal Record Check" would be required by the few whose work or volunteer capacity has no contact with Minors and/or Vulnerable Persons (examples: counting money, lawn maintenance, etc.)

### **C. DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE**

1. "Physical abuse" is any non-accidental human act that results in physical pain or injury to a person whether or not it leaves a cut or wound, or a mark or a bruise. Physically abusive behaviour ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, and biting to more severe forms like choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing and shooting. In other words, physical abuse is any intentional means of inflicting pain or injury to another person. It is sometimes a single event, but can also be a chronic pattern of behavior.
2. "Physical neglect" is not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care. Neglect interferes with or prevents a person's normal development.
3. "Sexual abuse" is the exploitation of a person or any sexual intimacy forced on a person for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a person who is not capable of understanding sexual acts or resisting coercion such as threats or offers of gifts. Sexual abuse may or may not involve physical contact. Examples of non-physical sexual abuse include people exposing themselves, displaying pornographic material, photographing a person for pornographic materials, obscene telephone calls, "peeping Toms," and requests to engage in sexual activity (where no physical contact occurs). Examples of sexual

abuse involving physical contact includes fondling of body parts such as breasts, crotch, buttocks, or sexual organs; intercourse; oral and anal sex.

4. “Emotional abuse” is attempting to control a person’s life through words, threats and fear, destroying a person’s self-worth through harassment, threats, humiliation and deprivation. Emotional abuse weakens a person’s mental and physical ability to resist, cuts off his or her contact with others, and causes a gradual loss of self-esteem all of which reinforce a sense of helplessness and dependence on the abuser.
5. “Spiritual abuse” is any use of someone’s spiritual (religious) position to control or dominate another person. For example, spiritual abuse occurs when shame is used in an attempt to get someone to support a belief, or to fend off legitimate questions. Spiritual abuse also occurs when a misplaced sense of loyalty to a religious leader is fostered and even demanded. Misusing Scripture to maintain a position of dominance or hiding behind “secrecy” are forms of spiritual abuse.
6. “Verbal abuse” is any use of language that causes someone harm. Criticism, cursing, recounting past offenses, expressing negative expectations, and yelling are all forms of verbal abuse. The level of abuse can be gauged by the frequency, volume and emotional weight given to the words.
7. “Harassment” is any vexatious comments or conduct that is known or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome, unwanted, offensive, intimidating, hostile or inappropriate. Harassment may be subtle or overt and includes bullying, stereotyping, sexual harassment, workplace harassment and discriminatory harassment.
8. “Economic abuse” is the misuse or misappropriation of a person’s financial resources.

## **II. GENERAL SAFE CHURCH POLICIES**

### **A. REDUCING RISK**

In order to reduce risk:

1. Every effort will be made to ensure that Helpers are in the presence of Staff or a Volunteer, subject to the guidelines of the Transportation Policy (see E. 10 and 11).
2. One on one meetings between Volunteers/Helpers and Minors and/or Vulnerable Persons shall not be conducted except for brief periods of time and in a location open to view or when a Volunteer drives a Minor or Vulnerable Person home.
3. A Social Media Policy has been instituted (see section J).
4. This applies to all ministries and activities within the church, regardless if mentioned in this policy (example: Pickleball).

## **B. MINISTRY TO MINORS/VULNERABLE PERSONS VOLUNTEER PROCEDURE**

1. All Volunteers are required to complete and sign-off on the Volunteer registration form.
2. All Staff and Volunteers 18 years and older who work on a regular basis with Minors/Vulnerable Persons shall complete a Police Vulnerable Sector Check to be renewed every 5 years.
3. All Staff and Volunteers must agree to comply with the Church's Abuse Prevention policy and, if non-compliant, the individual will be required to relinquish his/her responsibility in the ministry.
4. Anyone with a history of corroborated allegations or convictions of abuse/neglect of Minors/Vulnerable Persons, staff or volunteers, shall be prohibited from leadership and any involvement in ministries in which this person could pose a risk.
5. All Staff, Volunteers and Helpers are to notify the appropriate authorities (Police and/or Family & Children's Services) if they suspect any Minor or Vulnerable Person is suffering from neglect.
6. The Church Leadership (Pastors/Elders/Deacons) reserves the right to deny any Volunteer for any reason.
7. Volunteers must be Members or Adherents for a minimum of six months prior to serving in ministry with Minors or Vulnerable Persons.
8. All information obtained will be held in the strictest confidence and secured with limited access. Access is restricted to a pastor as delegated by Council, Chair of Safe Church Team and Office Administrator or as otherwise required by law.

## **C. EDUCATION**

1. All Staff, Volunteers, and Helpers shall participate annually in Safe Church Training.
2. All Staff, Volunteers and Helpers must read the Abuse Prevention Policy within 6 months of beginning their employment/volunteer work and are encouraged to read Safe Church resource material as made available by the Safe Church Team.

## **D. DISCIPLINE POLICY (Applicable to all ministries involving Minors/Vulnerable Persons)**

1. When a Minor/Vulnerable Person misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehaviour continues, the ministry leader must keep a written record of the contact made using the Occurrence/Incident Report.
2. A Parent/Legal Guardian or suitable Volunteer/Helper should be regularly involved where disruptive behaviour and/or misbehaviour is an ongoing issue.
3. Discipline must reflect the Minor's/Vulnerable Person's age and level of comprehension.

4. Minors/Vulnerable Persons are to be reminded of the kinds of behaviour that are unacceptable for a given ministry setting.
5. If a behavioural incident occurs which is physical, any person is authorized by law to use only as much force as is necessary to stop physical harm. For example, if a child or Vulnerable Person is hitting another person, it is reasonable to grab that child or Vulnerable Person's arm to stop the attack, but not to hit back or use any other kind of excessive force.

## **E. TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

1. Drivers must have a current valid Ontario driver's license or equivalent that has not been suspended or revoked for any reason. All drivers must show their driver's license to the leader of their Ministry, who will take a photocopy for records, which will be kept confidential and destroyed at the end of the Ministry season. A Volunteer has the right to refuse to provide this but will be unable to drive for Ministry Events.
2. Drivers who drive for volunteer or employment purposes must have a valid Police Check.
3. Drivers and passengers, regardless of age, must at all times wear a seatbelt.
4. Passengers who are Minors/Vulnerable Persons must be properly secured in a seat that is appropriate for their age and size (e.g., a child's car or booster seat).
5. All passengers must remain seated while the vehicle is in transit.
6. All passengers must obey the driver and other Volunteers in transit.
7. Drivers are expected to use their good judgment to drive at a safe speed with the flow of traffic.
8. Minors must adhere to the provincial licensing requirements when transporting other Minors/Vulnerable Persons.
9. Proof of valid insurance is required in each vehicle. All drivers must show their insurance to the leader of their Ministry, who will take a photocopy for records, which will be kept confidential and destroyed at the end of the Ministry season. A Volunteer has the right to refuse to provide this but will be unable to drive for Ministry Events.
10. No Staff member or Volunteer may travel one on one with a Minor/Vulnerable Person unless Parental/Legal Guardian permission is granted or there are extenuating circumstances. In those cases, the Parent/Legal Guardian and the leader of the applicable ministry, church staff or designated person must be notified prior to driving that person. A report must be submitted to the Safe Church Team outlining who was notified and the details of the extenuating circumstances.

11. Within the context of church ministry, no Staff member or Volunteer may travel one on one with a person of the opposite gender, unless extenuating circumstances apply. In those cases, the leader of the applicable ministry, church staff or designated person must be notified prior to driving that person. A report must be submitted to the Safe Church Team outlining who was notified and the details of the extenuating circumstances.
12. In case of breakdowns or emergencies, the leader of the applicable ministry, church staff or designated person must be notified.
13. In case of emergencies the applicable ministry leader will have a copy of all medical release forms which will be kept in an accessible location and readily available.

### **III. POLICIES FOR SPECIFIC MINISTRIES**

#### **A. NURSERY**

1. The individual tagging/check-in/check-out system must be used.
2. Only a Parent or Legal Guardian may pick up and drop off a Minor. The person who has dropped off the Minor and obtained the matching name tag will be deemed to be the Parent/Legal Guardian.
3. Volunteers or Helpers may not remove a Minor from the nursery area without the permission of the Parent or Legal Guardian except in the case of imminent danger to the Minor and/or the Volunteer or Helper.
4. Only regularly scheduled Volunteers/Helpers are permitted in the nursery area during nursery hours.
5. Once the applicable ministry has commenced, the nursery doors should be secured to prevent Minors from unplanned exits.
6. Supervision:
  - a) At least one Volunteer and one Helper must be in the infant nursery (for those Minors under the age of 18 months) with no more than five Minors before an additional Volunteer or Helper is required.
  - b) At least one Volunteer and one Helper must be in the toddler nursery (for those Minors between the ages of 18 to 30 months) with no more than eight Minors before an additional Volunteer or Helper is required.
  - c) Nursery cannot be provided if adequate supervision cannot be provided.
7. A couple (husband and wife) or two adult family members may serve in the nursery as Volunteers at the same time, provided that a third non-related Volunteer/Helper is also present.



8. Minors must be picked up immediately after any event requiring the use of the nursery.
9. Washroom Policy:
  - a) For Minors who do not require assistance in the washroom, the Volunteer or Helper must remain outside the washroom.
  - b) For Minors who require assistance, the Volunteer or Helper must assist the child with the washroom stall door open.
  - c) The diapering of a Minor will take place in the appropriate diaper changing areas.
10. If a Minor needs medical attention, the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian must be notified immediately. If, after making immediate efforts, the Parent(s)/ Legal Guardian cannot be located immediately, they must be notified as soon as possible.

#### **B. SUNDAY SCHOOL/VBS/THIRD PARTY VBS**

1. The sign-in/sign-out system must be used for all children age 5 and under.
2. Only a parent or guardian may pick up the child. The person who has dropped off the child and has signed in will be deemed to be the parent/guardian.
3. The Volunteer/Minor ratio for pre-school Minors aged 30 months to 5 years is 1 Volunteer per 8 Minors after which Volunteers and Helpers are added as necessary.
4. The Volunteer/Minor ratio for Minors over the age of 6 is 1 Volunteer per 15 Minors after which Volunteers and Helpers are added as necessary.
5. Volunteers or Helpers may not remove a Minor/Vulnerable Person from the ministry area unless in the case of imminent danger to the Minor/Vulnerable Person and/or the Volunteer or Helper or previously arranged by the Superintendent of Sunday School and with the written approval of the Parent(s) or Legal Guardian.
6. Enrollment records must be kept for all Minors/Vulnerable Persons in attendance and available at all times. These records include: contact information, emergency information, names of the persons to whom the Minor/Vulnerable Persons may be released, as well as any special parental instructions (e.g. diet, etc.).
7. Washroom Policy: For Minors/Vulnerable Persons who do not require assistance in the washroom, the Volunteer or Helper must remain outside the washroom. For Minors/Vulnerable Persons who require assistance, the Volunteer or Helper must assist the Minor/Vulnerable Person with the washroom stall door open.

8. If a Minor/Vulnerable Person needs medical attention, the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian should be notified immediately. If, after making immediate efforts, the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian cannot be located immediately, they must be notified as soon as possible.

### **C. GEMS (Girls Everywhere Meeting the Saviour) and Cadets**

1. Each GEMS and Cadets regular meeting should be supervised by at least one Volunteer provided that another Volunteer monitors the facility and observes all activities during the ministry.
2. Enrollment records must be kept for all Minors/Vulnerable Persons in attendance and available at all times. These records include: contact information, emergency information, names of the persons to whom the Minor/Vulnerable Person may be released, as well as any special parental instructions (e.g. diet, transportation permissions, etc.).
3. At least 2 GEMS or Cadet Volunteers must be at the ministry location 10 minutes prior to the ministry start time and must remain at the location until all Minors/Vulnerable Persons are picked up.
4. Minors/Vulnerable Persons should be picked up within 15 minutes of the end of any activity. If not picked up within 10 minutes, a counselor/leader will telephone the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian to ensure someone is coming to pick up the Minor/Vulnerable Person. If a Parent/Legal Guardian cannot be reached after three attempts and 30 minutes after the end of the activity, a Volunteer must drive the Minor/Vulnerable Person home and deliver them to the care of a Parent/Legal Guardian as per the stipulations of the transportation policy if possible. An incident/occurrence report must be completed.
5. GEMS and Cadets activities planned away from the Church facility/property, out of town, or overnight should be supervised by at least two Volunteers. The ratio ought to be 1 Volunteer to every 15 Minors.
6. Volunteers or Staff transporting a Minor/Vulnerable Person for purposes of these ministries must have Parental/Legal Guardian permission to do so and must meet the stipulations of the Transportation Policy, except in the event of a situation as described in section 4 above.
7. Each Volunteer, GEMS or Cadets participant has the right to refuse any displays of affection and their decision will be respected. While the appropriate displays of affection between Volunteers, GEMS or Cadets participants are often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another, such displays can be misinterpreted. For that reason, displays of affections should be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, a handclasp, or a light touch to the forearm and only when consented to by the other person.
8. At the end of any ministry activity:

- a) Volunteers/Staff may only release a Minor/Vulnerable Person into the care of the designated Parent(s)/Legal Guardian or a person designated by the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian.
  - b) The Minors/Vulnerable Persons cannot leave the Church building or sponsored activity unless accompanied by the Parent(s)/Legal Guardians or a person designated by the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian.
  - c) Parents/Legal Guardian(s) must come inside to pick up their Minors/Vulnerable Persons.
  - d) When applicable, Minors/Vulnerable Persons must wait inside the Church building to be picked up.
9. If a Minor/Vulnerable Person needs medical attention, the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian should be notified immediately. If, after making immediate efforts, the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian cannot be located immediately, they must be notified as soon as possible.

#### **D. TEEN CLUB AND IMPACT**

- 1. Each Youth Ministry activity should be supervised by at least one Volunteer provided that another Volunteer/Staff monitors the facility and observes all activities during the ministry.
- 2. Volunteers must contact a parent before a planned one-to-one visit with a Minor/Vulnerable Person.
- 3. Youth Ministry activities planned away from the Church facility/property, out of town, or overnight should be supervised by at least two Volunteers/Staff. The Volunteer/Minor ratio in these ministries is 1 volunteer per 15 Minors.
- 4. Volunteers or Staff transporting a Minor/Vulnerable Person for purposes of this ministry must have Parental/Legal Guardian permission to do so and must meet the stipulations of the Transportation Policy.
- 5. Enrollment records must be kept for all Minors/Vulnerable Persons in attendance and available at all times. These records include in part: contact information, emergency information, names of the persons to whom the Minor/Vulnerable Person may be released, as well as any special parental instructions (e.g. diet, transportation permissions, etc.).
- 6. Each Volunteer/Staff and Minor/Vulnerable Person has the right to refuse any displays of affection and their decision will be respected. While the appropriate displays of affection between Minors/Vulnerable Persons and their leaders are often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another, such displays can be misinterpreted. For that reason, displays of affections should be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, a handclasp, or a light touch to the forearm and only when consented to by the other person.

7. Participants should be picked up within 15 minutes of the end of any activity. If not picked up within 10 minutes, a Volunteer/leader will telephone the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian to ensure someone is coming to pick up the participant. On the first such occurrence, a letter with appropriate information will be sent to the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s).
8. If a Minor/Vulnerable Person needs significant medical attention, the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian should be notified immediately. If, after making immediate efforts, the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian cannot be located immediately, they must be notified as soon as possible.

#### **E. COFFEE BREAK/STORY HOUR AND OTHER MINISTRIES INVOLVING MINORS/VULNERABLE PERSONS**

1. Each activity must be supervised by at least one Volunteer provided that another Volunteer monitors the facility and observes all activities during the ministry. If the minimum number of volunteers is not met, the program is to be cancelled.
2. Volunteers or Helpers may not remove a Minor/Vulnerable Person from the ministry area without Parental/Legal Guardian permission or in the case of imminent danger to the Minor/Vulnerable Person and/or the Volunteer or Helper.
3. Activities planned away from the Church facility/property should be supervised by at least two Volunteers.
4. The Volunteer/Minor ratio for Minors under the age of 18 months is a minimum of 1 Volunteer for the first 5 Minors, after which Volunteers and Helpers are added as necessary.
5. The Volunteer/Minor ratio for Minors aged 18 months to 30 months is a minimum of 1 Volunteer for the first 8 Minors, after which Volunteers and Helpers are added as necessary.
6. Enrollment records must be kept for all Minors/Vulnerable Persons in attendance and available at all times. These records include: contact information, emergency information, names of the persons to whom the Minor/Vulnerable Person may be released, as well as any special parental instructions (e.g. diet, transportation permissions, etc.).
7. Volunteers or Staff transporting a Minor/Vulnerable Person for purposes of this ministry must have Parental/Legal Guardian permission to do so and meet the stipulations of the Transportation Policy.
8. At the end of any ministry activity, Volunteers/Staff may only release a Minor/Vulnerable Person into the care of the designated Parent/Legal Guardian or a person designated by the Parent/Legal Guardian.
9. If a Minor/Vulnerable Person needs significant medical attention, the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian should be notified immediately. If, after making immediate efforts, the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian cannot be located immediately, they must be notified as soon as possible.

10. Ordinarily, ministry activities take place in the Church building with all the appropriate Safe Church Policies enforced. However, in the event that a ministry activity takes place in a home, it is the homeowner's responsibility to ensure that adequate supervision is provided for any Minors/Vulnerable Persons on the premises with the knowledge and consent of a parent/legal guardian.
11. There may be other ministries that gather in the church or are otherwise affiliated with the Community Christian Reformed Church who have their own policy (example: Epic & Onside). Those ministries are to adhere to their own policy and ensure that their policy does not conflict with this Abuse Prevention Policy.

## **F. FRIENDSHIP MINISTRY (currently inactive)**

### **Introduction**

Friendship Ministries was created to encourage Friends – Adults and Minors with cognitive/developmental disabilities – to draw closer to God. The success of the ministry depends on numerous dedicated Volunteers who help Friends to develop fuller understandings of God's love and grace.

The design of the program places people in one-to-one interpersonal relationships. Unfortunately, it is in the context of close interpersonal relationships that persons with cognitive/developmental disabilities are often abused. Because of the potential risk of abuse in one-to-one relationships, the following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk of abuse so that meetings and social events will be enjoyable and safe for everyone.

### **General Guidelines for Friendship:**

#### **1. Group Meetings**

- a) If a Friend and Volunteer meet alone in a classroom, keep the classroom room door open.
- b) If possible, have pairs of Volunteers/Friends meet in adjacent rooms.
- c) If the meeting room is large enough, more than one Volunteer/Friend pair could meet at the same time.
- d) A Volunteer should be assigned to monitor the rooms where Volunteer/Friend pairs are meeting.
- e) If the classroom doors need to remain closed, each door should have a window with an unobstructed view of the room.

## **2. Washroom Guidelines**

- a) If necessary, Friends should be assisted by someone of the same gender in such a manner as to ensure their privacy and safety. This may require more than one Volunteer.
- b) When Friends routinely need assistance or need assistance with medical devices, caregivers should provide this assistance. Plans for assisting the Friend should be made before attending the ministry.

## **3. Physical and Verbal Contact**

- a) Physical affection initiated by a Volunteer should be limited to side-to-side hugs, pats on the back or forearm, touching the back of the hand and gently squeezing the hand.
- b) Both the Friend and the Volunteer can say "no" to physical affection and refrain from displays of affection. While the appropriate displays of affection between Friends and Volunteers are often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another, such displays can be misinterpreted. For that reason, displays of affections should be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, a handclasp, or a light touch to the forearm and only when consented to by the other person. If a Friend is unable to verbalize "no", notice carefully their body language and facial expression that may indicate discomfort with physical affection.
- c) It is not appropriate to make lewd or suggestive comments to Friends, or tell dirty or off-colour jokes. Details or discussions about one's intimate life should not come up in a Friendship meeting.

## **4. Corrective Action**

Consequences or corrections to attitude and/or behaviors are sometimes necessary in a Friendship meeting. If a Volunteer thinks a correction or consequence is needed, these guidelines may help. They are not intended to be progressive steps of correction.

- a) Give a verbal reminder to follow the rules, if appropriate
- b) Involve another Volunteer, Guardian or Caregiver
- c) Ask the Friend to leave the room for a few minutes and take a time-out
- d) End the meeting
- e) Ask the Friend not to come to the program for a period of time until an agreement can be reached about acceptable behaviour

- f) If a situation arises away from the Friendship program, stay in a public setting because moving to a private or isolated setting may increase vulnerability for the Volunteer and the Friend. Use a cell phone to seek assistance or to relay what is happening to someone else
- g) If problems continue beyond minor correction, do not hesitate to share them with a Parent, Guardian, or Caregiver and apprise them of how the situation has been handled.

Physical intervention including slapping, hitting, kicking, punching is never appropriate. Physical restraint may be necessary only to prevent harm or injury to the Friend, mentor, or other persons nearby. Lashing out in anger or verbal abuse will likely cause more harm to the other person and to the relationship.

## **5. Supervision Policies**

- a) A Volunteer ratio for the Friendship Ministry is 1 Volunteer to 3 Friends.
- b) A Volunteer/Friend ratio for off-site activities is 1:1, not to exceed 1:3.

Before and after Friendship, Volunteers and Guardians/Caregivers may be included in the ratio if they are supervising the Friends.

## **6. Volunteer Procedures**

- a) All Volunteers are required to complete and sign-off on the Volunteer registration form.
- b) All Volunteers and Staff who work on a regular basis with Friends shall complete a Police Vulnerable Sector Check to be renewed every 5 years or unless they switch involvement in ministries prior to the 5-year mark.
- c) All Staff and Volunteers must agree to comply with the Church's Abuse Prevention policy and, if non-compliant, the individual will be required to relinquish his/her responsibility in the ministry.
- d) Anyone with a history of allegations or convictions of abuse/neglect of Friends or other Vulnerable Persons shall be prohibited from leadership and any involvement in ministries in which this person could pose a risk.
- e) The Church reserves the right to deny any Volunteer for any reason.
- f) All information obtained will be held in the strictest confidence and secured with limited access. Access is restricted to a pastor as delegated by Council, Chair of Safe Church Team and Office Administrator or as otherwise required by law.

## **G. PASTORAL AND DIACONAL VISITATION POLICY**

1. Staff and office bearers should exercise good judgment when visiting alone with parishioners of the opposite gender in the privacy of their own homes. It is wise to visit in pairs and/or use public places such as restaurants. If the parishioner and elder/deacon are of opposite genders, they must each agree to the visits.
2. Each Staff member, Office Bearer and Member of the congregation has the right to refuse any displays of affection and their decision will be respected. While the appropriate display of affection between staff members, office bearers and members of the congregation are often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another, such displays can be misinterpreted. For that reason, displays of affections should be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, a handclasp, or a light touch to the forearm and only when consented to by the other person.
3. Pastors' offices should be equipped with windows in the doors and blinds that can and must be opened during pastoral visits.
4. The elders, deacons and pastors must report all pastoral visits to their respective coordinating bodies.

## **H. COMMUNITY CARE GROUPS**

Those hosting church activities are asked to be aware of Safe Church Policies and take care to make sure that everyone is safe.

## **I. NEW MINISTRIES**

Any new Church ministry that is developed to benefit Minors or Vulnerable Persons will be subject to this policy.

## **J. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **Introduction**

Social media and a general online presence now form key pieces of a church's connection and communication with parishioners. While social media presents new ministry opportunities, this area can also be an avenue for abuse and inappropriate boundaries. The following guidelines are in place to promote healthy boundaries for Staff, Volunteers, and Minors, and to ensure that the overall Abuse Prevention Policy of Community Christian Reformed Church is applied to the use of social media in connection to the ministry of the Church.

This policy applies to the official social media presence of Community Christian Reformed Church, as well as the social media presence of Staff and Volunteers as related to the ministries of Community Christian Reformed Church.



Due to the rapidly changing nature of social media use, this policy will be reviewed and updated every year from the date of implementation.

**Guidelines for Social Media Use:**

1. General Conduct and Management of Social Media Accounts
  - a) All official social media accounts of Community Christian Reformed Church will have 2 or more administrators consisting of Staff and authorized Volunteers only. Administrator authorization is given by both the Safe Church Team and Communications Team. When an authorized administrator steps down or is removed from that position, all passwords will be changed immediately for all social media accounts.
  - b) Passwords, passphrases and recovery questions for all official social media accounts will be changed on an annual basis and will not be shared with anyone except authorized administrators.
  - c) Any inappropriate material posted or inappropriate exchange or comments to official social media accounts are to be reported immediately to the Safe Church Team. Whenever possible, screen shots of the exchange(s) taken are to accompany the Incident Report Form prior to deleting them, with the exception of taking screen shots of photos of private areas.
2. Online Engagement with Minors
  - a) Staff and Volunteers will use prudent judgment in contacting youth through social media. Suggested guideline: Normally do not text, chat, e-mail back and forth with youth when you would not normally call their home phone line (before 8 AM or after 9 PM). If a youth texts you after hours and it is not urgent, wait until morning to reply.
  - b) If Staff and Volunteers use their personal social media to communicate with youth, they must apply privacy settings that are consistent with all youth, across all platforms. Staff and Volunteers will not actively friend or add youth to their personal accounts rather they will respond to friend or add requests as initiated by the youth themselves.
  - c) Parents should be made aware of how Staff and Volunteers utilize social network platforms.
  - d) When possible, communication should be sent to entire groups, in public areas.

- e) When ongoing pastoral communication is private, Staff and Volunteers will disclose the person's name and the frequency of contact with the parents and the ministry leader. Video-chatting one-on-one is strongly discouraged. Transcripts and records of online messaging with minors should be saved and archived.

### 3. Taking and Posting of Photographs and Videos Online

- a) Images where a person under 18 years of age is easily identifiable will not be posted without the written permission of a parent or guardian. This permission may be obtained on an annual basis or for a one-off ministry event via consent forms for ministry and program enrollment.
- b) Pictures and videos taken at large group events are considered safe to post, provided that opportunity is given to individuals to indicate they do not wish to have their own or their child's image posted. Notification of this opportunity may be included in event announcements and/or periodic publication of these guidelines in the bulletin or website.
- c) Reasonable steps will be taken to honour requests by individuals who do not wish to have their own or their child's image posted. It is expected that these same individuals will notify Staff or Volunteers immediately should a photograph or video need to be taken down or modified.

## IV. OCCURRENCE/INCIDENT/ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURES

### A. General Policies

- 1. Evidence or suspicion of abuse by anyone in a leadership position or of a Minor or Vulnerable Person must be reported and handled with care. The purposes of reporting are to stop the abuse, provide assistance for the victim, hold perpetrators accountable and begin the process of correction and redemption.
- 2. All efforts to respect confidentiality will be made. Unless required to do so by law or as necessary in the course of an investigation, the name of a victim will not be disclosed without her or his consent. We will not assume an alleged abuser is guilty before conviction or admission. Every attempt will be made to protect and maintain the safety of the person alleging abuse and the alleged abuser.
- 3. Where there is evidence or disclosure of abuse of a Minor in which it is believed that the Minor is still in danger of continued abuse, the Waterloo Regional Police Service must be notified immediately at 519-570-9777. The responding Police Officer will notify Family & Children's Services. Where there is evidence or disclosure of abuse of a Minor in which it is believed that the Minor is safe, the Family & Children's Services is to be notified at 519-576-0540.

4. Abuse of a person who is not/no longer a Minor will be reported to outside authorities only with the consent of the victim, even if the abuse occurred while the person was a Minor. In situations where the victim is a Vulnerable Person, it may be necessary to notify the Waterloo Regional Police Service.
5. All suspicion or disclosure of abuse must also be brought to the attention of the Safe Church Team and a pastor as delegated by Council.
6. Community CRC recognizes and respects the right of a victim to pursue legal remedies through civil courts, independent of any action taken within the processes established by the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). Spiritual support, pastoral help, and other forms of appropriate engagement by the church will be offered, whether or not legal action is taken in a particular case.

## **B. Protocol for Reporting Abuse**

1. Signs and symptoms of abuse or reports of abuse from a Minor need to be taken seriously. Any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect a Minor is or may be in need of protection must report the suspicion and information to the Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region (519-576-0540). In a case where it is suspected the Minor is still in danger of continued abuse, report the suspicion and information to the Waterloo Regional Police Service (519-570-9777).
2. Signs and symptoms of abuse or reports of abuse from a Vulnerable Person need to be taken seriously. Any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect a Vulnerable Person is or may be in need of protection must report the suspicion and information to the Waterloo Regional Police Service (519-570-9777).
3. An investigation of said symptoms and reports must be conducted only by people trained to investigate abuse complaints. In the case of a Minor, the trained investigators are representatives of local Police departments and the Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region.
4. The person reporting should use the Occurrence/Incident Report and keep these guidelines in mind when completing the report. First, do not ask the person if he/she is/was abused. It is appropriate, however, to ask how the sign or symptom appeared. Second, do not interview the person in great detail about the signs or symptoms. These guidelines are in place because only trained investigators from the Police or Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region are to make the determination as to whether or not abuse has taken place. Finally, it should be remembered that there is no liability for reporting suspected abuse of adults.
5. Anyone who has evidence or disclosure of abuse must also inform a member of the Safe Church Team and a pastor as delegated by Council. If the pastor, as delegated by Council, is informed of an abuse situation, he/she will inform the Safe Church Team.
6. In all cases of abuse, whether of a Minor or a Vulnerable Person, and in addition to the civilian legal protocols that are followed (i.e., those initiated by protocols 1 – 3, above), the Safe Church

Team will, in congruence with the established protocols for the Christian Reformed Church in North America and in consultation with the victim, as appropriate, determine what course of action will be taken, including:

- a) a recommendation that Council request that the Safe Church Team of Classis establish a review panel, to engage in fact-finding and provide advice to the Council;
  - b) a referral to the appropriate pastoral team member as a matter requiring pastoral counselling
7. The Safe Church Team operates in an advisory capacity to the designated authorities in the Church. Any pastoral and/or disciplinary action will be taken by the designated authorities according to the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
8. If the situation involves a Church leader, matters such as notification, temporary suspension from office, and disciplinary measures will be handled in accordance with the process adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Depending on the circumstances and severity of the incident, suspension from a position, with pay for paid staff, may be temporary to allow time for further investigation, and will be done without prejudice as to the final determination. Suspension may include limitations or conditions on contact with children or other church members, pending the conclusion of a more formal hearing process. Disciplinary measures will be in accordance with the established policies of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America including, when appropriate, a permanent ban on holding pastoral office in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

### C. Occurrence/Incident/Abuse Response Guide

<i>Type of Incident</i>	<i>Care to be provided</i>	<i>Required Reporting</i>	<i>Required Follow Up</i>
Physical Injury (i.e. trip, fall, scrape, cut, etc.)	Provide first aid	Complete Occurrence/Incident Report Submit report to Safe Church Team Inform Parent/Legal Guardian of injury and care provided	
Critical Injury (i.e. broken bone, excessive bleeding etc.)	Provide first aid Call required emergency service Accompany individual to emergency care facility if warranted	Complete Occurrence/Incident report Submit report to Safe Church Team Inform Parent/Legal Guardian of injury and care provided	Inform Lead Volunteer of injury and care/treatment provided Lead Volunteer to inform church staff or designated person as soon as possible, of incident and care provided
Behavioural incident/Discipline	Take appropriate immediate measures, such as stopping physical harm and/or separating the offender(s) from the group	Complete Occurrence/Incident report Submit report to Safe Church Team Inform Parent/Legal Guardian of the events and any applicable discipline measures that were required	Inform Lead Volunteer of the events and any applicable discipline measures that were required
Auto Collision	Provide first aid Call required emergency service Accompany individual to emergency care facility if warranted Report to insurer	Report the Collision to the Waterloo Regional Police Service, and obtain the collision report, including the officer's rank, name, badge number and occurrence number. Include this collision report with a	Inform Lead Volunteer of injury and care/treatment provided Lead Volunteer to inform church staff or designated person, as soon as possible, of accident and care provided

		completed Occurrence/Incident report and submit it to the Safe Church Team. Inform Parent/Legal Guardian of the event	
<i>Type of Incident</i>	<i>Care to be provided</i>	<i>Required Reporting</i>	<i>Required Follow Up</i>
Medical Incident (i.e. Anaphylactic, allergic, seizure, etc.)	Provide first aid Call required emergency service Accompany individual to emergency care facility if warranted	Complete Occurrence/Incident report Submit report to Safe Church Team Inform Parent/Legal Guardian of the event	Inform Lead Volunteer of injury and care/treatment provided
Harassment	Report to Safe Church Team and a pastor as delegated by Council who will determine the need to notify civil authorities, if applicable	Complete Occurrence/Incident report Submit report to Safe Church Team Inform Parent/Legal Guardian of the event (if applicable)	Spiritual support, pastoral help, and other forms of appropriate engagement by the church will be offered to all involved If the incident involves a Church leader disciplinary measures mandated by Synod <b>may</b> be followed in addition to any civil legal remedies
Abuse of a Minor	Report to Family and Children's Services of Waterloo when it is believed the Minor is safe, otherwise report to the Waterloo Regional Police Service when it is suspected the Minor is unsafe.	Complete Occurrence/Incident report. If the Waterloo Regional Police Service has been notified, include the Occurrence Number and Investigating Officer's name, rank, and badge number to that report.	Spiritual support, pastoral help, and other forms of appropriate engagement by the church will be offered to all involved If the incident involves a Church leader disciplinary measures mandated by Synod

	Report to Safe Church Team and a pastor as delegated by Council	Submit report to Safe Church Team Inform Parent/Legal Guardian of the event	will be followed in addition to any civil legal remedies
<i>Type of Incident</i>	<i>Care to be provided</i>	<i>Required Reporting</i>	<i>Required Follow Up</i>
Abuse of a Vulnerable Person	Report to Safe Church Team and a pastor as delegated by Council who will determine the need to notify civil authorities	Complete Occurrence/Incident report Submit report to Safe Church Team Inform Parent/Legal Guardian of the event	Spiritual support, pastoral help, and other forms of appropriate engagement by the church will be offered to all involved If the incident involves a Church leader disciplinary measures mandated by Synod will be followed in addition to any civil legal remedies
Reported self-harm (no imminent threat)	Report to Safe Church team and a pastor as delegated by council. In the case of a Minor, notify Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s)	Complete Occurrence/Incident Report. Submit report to Safe Church Team. Inform Parent/Legal Guardian of the event in the case of a Minor.	Spiritual support, pastoral help, and other forms of appropriate engagement by the church will be offered to all involved. If the Church leader disciplinary measures mandated by Synod will be followed in addition to any civil legal remedies.
Reported imminent self-harm and suicidal thoughts	Report immediately to the Waterloo Regional Police Service, then to the Safe Church team, and a pastor as delegated by council. In the case of a Minor, notify	Complete Occurrence/Incident Report and include the Occurrence number and the Investigating Officer's name, rank, and badge number from the Waterloo Regional Police Service.	Spiritual support, pastoral help, and other forms of appropriate engagement by the church will be offered to all involved. If the Church leader disciplinary measures

	the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s)	Submit report to Safe Church Team. Inform Parent/Legal Guardian of the event in the case of a Minor.	mandated by Synod will be followed in addition to any civil legal remedies
<i>Type of Incident</i>	<i>Care to be provided</i>	<i>Required Reporting</i>	<i>Required Follow Up</i>
Suspected Neglect of a Minor/Vulnerable Person	A report must be made to the Police and/or Family & Children's Services if there is a suspicion of child neglect. Report to Safe Church team and a pastor as delegated by council. In consultation with a pastor, notify Parent(s)/Legal Guardian (they may be suspected of causing the neglect).	Complete Occurrence/Incident report Submit report to Safe Church Team In consultation with a pastor, inform Parent/Legal Guardian of the event (they may be suspected of causing the neglect).	Spiritual support, pastoral help, and other forms of appropriate engagement by the church will be offered to all involved If the incident involves a Church leader disciplinary measures mandated by Synod will be followed in addition to any civil legal remedies



Date of Report \_\_\_\_\_

## Occurrence/Incident Report

For definitions, reporting time frames and procedures see the Community Christian Reformed Church Abuse Prevention Policy.

**Date, time, and location of occurrence/incident:**

**Name of Minor(s)/Vulnerable Person(s)/Participant(s):**

**Name(s) of Volunteer(s) involved:**

**Please select one of the following types of incidents:**

- ☐ Physical injury (trip, fall, scrape, cut, etc.)
- ☐ Critical Injury (broken bone, excessive bleeding etc.)
- ☐ Behavioral Incident/discipline of Vulnerable Person
- ☐ Physical Neglect
- ☐ Sexual Abuse
- ☐ Emotional Abuse
- ☐ Spiritual Abuse
- ☐ Verbal Abuse
- ☐ Financial Abuse
- ☐ Auto Accident
- ☐ Mental Health Issue
- ☐ Other - Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**Events that preceded the occurrence:**

**Describe the occurrence:**

**Action taken following the occurrence:**

**What is the current status/condition of those involved?**

**Notifications:**

**Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region contacted?**

Yes ☐ No ☐ Date and time of contact(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of contact(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please select which emergency service(s) were contacted.**

☐ Emergency Medical Services ☐ Fire Department ☐ Police Services ☐ N/A

**If police services were called, please indicate the following information.**

Occurrence # \_\_\_\_\_

Investigating Officer's name, rank, and badge # \_\_\_\_\_

**Family/Guardian contacted?**

Yes ☐ No ☐ Date and time of contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of contact: \_\_\_\_\_

**Other notifications? (i.e. doctor, poison control)**

Yes ☐ No ☐ Date and time of contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and title of contact: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional action required by volunteers or church staff?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

**If yes, what action is required?**

**Signatures:**

Participant (or Guardian/Parent): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Safe Church Committee Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_