Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church Safe Church Policy

2025

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1. Introduction

A. Vision:

As a community of Christ-followers, we seek to be a place where each person can experience the love, compassion, healing, and forgiveness that God pours out on us in Jesus Christ. This means being a congregation where all can worship and grow in their faith free from abuse, and where those who have been victimized by abuse can receive support in their journey toward healing. In instituting this policy, we commit to protecting and supporting the value and dignity of each person, especially the most vulnerable among us, and to being a community that makes every effort to prevent abuse in our midst.

B. Purpose of this Policy:

1. To educate staff, leaders, and volunteers about abuse, the dynamics of power, and especially the responsibility required by people in positions of power.
2. To ensure that clergy, elders, deacons, staff members, and volunteer leaders are following appropriate boundaries and have appropriate structures of accountability and support.
3. To reflect the high value that Jesus places on those who are vulnerable. As Christ's church, we reflect Christ by ensuring that honour and dignity are shown to every person created in God's image.
4. To equip the church leadership and congregation with clear guidelines for how to respond effectively with justice and compassion to situations of abuse.
5. To practice the diligence required as the church and also to abide by the laws of our state or province, and country.
6. To satisfy requirements from insurance companies and to limit the risk of abuse or harm.

C. Policy Review and Revision

This policy is to be reviewed annually.

2. Definitions:

A. Misconduct

As a church, we are committed to holding our leaders and volunteers to the highest standard of behaviour. Therefore, the following definitions of misconduct[1] go beyond legal definitions of abuse to include any form of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, misuse of spiritual authority, sexually inappropriate behaviour, neglect, and abuse of office. These are behaviours that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers, and they taint the office or role held by the offender (See Appendix C: CRCNA Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders).

1. **Physical Misconduct is:**
    a. Threatened harm or non-accidental injury inflicted on a minor or vulnerable adult, or
    b. Offensive or harmful contact with an adult;

    Physical misconduct is sometimes a single event, but more often a chronic pattern of interacting with a minor or an adult.

2. **Sexual Misconduct is:**
    a. Exploiting or grooming (preparing) a minor or an adult – regardless of consent or circumstances – for the purpose of sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy with the result of either sexual gratification or power and control over the minor and/or adult;
    b. Unwelcome touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between co-workers, co-volunteers, or
    c. Sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between a supervisor and a subordinate who serve together in a church program or church ministry.

3. **Emotional Misconduct is:**
    a. A pattern of behaviour in which a person insults, humiliates, and manipulates an individual or group in order to establish or maintain control over them. Emotional misconduct includes:
        i. Threatening a person's safety, property, or loved ones;
        ii. Isolating a person from family, friends, and acquaintances;
        iii. Demeaning, bullying, belittling, shaming, or humiliating a person;
        iv. Delivering constant criticism; or
        v. Emotionally blackmailing or harassing a person.

[1] The following definitions are taken from the guidelines approved by CRCNA's Synod 2010 and the COD 2022.

B. Abuse of Power

Abuse of power is misusing power to harm another person, or using power and influence for personal gain at the expense of another person. Power can be used to harm another person intentionally or through ignorance, subtly or overtly, to advance one's own desires without regard for the needs or desires of others in ways that disturb the flourishing of others. At the core of all types of abuse are behaviours related to acquiring, maintaining, and misusing power and control. The same power dynamics show up in all types of abuse, whether it be sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, or spiritual abuse.

C. Position Titles *and Definitions*

Safe Church Team/Abuse Prevention and Response Team: The Safe Church Team, or Abuse Prevention and Response Team, shall have at least 2 people, with one person being an ordained elder of the church, and all individuals having experience or training reflecting competency in one or more of the following:

Abuse of Power, Trauma-informed Ministry, Healthy Boundaries, Circle of Grace program, Domestic Abuse/Intimate Partner Violence, and/or Restorative Practices.[2]

Child*:* Children 0 - 10 years of age.

Youth: Children from 11 to 18 years of age.

Vulnerable Adult: A person over the age of 18 who is unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation because of a mental or physical impairment or advanced age.

Ministry Leader: Any person, paid or volunteer, ordained or unordained, in a position of leadership over an area or aspect of ministry in Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church.

Screened Volunteer: Any volunteer over the age of 18 who or serves in ministry programming involving Youth, Children or Vulnerable Adults, and has completed the background check and application process outlined in this policy.

Hall Monitor: A Ministry Leader or Screened Volunteer specifically tasked with assisting in monitoring premises surrounding classrooms and venues where ministry involving youth, children, and vulnerable adults is occurring.

Helper: A youth who assists Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers, and has completed the application process outlined in this policy.

[2] Training is available through the CRCNA's Safe Church Ministry.

3. General Guidelines and Expectations of Ministry Leaders and Volunteers.

All who serve in the life of the church are called to use their position and power, not in ways that lord it over others or seek to control others, but in ways that are patterned after Christ himself. According to Philippians 2, Christ did not consider equality with God as something to be used to his own advantage, but used his power for the thriving of others. These guidelines are designed to help ministry leaders steward their position and power well and cultivate cultures that resist abuse.

A. All Ministry Leaders shall sign and commit to conducting themselves according to the Code of Conduct (see Appendix C: CRC Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders). The church office will keep a signed copy of the Code of Conduct for each Ministry Leader on file.

B. All Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers are required to conduct and provide a criminal background check. (Appendix D) Background checks will be refreshed every 5 years.

C. All Ministry Leaders, Screened Volunteers, and Helpers must attend a yearly training session on the Safe Church Policy. Training sessions will be held at the beginning of each church program year and thereafter as needed.

D. In addition to a background check and approved application, prospective Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers must attend or be associated with Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church for at least six months before supervising children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Staff that are hired to work with children or youth ministry will not count towards minimum supervision guidelines discussed in section 4 until this six-month period has passed.

E. If a criminal reference check is received with indications of criminal convictions, Jennings Creek CRC Administrator will notify the Safe Church Team. The Safe Church Team, in consultation with the church Council, will review how to proceed before approving the application.

F. All Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers are required to report any suspected abuse of a minor (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect) to the civil authorities. For more guidance, see section 7. Responding to Abuse.

G. All Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers are required to use their access to the church internet and technology belonging to the church (computers, laptops, cell phones, etc.) in ways that are legal, reflect godly conduct, and conform to network etiquette, laws and courtesies. For more details, see section 4-J below.

4. General Guidelines Pertaining To Safe Supervision and Care of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

These guidelines are designed to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults from harm while attending and participating in church-sponsored events.

A. Minimum Supervision Guidelines:

At all church-sponsored functions involving the supervision of children, youth, or vulnerable adults, at least one of the following supervision guidelines will be in place:

1. **Two Ministry Leader/Screened Volunteer Rule*:***

At least two unrelated Ministry Leaders and/or Screened Volunteers will be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

2. **One Ministry Leader/Volunteer With Hall Monitor Rule:**

When only one Ministry Leader or Screened Volunteer can be present to supervise children, youth and vulnerable adults in an enclosed space or classroom during a church-sponsored function, a Hall Monitor will be present with a clear and unobstructed view into the room/area where the supervision is taking place.

B. Leader/Volunteer to Child/Youth Ratios

During scheduled ministry programs, the following leader/volunteer to child/youth ratios will be in place:

- Two *unrelated* Ministry Leaders or Screened Volunteers for every six infants and toddlers in nursery (ages 0–3 yrs)
- Two *unrelated* Ministry Leaders or Screened Volunteers for every ten preschoolers (ages 3 to 5 yrs)
- Two *unrelated* Ministry Leaders or Screened Volunteers for every twenty elementary age children (ages 6 to 12 yrs)
- Two *unrelated* Ministry Leaders or Screened Volunteers for every twenty youth age children (ages 13 to 18 yrs) ***Those supervising Youth should be at least 5 years older than the youth they supervise.***

Groups of children or youth of *mixed gender* should be supervised by at least two *unrelated* Ministry Leaders or Screened Volunteers of *opposite gender.*

Ratios for off-site excursions should be two Ministry Leaders or Screened Volunteers for every half of recommended classroom ratios stated above.

Helpers can count towards the leader/volunteer ratio, so long as there is at least one *adult* Ministry Leader or Screened Volunteer present.

Ministry Leader/Volunteer to Child/Youth Ratio Table				
Age Range	Nursery (0-3 yrs)	Preschool (3 to 5 yrs)	Elementary School (6-12 yrs)	Youth (13 to 18 yrs)
Ministry Leader/ Screened Volunteer*: Child	**2:6**	**2:10**	**2:20**	**2:20**
Off-Site Excursion Ratios	**2:3**	**2:5**	**2:10**	**2:10**
Helpers: Can count towards the ratio if there is at least **one** Ministry Leader Screened Volunteer present. (Leaders must be opposing gender if children/youth are mixed gender)				

*these must be unrelated

Example A: Sunday school (kid connection) has 20 children attending who are over the age of 6. Adequate supervision would require:

A. 2 Ministry Leaders/Screened volunteers in the room,
B. a Ministry Leader/Screened Volunteer with a Helper in the room, or
C. a Ministry Leader in the room, and a Hall Monitor nearby with an unobstructed view of the room.

Example B: Youth group has 22 youth in attendance. Adequate supervision would require:

A. 3 Ministry Leaders/Screened Volunteers (one of which must be at least 5 years older than the oldest Youth present),
B. 1 Ministry Leader in the room (who is at least 5 years older than the oldest Youth present) with two Hall Monitors nearby with an unobstructed view of the room.

Example C (lower age ratio default): 19 children attend a children's ministry event, some of whom are between 3 and 5 years of age, while the rest are mostly 6-12 years of age. Adequate supervision would require adhering to the ratio for the younger children present:

A. **3** Ministry Leaders/Screened volunteers in the room,
B. a Ministry Leader/Screened Volunteer with at least **2** Helpers in the room, or
C. a Ministry Leader in the room, and **2** Hall Monitors nearby with an unobstructed view of the room.

C. Registration, Name Tags, and Check-in System

On Sundays, and during children's ministry events, Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers who are actively serving in these ministries will wear a name tag that identifies them to parents, children and visitors.

Every child or youth attending these ministries will have their presence recorded in the "check-in" system. Each child and youth activity will have unique check-in procedures, registration forms, and name-tag policies, described below in section 5. Program-specific Guidelines for Abuse Prevention of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

D. One-to-One Meetings:

Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers are encouraged to only meet with Children and Youth during regular ministry events or gatherings.

Should there be a time when a Ministry Leader or Screened Volunteer seeks to meet one-to-one with a child, youth or vulnerable adult outside a church-sponsored event or scheduled ministry program, the following protocols should be observed:

1. The meeting should take place in a public place (i.e. restaurant, coffee shop, bookstore, etc.) with the permission and knowledge of the parents of children or youth.
2. The Ministry Leader or Screened Volunteer should first gain approval and notify the director of the ministry or another Ministry Leader.

E. Transportation and Off-Site Excursions:

1. To transport children or youth for any church-sponsored event, individuals must be

21 or older, and must have a current Volunteer Application Form (Appendix D: CHILDREN/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULT WORKER APPLICATION FORM:), a copy of current insurance and driver's license, and a copy of their current automobile insurance policy on file. They also must have a minimum of five (5) years driving experience in good standing, which will be verified by obtaining a driving record.

2. To transport children or youth, the driver is expected to ensure strict adherence to all traffic laws and exercise the utmost caution while driving.
3. Parent/guardian permission will be required for children's participation in off-site activities, and can be acquired by completing the Appendix F: PARTICIPATION & RELEASE FORM.
4. Minimum supervision in vehicles is to be adhered to. Should it be necessary that only a single volunteer transport children or youth, clear documentation of the trip must be acquired, and a Ministry Leader must be informed.

F. High-Risk Events, Overnight Trips and Camps

High Risk Event definition: Any activity involving higher physical risk or supervision risk such as water activities, extreme sports, overnight events, online events, or any event that is irregular of schedule.

Parents and Guardians will be informed ahead of time of any high risk, off-site, or overnight trip that is being planned, and must authorize their child's participation via the forms attached in Appendix F and Appendix G, which they will be provided along with a detailed description of the trip and planning arrangements.

Off-site Ministry Leader/Screened Volunteer to child ratios, as described in section 4.B will be respected for the entire duration of the overnight trips.

Housing/Sleeping Arrangements

Any adult guests who are not Ministry Leaders or Screened Volunteers will have separate sleeping arrangements from the Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult participants. For all off-site overnight trips involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults, the following sleeping arrangements will be followed:

Group Arrangements - Sleeping arrangements for gendered groups in common sleeping areas is preferred.

- All children, youth, and vulnerable adults must sleep in separate quarters from individuals of the opposite gender.
- At least two unrelated Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers will sleep in the same general vicinity as the child, youth, or vulnerable adult participants.

Room Arrangements - Should plans require arrangements where participants are to be assigned to separate rooms, the following guidelines will be followed:

- Hotel/Motel stays will group participants together into assigned wings when possible.
- All children, youth, and vulnerable adults must sleep in separate quarters from individuals of the opposite gender.
- Children/Youth Participants will be assigned to rooms in groups of at least three or four.
- At least 2 unrelated Ministry Leaders or Screened Volunteers will be assigned to each wing.

Billeting and Hosting

Overnight trips may also plan to house children, youth and vulnerable adults into screened billet or host homes, where there are at least two adult hosts. All adult hosts residing in billet or host homes must meet the following criteria:

- Criminal Record Check is completed and on file.
- At least two references from trusted sources are acquired.
- At least two ministry leaders provided signed approval of host-home.

Children, youth and vulnerable adults must be billeted in small groups of the same gender, and should have separate sleeping arrangements from the household members.

G. First Aid and Medications

Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers are encouraged to acquire and update first aid certification. Names of individuals requiring medication will be on file in the office, see Appendix I: MEDICATION AUTHORIZATION FORM.

Medications and Allergies

Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers are not to administer medications without written parent/guardian permission, as provided in Appendix I. If needed, parents or guardians can be contacted should medications be required.

Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers will be notified of participants with severe allergies in the registration forms attached in Appendix F and Appendix G.

First Aid Kits

First aid kits will be kept in the main floor and basement, the expired contents of which will be replaced regularly. An Appendix H: ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT REPORT, will be complete for all accidents and injuries.

Accidents or illnesses must be reported immediately to the child's parent/guardian.

H. Discipline:

The following forms of discipline will not be tolerated:

1. Corporal punishment (spanking, pinching, hitting).
2. Deprivation of basic needs.
3. Locking or confining a child or youth.
4. Deliberately harsh or degrading measures intended to humiliate.

Parents are to be informed whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehaviour develops. An aide or parent should be involved in classrooms where misbehaviour is an ongoing problem.

Whenever possible, leaders should address disruptive behaviour by:

1. redirecting the child/youth to another activity
2. helping the child/youth focus on a more acceptable behaviour
3. explaining the consequences of unacceptable behaviour by defining the correct way to behave as well as the result of the wrong behaviour,
4. taking the child/youth aside if another adult volunteer person is available to assist

Bullying:

All Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers will take action to prevent bullying, teach against it, and assist and support Children and Youth who are being bullied. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.

I. Appropriate Touch

Examples of Appropriate Touch:

- Holding a toddler/preschool child who is crying.
- Holding a child's hand while speaking with them, or walking with them.
- Gently holding a child's shoulder when getting their attention, or comforting them.
- Patting a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm them.

Examples of Inappropriate touch:

- Kissing a child or asking them to kiss you.
- Extended hugging or tickling.
- Holding a child's face.
- Touching a child in any bathing-suit area (except when diaper changing, see section 5.A Nursery Guidelines).
- Having a child sitting on your lap (unless in the case of an infant in nursery).

J. Electronic and Online Communication:

Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers will abide by the following Electronic Communication and Social Media Usage policy in their interactions with youth. Such interactions may only be conducted with youth over the age of 11 who have signed parental consent (see Appendix G).

1. Communication should be limited to daytime hours (8am-11pm).
2. Emails, messages, texts, or phone calls should be short and should usually be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event.
3. Ongoing conversations or lengthy personal communications should not be done through email or text.
4. If a digital communication raises any child protection concerns, they should be brought to the Safe Church Committee as well as the Consistory (Elders).
5. Online communication should not involve video.
6. All Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers are encouraged to demonstrate and model purity, integrity, transparency and accountability with all communications including those noted above.

Guidelines for Social Media Groups:

All ministries involving children, youth or vulnerable adults that wish to use social media groups will follow the guidelines below:

1. The group must be “closed” or “private” so that it is not public information. Privacy settings on photographs should be set to ensure that only members of the group see them.
2. Images of a child or youth cannot be used without written consent of the parents and only in ways that protect the value and dignity of those pictured.
3. The group must be monitored by at least two Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers who have admin rights.
4. Membership to these groups should be exclusively above the age of 13.
5. While direct 1:1 messages should be avoided between youth and volunteer leaders, communication can occur openly through comments and posts on the page.
6. Church events can be posted on the page.
7. Church volunteers will not post or distribute personal identifiable information of any child under the age of eighteen. Personal identifiable information includes but is not limited to: full name, home address, email address, telephone number.

K. Photography and Video

Photography and video of children, youth, or vulnerable adults during ministry events should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Photos and videos of children, youth, or vulnerable adults should only be captured by Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers.
- Photos and videos of children or youth should not be taken without the written consent of a parent or guardian. Consent should be recorded in the Participation and Release Form (Appendix F).
- Sunday worship services at Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church are streamed and broadcasted. Signage informing those in attendance that the service will be captured on camera. Individuals may elect to stay out of the line of the camera's sight, and/or opt out of activities where they are asked to step into view of the camera.

5. Program-specific Guidelines for Abuse Prevention of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

A. Nursery Guidelines

Ministry Leader/Screened Volunteer minimum supervision guidelines will be followed. See section 4.A-B.

Check-in and Registration

1. All children attending nursery must complete an annual registration form Appendix F: Children's Ministry Participation and Release Form, and may only be checked in by their parent or guardian. Registration and check-ins will be completed at the check-in station.
2. Children checking into nursery will be given a name tag, with a matching tag given to the parent/guardian checking them in. Children will not be checked out of nursery by anyone other than the parent or guardian possessing the matching name tag.
3. Only *scheduled* Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers are permitted in the nursery room during nursery hours. Parents and visitors are not to enter the nursery unless requested by a scheduled Ministry Leader or Screened Volunteer.

Diaper Changing

It is always preferable for a child's parent or guardian to carry out diaper changes. Should a parent or guardian not be available, the following guideline will be followed.

Diaper changing may only be done at the diapering station by a scheduled Ministry Leader or Screened Volunteer, and can only be done within view of another Ministry Leader or Screened Volunteer.

The following diaper changing procedure will be followed, and will be posted in the nursery diapering station:

Diaper Changing Procedure:

1. Wash your hands with soap or hand sanitizer.
2. Place the baby on a clean surface.
3. Remove soiled diaper and place in plastic bag.
4. Clean diaper area with wipes and place in plastic bag.
5. Wash your hands.

B. Guidelines For Preschool to Elementary School Aged Children (Truth Seekers, Kid Connection, and Club Kingdom Builders).

Ministry Leader and Screened Volunteer minimum supervision guidelines will be followed. See section 4.A-B.

Check-in and Registration

1. All children attending Truth Seekers, Kid Connection and Club Kingdom Builders must complete an annual registration form Appendix F: Children's Ministry Participation and Release Form, and be checked-in at a check-in station by their parent or guardian.
2. All high-risk or off-site events not described on the original registration form will require an additional registration form to be completed.
3. Check-outs must be done by each child's parent or guardian.
4. Only scheduled Ministry Leaders or Screened Volunteers are permitted in preschool and elementary-aged children's classrooms.

Washroom procedures

Children are not to go to the washroom by themselves. All children needing to use the washroom will be accompanied by a Ministry Leader or Screened Volunteer to the washroom, where a Hall Monitor will also be nearby.

Should a preschool-aged child require assistance in the washroom, and it is not possible for their parent/guardian to be summoned, the Ministry Leader or Screened Volunteer may step into the washroom only while a Hall monitor stands at the doorway with the door cracked open. No adult may be in a closed bathroom stall alone with a child.

C. Guidelines for Youth Ministry and Odyssey

Ministry Leader/Screened Volunteer minimum supervision guidelines will be followed. See section 4.A-B.

Check-in and Registration

1. All Youth attending Odyssey or Youth Ministry must have their parent or guardian fill out an annual registration form: Appendix G: Youth Ministry Participation Release, and Consent Form and be checked-in. Youth may check themselves in without a parent or guardian present. Name tags may be used, but are not required for youth check-ins.
2. All high-risk or off-site events not described on the original registration form will require an additional registration form to be completed by a parent or guardian.
3. Youth must check themselves out before leaving.
4. Only scheduled Ministry Leaders, or Screened Volunteers are permitted in youth classrooms.

6. Guidelines for Pastoral Visitation

Formal pastoral care is care carried out by church representatives - ministers, elders, and deacons on behalf of the church community. Such care is an important ministry of the church, reflecting the love, compassion, and presence of Christ to those who participate in the ministries of the church.

Some forms of pastoral care involve one-on-one visitation, such as with those who are experiencing a time of suffering or grief, with those who are housebound, or with those in the hospital. In these cases, pastoral visits are made to offer spiritual friendship, help, support, and contact with the community of faith. These visits may include practical help, giving information, and/or supporting people as they make difficult decisions.

The following guidelines are provided to ensure safe and healthy practices of pastoral visitation:

1. All pastoral care visitors must have taken the annual Safe Church Policy Training and have signed the Code of Conduct.
2. Pastoral care visits should be conducted in the morning, afternoon, or early evening.
3. If a pastoral care visitor meets alone 1:1 with a congregant, they must report their visit to the consistory.
4. When meeting with a single person in a private location, the visitor should consider whether bringing another ministry leader with them is appropriate. Higher risk situations call for higher accountability.
5. In the interest of confidentiality, all records of pastoral care visits should be kept securely on the church premises. Records should be minimal, including the name of the person visited, the date, and a brief indication of the reason for the visit.
6. When a pastoral care visitor believes the cognition of the person being visited is compromised, a pastoral care card, or a signed notice of visitation in a visitor's book (with the name of the visitor(s), address of church, and contact info) should be left at the residence.
7. All pastoral care visitors will honour the limits of their role in giving care, referring congregants as the situation requires to the services of counsellors, spiritual directors, and others who are better trained and resourced to meet a congregant's needs.
8. The Safe Church Team Leader, or Consistory chair is responsible for overseeing that risk is being assessed, and these pastoral care guidelines are properly adhered to.

7. Responding to Abuse

A. Reporting/Responding to Disclosures and Allegations of Abuse of Minors or Vulnerable Adults

The following steps are to be followed in cases of suspected abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult.

1. All Ministry Leaders and Screened Volunteers who have a reasonable suspicion of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult are responsible to report it to the Children's Aid Society's (CAS) 24-hour hotline 705.743.9751 or 1.800.661.2843. If you are uncertain of whether what you heard or saw constitutes evidence of abuse, call CAS on a confidential basis, as they can help you determine this (see Appendix A: Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse – School Age).

2. If a minor or vulnerable adult is in immediate physical danger (either on church property or off the property) then the police (911) should be notified immediately.

3. A Ministry Leader and Screened Volunteer who suspects abuse should also contact the Safe Church Team leader to fill out an incident report (see Appendix H: ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT REPORT) in order to record their observations and follow-up actions. This documentation will be kept in a confidential, secure location in the church office.

4. Neither the ministry leader/volunteer nor the Safe Church Team leader will try to investigate the abuse concerns. Additionally, they will not seek to notify the alleged offender of the allegations against him or her. These tasks should be left to the police and/or CAS.

5. The Safe Church Team leader should inform the pastor and chair of council of the concerns or allegations of abuse. Note that confidentiality is important in all cases of abuse, but especially when a minor is involved (see Appendix B: Confidentiality).

6. If the abuse happened during a church/ministry-sponsored activity or by a ministry leader/volunteer, in addition to ensuring that the police and/or CPS/CAS have been contacted, the Safe Church Team leader shall notify the church's insurance agent and legal counsel.

7. Together with the pastor and the chair of council, the Safe Church Team leader will develop a plan for responding to the abuse in ways that provide care for the one who has been victimized by abuse and respects the dignity of all involved. The plan will include:

a. Putting the accused ministry leader on administrative leave with or without pay (or suspending a volunteer) for up to 90 days or until the conclusion of the investigation, whichever is sooner.
b. Providing support and care for the minor and their family. This should be done in a way that puts the needs of the minor and his/her family first.
c. Determining who will be the primary contact with the police and/or CAS.
d. Determining how to deal with media inquiries.
e. Contacting the classical Safe Church Coordinator and/or the denominational Safe Church Ministry (safechurchministry@crcna.org) for further counsel.

8. After the accused has been contacted by the authorities and the investigation is underway, the elders will provide an opportunity for the accused to respond to the allegations.

9. If the accused is found guilty or admits guilt, the elders may (1) subject a determined abuser (hereafter abuser) to further suspension, deposition, or termination of employment, or (2) take such other action against the abuser as the circumstances may dictate.

10. Should the determined abuser be an office bearer, the elders will follow the specifications for admonition and discipline in the Church Order, Articles 82-84.

11. Subject to the best interest of the person victimized by abuse, the governing body should notify the congregation in writing if they conclude that a church leader has perpetrated abuse. This notice should protect the identity and confidentiality of any innocent parties, including the person who was victimized by abuse. This written communication should be pastoral, succinct, and objectively factual. Referencing public police reports, charges, or court verdicts may be used.

12. If law enforcement decides not to investigate or charge an adult of the congregation who has been accused of abusing a child or vulnerable adult, an independent investigation should be considered in consultation with legal counsel and Safe Church Ministry.

B. Responding to Allegations of Abuse of Adults:

If an adult (the claimant) reports abuse to a member of a Safe Church Team, the pastor, or a member of the council, the Safe Church team leader, the pastor, and the elders (or a few members of the council) will do the following[3]:

[3] Officebearers who participate in following up on allegations of abuse are required to take abuse of power training or abuse awareness training. Safe Church Ministry (safechurchministry@crcna.org) offers a 60-minute online orientation and training on abuse awareness and response.

1. Assign the claimant an advocate (i.e. Elder or Pastor) who can walk alongside, support, and represent the claimant throughout the reporting and investigation process.

2. Meet with the claimant and/or the advocate to hear the complaint, the impact it has had on the complainant and what the claimant feels needs to happen for them to feel safe at Jennings Creek CRC again. The claimant may present their testimony orally but should also submit their statement in writing or alternatively, an incident report (see Appendix H: ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT REPORT) can be filled out at the meeting and signed by the claimant. The written statement or incident report will be kept in a confidential, secure location in the church office.

3. Suspend the accused from their duties without prejudice until the allegations have been investigated.

4. Based on the information gathered, develop a plan for assessing the veracity of the allegations. Ordinarily, the plan will involve at least one of the following processes:
    a. An informal response led by a designated investigation team who meets with the accused to follow up on the allegations.[4] The conversation shall include:
        i. A report of the event as the claimant experienced it
        ii. An account of how the claimant was impacted by the accused's actions
        iii. An opportunity for the accused to respond to the allegations
        iv. A request that the accused not contact the claimant directly until further notice.
        v. A report of the conversation, detailing the accused's response, that is filed with the incident report.
    b. An advisory panel process exploring the gravity and probability of the allegations of abuse (the classical Safe Church Coordinator or the denominational Safe Church Ministry office is available to help assemble the panel)
    c. An independent investigation into the allegations of abuse (the denominational Safe Church Ministry office will keep a list of reputable investigators). It is strongly recommended that councils make use of a third party investigator when:
        i. The accused is a prominent leader in the community or region such that impartiality is especially elusive;
        ii. The accusations consist of multiple victims or multiple jurisdictions;
        iii. Real or perceived conflicts of interest make impartiality especially elusive.
    d. If the accused is an office bearer, the elders/council will follow the Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader, and include the church visitors in their initial deliberations about the best way forward.

5. Based on the information gathered (and the recommendations of the informal

[4] This option is only appropriate when both the nature of the incident and/or the harm done are relatively minimal. The claimant must agree to this informal response.

investigation team, the advisory panel or the third party investigators), the Safe Church Team leader, claimant's advocate, pastor, and elders (or a few council members) will determine a plan of action for responding to abuse. If the allegations are found credible, the plan will include:

a. A determination of appropriate measures of discipline and opportunities for restoration. This could include suspension of church leadership for a period of time, counselling, abuse of power training, mentoring, oversight and accountability, a written apology to the claimant, or if an office bearer is involved, deposition.
b. A plan for providing ongoing care and accountability for the accused.
c. A plan for providing ongoing care and support for the claimant.
d. Provisions for counselling for the claimant.
e. If the claimant desires, an opportunity to participate in a restorative conversation with members of the council, members of the church, and/or, the accused (Information on Restorative Circle Processes may be found at crcna.org/safechurch/restorative).

6. Throughout the process, every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality and dignity of the claimant and the accused.

7. The classical Safe Church Coordinator and the denomination Safe Church Ministry office are available for support, counsel, and resources throughout the process.

C. Responding to Church Attendees Convicted of Abuse

Should an individual who is known to have been convicted of abuse, or to have engaged in abusive behaviour in the past wish to attend Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church, the Church Council must enter a covenant agreement with the individual .

Appendix A: Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse – School Age

Note: Children rarely exhibit just one sign indicating that they are the victims of abuse. Some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes, or the after-effect of other kinds of trauma in their lives. Conversely, it is possible for abuse to be taking place without the appearance of any symptoms because of the child's ability to mask or deny what is very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, several symptoms appearing at once *may* be an indication of abuse.

- Complaints of pain, irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom; smearing feces on walls or objects
- Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck; failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort; hiding bruises
- Unusual fears: a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences
- Poor concentration in classroom; inability to focus
- Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviours, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing
- Engaging in self-injury, engaging in excessive masturbation or masturbation in a public setting
- Acting enraged and out of control; expressing anger through destruction
- Shyness or fear about physical touch
- Exhibiting sexual behaviour beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in a sexual manner with other children or adults
- Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations; bullying others
- Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions
- Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting
- Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events because of being punished
- Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism
- Hyper-vigilance, excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled
- Preoccupation with fire and setting fires
- Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight

Appendix B: Confidentiality

In order to protect the dignity and well-being of any person who has been victimized by abuse, it is important that their identity is kept confidential. The following measures are implemented to protect the privacy of all parties and to ensure that information about any alleged act is limited to essential persons:

A. Need-to-Know: Those positions in the need-to-know category include the following: chair of council, pastor, the pastoral care elders for the claimant and accused, and the Safe Church Team.

B. Situations of abuse involving minors or vulnerable adults require sensitive care and full transparency with law enforcement investigations. In situations of abuse involving minors or vulnerable adults, there shall be a designated Safe Church Team member, pastor, or elder who consults the CRCNA Safe Church Ministry or a Classis Safe Church Coordinator.

C. The names and information in any abuse allegations shall be limited to the positions listed in paragraph A. Need to Know on this page. Any request to release names of any involved party must be first cleared by the congregation's legal counsel.

D. Discussion by Council or Committees of Council shall be conducted without the actual names of involved persons being used. Instead, descriptions such as "reporter", "alleged offender", and "claimant" shall be used.

E. A liaison between the legal authorities or Child Protective Services/Children's Aid Society and the church council will be appointed.

F. After law enforcement has officially charged someone of a crime or after a legal decision has been made, there will be a communication outlining ways that the church and community may be able to move forward with respect and responsible ways to process the harm within the congregation and community.

G. Information regarding an individual's convictions should only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis. Should the individual be a parent of children attending the church, and will therefore more likely be in closer proximity to other children at events involving children, other families should be considered as those needing-to-know.

Appendix C: CRCNA Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders

Below are the principal sections contained in the CRCNA Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders.

Code of Conduct

"Ministry leaders" are all officebearers (ordained ministers, commissioned pastors, elders, and deacons), CRCNA staff members, and members of the Council of Delegates. Local church councils are also encouraged to regard all church staff (whether or not they are ordained) and volunteers who are providing leadership in the church as ministry leaders. Ministry leaders have been empowered by God and the church to serve the body of Christ for good. They are called to resist all temptations to abuse their power through the misuse of position, authority, or influence.

Abuse of power is often defined as misusing power to harm another person, or using power and influence to take unjust advantage of another person. All abuse by ministry leaders within the church is also spiritual abuse and has spiritual impacts that often heighten the harm caused to individuals and to the family of God. For more on the use and misuse of power, see the report of the Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee (Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 587-615).

As a ministry leader, I will, to the best of my ability, commit to the following:

Relationships

1. I will speak and act, in all my personal and professional relations, in ways that follow the pattern of Christ, who used his power to serve (1 Pet. 5; Mark 10; Phil. 2; 2 Tim. 4:2).
2. I will respect, love, and treat with integrity and truthfulness people of every position, status, race, ethnicity, gender, age, or ability.
3. I will maintain appropriate emotional, physical, and sexual boundaries in all relationships.
4. I will keep all my relationships free from inappropriate, unwanted physical contact, emotional or sexual intimacy, sexual comments, gestures, or jokes.

Safety

1. I will actively promote a welcoming and respectful environment where all persons are treated with dignity and value, and where any form of abuse, bullying, or harassment is neither tolerated nor allowed to take place.
2. I will report known or suspected cases of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect of minors or vulnerable adults to the proper authorities.
3. I will support those who disclose physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in a way that empowers the person who has been victimized to seek out justice and healing.

Pastoral Leadership

1. I will promote truthfulness, transparency, and honesty in all of my work.
2. I will use my power, authority, and position to build up the community of believers and seek first the kingdom of God.
3. I will work within my trained competence, especially in counselling situations, and I will refer individuals to other professionals as appropriate.
4. I will preach, teach, admonish, or discipline in ways that are biblical and Christlike, promoting the shalom and flourishing of those to whom I am ministering (2 Tim. 3:16).
5. I will refrain in my pastoral care and counselling from using references to Scripture or God to manipulate, coerce, or threaten another person.
6. I will disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest.

Confidentiality

1. I will maintain and uphold confidentiality appropriately, which means I will hold in confidence whatever information is not mine to share.
2. I will not use information shared with me in confidence in order to elevate my position or to depreciate that of others.

Finances

1. I will ensure that funds for which I am responsible or which are under my control are used for their intended ministry purposes.
2. In all financial matters, including the acceptance of gifts, I will act with scrupulous honesty, transparency, and appropriate accountability.
3. I will appropriately use and encourage accepted accounting practices and regular reviews and/or audits of ministry funds.

In the event that I misuse my power, either intentionally or unintentionally, in my dealings with others, in word or deed—if I fail "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly" (Mic. 6:8) as outlined in the Scriptures and our confessions—I will acknowledge the harm that has been caused and the trust that has been broken, and I will actively seek restoration with justice, compassion, truth, and grace. I will humbly submit to the insight and accountability of the body that implements this Code of Conduct to ensure that I use any power entrusted to me fully in service to Christ. In the beautiful hope of Christ's transforming work, in all I do, I will seek to use my position, power, and authority prudently and humbly to support and encourage all the members of his body in my care.

Appendix D: CHILDREN/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULT WORKER APPLICATION FORM:

This application is to be completed by all adults in positions of power and/or who could have access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults. An interview may also be conducted.

General Information:

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Do you regularly attend our worship services? Yes / No

If yes, when did you start attending? (Approx. date) _____

Ministry Information:

I have chosen to work in the ministries indicated above because. . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

Briefly describe what it means to you to be a follower of Jesus Christ:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Briefly describe what it means to you to Christ-like in your ministry responsibilities:

_____

_____

_____

_____

References: List 2 references whom you have known for at least 2 years, persons who are not related to you but who have specific knowledge of your character and ability to work with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

1. **Reference #1 Name:** _____

   Email/Phone: _____

   Nature of Association: _____

   Length of Time Known: _____

2. **Reference #2 Name:** _____

   Email/Phone: _____

   Nature of Association: _____

   Length of Time Known: _____

Personal Disclosure Information: *Please circle the appropriate response.*

1. Have you ever been arrested, convicted, or plead guilty to a crime? Yes / No

   If yes, please explain:

   _____

   _____

2. Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the last 12 months? Yes / No

3. Is there any fact, circumstance, or pattern involving your background that would make it inappropriate for you to serve with minors or would compromise the integrity of the church? Yes / No

   If yes, please explain**:**

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Have you ever participated in, or been accused, convicted or pleaded guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct? Yes / No

Church History and Prior Ministry Involvement:

List previous church work involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults *(list church name, city, state, and type of work performed) if any:*

_____

_____

_____

List previous non-church work involving children, youth, or vulnerable (*list each organization name, city, state, and type of work performed) if any:*

_____

_____

_____

Verification and Release:

I recognize that Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church is relying on the accuracy of the information I provide on the Worker Renewal Application form. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that the information I have provided is true and correct.

I voluntarily release Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church and any such person or entity listed on this form, from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications. I further authorize Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church to conduct a criminal background check if such a check is deemed necessary.

I agree to abide by all policies and procedures of Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church and to protect the health and safety of the children, youth or vulnerable adults assigned to my care or supervision at all times.

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

>>>

Appendix E: CHILDREN & YOUTH WORKER RENEWAL FORM

Year: _____

Volunteers and Employees

Name: _____

Daytime Phone/Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code _____

Age: _____ 18 or younger _____ 19-25 _____26 to 45 _____46 or older

Which area(s) of this ministry are you currently involved?

_____

_____

What other areas of this ministry, if any, do you plan to become involved?

_____

Have you at any time ever:

• Been arrested for any reason? _____ Yes _____ No

• Been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest to, any crime? _____ Yes _____ No

• Engaged in, or been accused of, child molestation, exploitation, or abuse? ____ Yes ____ No

Are you aware of:

• Having any traits or tendencies that could pose any threat to children, youth, or others?

___ Yes ____ No

• Any reason why you should not work with children, youth, or others? _____ Yes _____ No

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” please explain in detail:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Verification and Release:

I recognize that Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church is relying on the accuracy of the information I provide on the Worker Renewal Application form. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that the information I have provided is true and correct.

I voluntarily release Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church and any such person or entity listed on this form from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications. I further authorize Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church to conduct a criminal background check if such a check is deemed necessary.

I agree to abide by all policies and procedures of Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church and to protect the health and safety of the children, youth or vulnerable adults assigned to my care or supervision at all times.

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

PLEASE RETURN this form to the

Safe Church Team Leader or Office Administrator

Thank you!

Appendix F: Children's Ministry Participation and Release Form

We (I) give permission for our (my) child(ren), _____, to participate in Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church children's ministry during the school year of 20__/20__.

In addition, we (I) hereby agree to hold harmless the church or any person in its organization for the result of any negligent, wilful, or intentional acts of our (my) child(ren) which requires repair and/or reimbursement of expenses.

Travelling events: Further, authorization, and permission are given to Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church to furnish the above participant with any necessary food, lodging, and transportation to, from, and during any travelling event as described below. While our (my) child is travelling attending an event sponsored by Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church, we (I) understand and accept that Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church will provide supervision. Further, we (I), the parent(s)/guardian(s) of said participant(s), hereby grant permission to the pastor, youth leader, or an adult volunteer acting on the child's behalf to authorize medical treatment.

Further, if it is necessary for our (my) child(ren) to return home due to medical reasons or disciplinary action, we (I) assume all transportation costs.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Email:_____Phone:_____

Child's Health Card No:_____

Child's Physician:_____Physician Phone Number:_____

Emergency Contact (name and phone #):_____

Relationship to Child: _____

Description of Travelling or Special Events: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MEDICAL CONDITIONS/ALLERGIES/MEDICATIONS

Does your Child have any physical, emotional, mental, behavioural concerns or limitations that staff should be aware of? ❑ Yes ❑ No

If yes, please explain: _____

_____

_____

Is your Child bringing any medication with him/her? ❑ Yes* ❑ No

If yes, please list:_____

_____

*Please also complete a MEDICATION AUTHORIZATION FORM

Does your child have any allergies? ❑ Yes ❑ No

If yes, please list:_____

_____

PHOTO & MEDIA RELEASE FORM

I grant permission to Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church to use photos, videos, or other media of my children in the following ways: Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church website, Social Media pages, PowerPoint presentations, and bulletin boards.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to the church office

Appendix G: Youth Ministry Participation Release, and Consent Form:

We (I) give permission for our (my) child(ren), _____, to participate in Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church youth ministry during the school year of 20__/20__.

In addition, we (I) hereby agree to hold harmless the church or any person in its organization for the result of any negligent, wilful, or intentional acts of our (my) child(ren) which requires repair and/or reimbursement of expenses.

Travelling events: Further, authorization, and permission are given to Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church to furnish the above participant with any necessary food, lodging, and transportation to, from, and during any travelling event as described below. While our (my) child is travelling attending an event sponsored by Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church, we (I) understand and accept that Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church will provide supervision. Further, we (I), the parent(s)/guardian(s) of said participant(s), hereby grant permission to the pastor, youth leader, or an adult volunteer acting on the child's behalf to authorize medical treatment.

Further, if it is necessary for our (my) child(ren) to return home due to medical reasons or disciplinary action, we (I) assume all transportation costs.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Email:_____Phone:_____

Child's Health Card No:_____

Child's Physician:_____Physician Phone Number:_____

Emergency Contact (name and phone #):_____

Relationship to Youth: _____

Description of Travelling or Special Events: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MEDICAL CONDITIONS/ALLERGIES/MEDICATIONS

Does your Child have any physical, emotional, mental, behavioural concerns or Limitations that staff should be aware of? ❑ Yes ❑ No

If yes, please explain: _____

_____

_____

Is your Child bringing any medication with him/her? ❑ Yes* ❑ No

If yes, please list:_____

_____

*Please also complete a MEDICATION AUTHORIZATION FORM

Does your child have any allergies? ❑ Yes ❑ No

If yes, please list:_____

_____

PHOTO & MEDIA RELEASE FORM

I grant permission to Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church to use photos, videos, or other media of my children in the following ways: Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church website, Social Media pages, PowerPoint presentations, and bulletin boards.

Communication:

A policy is in effect that communication is to be used solely for the dissemination of information. Please sign below to grant permission for Youth Ministry Personnel (staff and volunteers) to communicate with your Child via telephone, email, social media and text.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to the church office

Appendix H: ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT REPORT

Name(s) of Person(s) Involved: _____

Address of Person(s) Involved: _____

Email/Phone Number: _____

Date and Time of Incident: _____

Name of Parent(s)/Guardian, if applicable: _____

Location: _____

Description of Accident/Incident (i.e., how injured, others involved, type of injury, etc.):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Action Taken:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Contacted Parents? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Parents' Response:_____

_____

_____

Report Submitted by: _____ **Date:** _____

Report Reviewed by Policy Administrator: _____

Please return this form to the church office

Appendix I: MEDICATION AUTHORIZATION FORM

Child's Name: _____

This form is to be completed by Parent/guardian for all scheduled medications. One medication and treatment can be on each form.

Name of Medication: _____
Dosage: _____

Description: □ Tablet/Capsule □ Liquid □ Spray/Inhaler □ Other

Start Date: _____ End Date: _____

Storage Instructions: _____

Administration Instructions: _____
_____

STOP the medication/treatment if: _____
_____

I release Jennings Creek Christian Reformed Church and its employees from any liability, however caused, arising out of administering, or failure to administer, the medication provided herein.

Parent Name: _____
Parent Signature:_____ Date: _____