

**PLAN TO PROTECT POLICY
TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH**

FEBRUARY 2007

\

RE. APRIL 2010

RE. NOVEMBER 2012

RE: OCTOBER 2022

Rational

1. Mission Statement

Our purpose is to equip ministries to carry out their missions, while safeguarding minors and vulnerable adults against abuse, harassment and neglect.

2. Objectives of Protection

Protect the Children – The creation of a safe and secure environment is of utmost importance! Children (and parents) need to know that when they come to church, all kids are well looked after. Also, when children feel safe they are more likely to hear the message being taught.

Protect the Adults – By completing the character checks that we do and developing appropriate guidelines and boundaries, we may be in a better position to ward off false accusations. We are also in a better position to not place a volunteer in a position where they may be conscientiously, or unconscientiously, tempted to sin.

Ministry Support – The completion of the Plan to Protect process enables the ministry to know the level of accessibility to children of each volunteer, which permits them to focus on their calling from God.

Protect the Church – We want to protect the church as a Body. One accusation could hurt the ministry. We need to know that we have done everything to prevent an incident from happening.

Temple Baptist Church is concerned for the safety of the children and families we serve. At the same time, we are concerned about the safety and reputation of the adults and teens who volunteer to make this ministry possible. The policies and procedures outlined in this document are intended to address these concerns, as well as the legal requirements of the Ontario Child and Family Services Act, the local police and child welfare authorities.

3. Scripture

As a church we believe in the importance of ministry to children/youth. Our Lord Jesus Christ set the example and has made us accountable to nurture children in the things of God (Matthew 18:1 – 5, 10). It is our desire to see them come to know the love of God and the support of a caring fellowship of believers.

We also believe that the mobilization of volunteers for ministry is essential to a healthy, growing church. Scripture teaches that God has equipped every believer for ministry in, or through the church, so that the church will grow numerically and spiritually (Ephesians 4: 16).

The following Scriptures must be kept in mind as we seek to achieve these ministry goals.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?” He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into

eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the fire of hell. See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven". Matthew 18:1-10.

4. Definitions

Abuse is any form of physical harm, emotional deprivation, neglect or sexual mistreatment which may result in injury or psychological damage to the child.

PHYSICAL ABUSE - means any physical force or action which results in or may potentially result in a non-accidental injury to a child and which exceeds that which could be considered reasonable discipline.

SEXUAL ABUSE means any sexual exploitation of a child whether consensual or not. It includes touching of a sexual nature and sexual intercourse, and may include any behavior of a sexual nature toward a child. In determining whether behavior is of a sexual nature, one should ask whether a reasonable observer, looking at the behavior in its context, would conclude that it is. Sexual abuse can include sexual remarks or comments, allowing a child to look at or perform pornographic pictures or videos, indecent phone calls, exhibitionism, and allowing children to witness sexual activity.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE means acts or omissions of those responsible for the care of a child which are likely to produce long term and serious emotional disorder. This might include effects such as non-organic failure to thrive, developmental delays, serious anxiety, depression or withdrawal, or serious behavioral disturbance. Much emotional abuse is verbal: belittling, accusing, finding fault, shouting without cause, undermining or putting down. Examples: describing a child as slow, stupid, or incapable, criticizing severely, nagging and withdrawing affection.

CHILD ABUSE is defined as a non-accidental physical or mental injury or mistreatment caused by the acts or omissions of the child's parents or caretakers. Along with the above aspects, child abuse may also include neglect.

NEGLECT means the failure of those responsible for the care of the child to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs of a child to an extent that the child's health, development or safety is endangered. Neglect remains the most common form of child mistreatment in Canada and the U.S.

DISCRIMINATION on the basis of colour, ethnic origin, primary language, religious background, family status, or disability. These discriminations, which are contrary to Human Rights Legislation, ridicule and demean the child.

Volunteer Process

5. Process – Plan to Protect

Step 1 – Fill out an application and send out a reference to 2 people. Please include a reference from a pastoral staff member of your previous church if you are coming from another church.. References may not be someone related to you. You must have known them for a minimum of 3-5 years.

Step 2 – Obtain current Police check online. Please be sure to check the venerable sector check for volunteers. Police checks need to be done for anyone 18 years of age or older. The check will need to be updated every 5 years.

Step 3 – Plan to Protect seminar or watch online. Sign the Plan to Protect agreement.

Step 4 – Hand the application, church protection agreement form and police check to the church office

Step 5 – Interview with a pastor or director

You may be asked to get an updated Police Check at any given time. You will be encouraged to attend any training for child safety. If you are not active in ministry for a period of time, you will be asked to repeat the Plan to Protect program.

The application volunteer process is critical in protecting the church from legal action if a case of child abuse occurs in which a church volunteer is involved. To be immune from liability in child abuse cases, the church must show evidence that it has taken reasonable action in checking out the volunteers it uses in working with children, youth or vulnerable adults/seniors. The courts will look for a process by which a church screens volunteers before engaging them in service. A court can find a church legally liable if the church is less than systematic and therefore negligent in screening volunteers. By having every volunteer complete the Plan to Protect process and keeping these forms on file, and updating them, the church greatly reduces its liability in child abuse cases.

These documents/records should be kept on file permanently.

All persons currently serving must complete the Plan to Protect program.

A minimum six-month waiting period prior to serving is required of individuals wanting to work in children or youth ministry. All prospective ministry personnel will have regularly attended the church for the previous six months.

Individuals that have been accused, or convicted, or are under the suspicion of crime against children and/or youth, or who have been convicted of violent crimes or other relevant crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programs where children or youth participate.

Ministry personnel serving in children's and youth ministry are members or adherents in good standing who support the doctrines, direction and by-laws or constitution of the church.

Child Protection Procedures and Policies

Our church is concerned for the safety of children and families. At the same time we are concerned about the safety and reputation of the adults and teens who volunteer to minister to children. There will be some, however, who may come in with impure motives. We have therefore developed these procedures to make it very difficult, if not impossible, for abuse to occur.

A. Child Security

Every church worker/volunteer should understand the need to maintain child security.

Attendance of children is taken each time a classroom or program is in session. These attendance records will be kept of file permanently. Attendance may also be done by an online program.

An attendance record will be kept of ministry personnel on duty in each classroom or program. This record will be maintained with the record of attendance and kept of file permanently. Staff and volunteers will sign in online if the software is used for their ministry program

Receiving and Releasing of Preschool Aged Children and younger (ages 0 to Grade 4)

All ministry personnel working with the children should wear a name tag or approved clothing (e.g. Day Camp T-shirts) which identifies them to others as staff members or volunteers.

Group leaders for programs for preschool aged children should know the volunteers entering the room by name. Each child should have a registration form filled out or they have done registration online. Children will receive a name badge and will not be able to leave their program until the badge matches the parents tag.

Children (ages 0-3) will also be assigned a pager number. The pager should be given to the parent. The child will not be released to the parent until the pager has been received by the nursery/toddlers/preschool volunteer. Nursery, toddlers and preschool children should not be received into the nursery or classroom until properly signed in.

Children should never be dropped off in a classroom without a volunteer present. The parent must stay until two volunteers are present.

Parents are not to enter the nursery or classroom when picking up their child unless requested to do so. This better enables the child care staff to maintain order and provide the level of security that parents would expect.

B. Washroom Guidelines

We strongly recommend that parents take their children to visit the washroom prior to each class or service. This recommendation could be communicated to parents at the beginning of each new school year, and throughout the year to newcomers.

Preschool and younger

Diaper Changing

Volunteers/staff members are not allowed to change diapers. If a child/baby requires a change, please page the parents/guardians. Changing areas are located in the nursery foyer and the family washroom by the auditorium.

Washroom

If just one child must go to the washroom, the adult leader should escort the child to the washroom and prop the door open. The adult should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him/her back to the classroom. The adult should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.

Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.

If preschool children need assistance in the washroom, an adult may enter the washroom cubicle to assist only under the following guidelines:

1. A second adult must be within visual contact. If this is not possible, inform another adult when taking a child to the washroom and when returning.
2. The outside washroom door must be propped open if only one adult is present. The adult must stand in the open cubicle doorway.
3. Toilets are located in the pre-school rooms to prevent the need for children to leave the room. The child-sized toilets make it possible for children to use the washroom with little assistance.

Grades JK to 4

A child should not be sent to the washroom alone, but should be accompanied by an adult volunteer. The adult volunteer should escort the child to the washroom, and prop the door open to make sure that everything is in order. The volunteer should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom. The volunteer should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.

Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door. Volunteers/staff will have separate washroom facilities assigned in the building and will not share the children's washrooms.

C. Health and Safety Guidelines

Sick Children

A child who is ill and could therefore expose other children and workers to illness, should not be received into the classroom. Some signs of illness are unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat. Any child with a known communicable disease should not be received into a classroom.

Emergencies

Workers are not to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medication, the parent must give it. No medication will be left in the classroom or with a worker or child. In extreme cases (e.g. serious allergies, ventilators, etc.) arrangements should be made with written instructions and the permission of the child's parent. The exception for medication is when the child is in a day program at Temple and medication is required (example: Day Camp); written instruction and permission from the parent will be required.

Parents are responsible for informing workers of their children's allergies, Peanuts and all products containing peanut oils, extracts etc., are not encouraged to be used in the church building or any activity sponsored by the church. We are a peanut sensitive environment.

Procedures should be reviewed semi-annually for fire emergencies. These procedures are to be posted in a visible place in each classroom, stating the planned route of escape to the nearest fire exit.

A first aid kit must be on hand and all workers are to review the location and contents regularly.

The security hall doors should be closed if there is an emergency where children need to be protected. The hall monitor will close the doors and the doors will lock.. Instructions to either stay in the classroom or leave the building will be given by someone in authority.

D. Procedures for Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood

Separate the injured child from the other children. Isolate the area where any blood may have dropped on carpet, toys, etc. Send someone to locate the parents at this time.

Check to ensure that no other children had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury.

Put on the latex gloves (available in the first aid kit) and bandage the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.

Carefully wipe up all blood and bloody bandages and remove to a secure, inaccessible waste removal receptacle.

Remove and properly dispose of latex gloves. Wash carefully with disinfecting soap (available in the first aid kit).

Fill out incident report.

E. Classroom Staffing and Supervision Guidelines

Workers should always conduct themselves in a godly manner, being an example of obedience, respect and honesty to those in their care.

Our desire is to provide a safe, loving classroom where the child feels comfortable and learning can take place. Therefore we recommend the following guidelines:

Two Leaders

There must be a minimum of two unrelated screened volunteers in any room with children, except in the event of an emergency. Volunteers may begin at the age of 12 as a helper. If a helper is younger than 14, it is highly recommended that the babysitting course be completed. All helpers are subject to the same training and recruiting protocols as leaders. Volunteers between the ages of 12-16 must be assigned to work alongside another adult volunteer.

Open Doors

When it is necessary that only one leader be in a closed room with children (e.g. adult leader leaves room to take children to the washroom), the door of that room should remain open. All classes should have windows or window doors (if the door is closed) that will allow ministry supervisors to look in occasionally without interrupting the teaching process. Sleeping view is in full view and hearing distance of others.

Supervisory Staff

The supervisory staff should make regular visits to the classroom to make sure the class is properly staffed and supervised. On a Sunday morning, anyone in the children's hallways will have needed to check in or have a pick up tag that gives them permission to be in the hallway.

Ratios

One volunteer for every 3 babies, one volunteer for every 4-5 toddler/preschool, one volunteer for every 7-10 elementary age.

Visitors in Classrooms

Occasionally a parent or an observer may want to join a class. They will need to check in and clearly identified. If they have not been screened and approved, they are not hold any position of trust with the children.

F. Proper Display of Affection

(Babies to Grade 4)

Physical Touch

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. We recommend the following guidelines as pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love.

Appropriate Touch/Words

Love and caring can be expressed in the following appropriate ways, by:

- Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him/her carefully.
- Holding a preschool child or younger who is crying or needs comfort.
- Taking a child's hand and leading him/her to an activity (if the child gives permission).
- Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs comforting.
- Patting a child on the head, shoulder or back to affirm him/her.
- Praising good behavior
- A firm, gentle voice addressing the "offense"
- Age appropriate "time outs" or withdrawal from activity
- Sitting a child on leg (appropriate only at preschool or younger level)
- Another volunteer/staff member should be able to see your hands at all times.

Inappropriate Touch/Words

You must avoid:

- Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging, and tickling. Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child with toileting as outlined previously).
- Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap. Appropriate sitting on laps may occur with children 5 years and younger; must be in full view of other workers (hands must be seen). Discourage lap sitting with school age children. Rather, encourage them to sit next to you.
- Sitting a child between your legs
- Piggy back rides
- Seductiveness or suggestive contact
- Any touching used to express power or control over a child
- Physical contact of any kind which is done for pleasure or satisfaction of the care provider

- Any words that could cause feelings of condemnation or shame in a child about any aspect of their person...including derisive references to anything physical, emotional, mental or position (or station) in life, such as saying *Your skin is too dark*, or saying *Are you a strong boy? Strong boys don't cry, etc.*
- Care providers alone with a child – especially in a bathroom
- Physical punishment of any kind will not be used

G. Special Events and Overnight Policies

Field Trips and Special Events

Off-campus activities should be approved by the church or departmental leadership. Parents should be notified at least one week prior to the outing. Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in the field trips and special events. All trips and outings should be supervised by a minimum of two approved, unrelated leaders.

The transporting of children is involved in an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car should not exceed the number of seat belts. Children will use the proper car sets. The Volunteer Driver Agreement form should be filled out when using a vehicle not registered by the church. Drivers' will have two adults in the vehicle when driving minors. Drivers will be a minimum of 25 years of age, however exceptions can be considered for safe, mature staff member or ministry leaders.

Overnight Events

Church sponsored overnight activities may be permitted as long as the following guidelines are met:

- All overnight activities must be pre-approved by the church or departmental leadership.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in overnight events.
- All supervising leaders must be approved volunteers.
- Volunteers and ministry staff will never share a bed with a child.
- Perusal of the church insurance policy is needed to be sure that liability coverage includes the off-premise activity.

One on One meeting of a leader and a student

The following information must be discussed with the parent before going on the one on one:

- Two adults (unrelated) for off-premises contact
- Parental approval must be given
- The location and nature of the activity
- Emergency numbers
- Curfew must be set with the parent(s)/guardians and upheld
- Any guidelines given by the parent(s) must be followed

H. Discipline

Consideration must be given to a child's dignity and vulnerability in exercising discipline. Actions and words must be guided by gentleness, respect, and understanding. Discipline will be carried out through instruction, training, and correction. Physical punishment of any kind will not be used.

All workers will follow two person rule when talking with a child privately.

Workers experiencing difficulty and lack of response with an individual child will seek assistance and advice through the program leader.

I. Bullying among Peers

Our children have a right to a caring, respectful and safe church environment where they will encounter the love of God in action. An anti-bullying policy will therefore be in effect at all times and will be clearly communicated and enforced among the children and youth. All ministry personnel 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.

J Discrimination and Harassment

Showing respect and dignity for a child should be shown at all times. Everyone has a right to be shown equal treatment. We will not discriminate based on such factors as race, ancestry, ethnic origin, place of origin, citizenship, sex, age, marital status, disability, primary language, family status, or religious background. Discrimination or harassment with regard to such matters will not be tolerated.

Jokes, cartoons, or any material which ridicules or demeans a child are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

K Social Media

Photographs will only be taken with the parents' consent and posted on social media only for promotional material. Photos of children will not be posted on personal social media pages but may be posted on Temple Baptist Church pages.

All communication will be directed to the parent and may include the child if necessary.

Youth Protection Procedures and Policies

Along with our concern for child protection, our church is committed to providing a place for youth/teens that is safe and welcoming. We are also committed to protecting our ministry workers from false allegations while holding a zero tolerance view of abuse and neglect. The following procedures and policies are in place to help prevent the abuse of this vulnerable group.

Youth Ministry Personnel Standards

A. Lifestyle

- a. For the protection of our youth, ministry personnel are to be committed to pursuing a consistent spiritual life through various spiritual practices including, but not limited to, prayer, scripture reading, silence and solitude, etc.
- b. Ministry personnel are to be role models of integrity. They are to refrain from activities that are illegal or morally questionable.

B. Contacting Opportunities

- a. Ministry personnel are encouraged to meet with youth in small group settings or in teams
- b. One-on-one mentoring must be done in a public setting. Both the ministry lead and the youth's parents must approve of the mentorship relationship and separate transportation must be arranged.

C. Open Door Policy

- a. Ministry Personnel working with youth must not have a one-on-one or small group meeting behind closed doors. Doors must remain open or take place in a room with an unobstructed window in the wall or door.

D. Physical Contact

- a. Appropriate touch constitutes one-arm hugs, shoulder to shoulder hugs or quick touch on the back or shoulder.
- b. Refrain from inappropriate touch such as: chest to chest hugging, extended hugging, overly exuberant affection, lap-sitting, kissing, touching of thighs, knees or inappropriate spots on the body.
- c. Be aware of conduct that could be misinterpreted such as: horseplay, tickling or extended back rubs.

E. Dating

- a. Ministry personnel may not pursue a dating relationship with a youth/teen/student.

F. Harassment & Discrimination

- a. Our church is committed to fostering an environment that is free of harassment and one in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Every member of Temple Baptist Church's community has a right to equal treatment with respect to employment and with respect to the receipt of services and facilities without harassment based on the following prohibited grounds: race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, age, marital status, family status or disability.
- b. A right to freedom from harassment is also applicable where someone is treated unequally because she/he is in a relationship, association or dealing with a person or persons identified by one of the prohibited grounds.
- c. Harassing behaviours are offensive, degrading and illegal. Every member of Temple Baptist Church's community, especially screened personnel, is responsible for creating an environment which is free of harassment. Those found to have engaged in such conduct will be subject to discipline.

Youth Ministry Programming

A. Ministry Personnel Staffing Ratios

- a. Programs for youth must comply with the following staffing ratios:
 - i. Junior High events - 2 ministry personnel for every 16 students
 - ii. Senior High Events - 2 ministry personnel for every 20 students
 - iii. Overnight/Off-Site events - 2 ministry personnel for every 16 students
- b. To comply with insurance standards, there must be at least 2 unrelated ministry personnel at all events.
- c. Overnight events with mixed genders must be accompanied by both male and female ministry personnel.

B. Dealing with Injuries

- a. Ministry lead/Youth Pastor must complete first aid training.
- b. In case of an injury at a youth event, the following steps must be followed:
 - i. The student must not be moved, unless they can stand up and walk on their own. If they can move on their own, lead him or her out of the activity area. One or two witnesses as well as the ministry personnel must remain with the injured youth for assistance, comfort and to confirm information for the incident report.
 - ii. If the injury is severe and time is of the essence:
 1. Immediately call 911 and request ambulance;
 2. Contact the injured youth's parents and make them aware of the situation;
 3. If the decision is made to transport the student to the hospital, the ministry lead should accompany the injured youth to the hospital;
 4. When the parents arrive at the hospital, the ministry leader should
 - a. Introduce themselves and their role in the youth's life
 - b. Explain the situation and the injury being careful not to admit fault on any part
 - c. Return to the event unless there is a good reason to stay,

- d. Have the parents call the youth pastor or ministry lead at the church in the morning if they have any questions or concerns
- 5. If the parents cannot be reached, follow the instructions given on the consent form.
 - iii. Complete an incident report and advise the youth pastor or ministry lead of the incident and determine whether the church insurance company needs to be notified.

C. Retreats and Overnight Events

- a. All retreats and overnight events must be pre-approved by church leadership.
- b. Written communication regarding retreats and overnight events should be available to families no less than one week prior to the event. Include the exact location of the event, emergency phone numbers and a list of the adult ministry personnel attending the event. If there is travel involved or any element of risk in the activity, parents must be asked for further signed authorization.
- c. Youth Ministry Authorization and Medical Consent Forms and Informed Letter of Consent are required for each student participating in overnight events. Photocopies of the forms must be kept in the ministry lead's possession during trips and events with the originals filed in the church office. The originals are to be kept on file permanently.
- d. Policies for ministry personnel staffing will be followed. Female Ministry personnel will be assigned responsibility for female youth and male ministry personnel will be assigned responsibility for male youth.
- e. Female and male youth are not allowed in each other's rooms, cabins or tents for any reason during retreats and overnight events and they are not permitted to sleep in mixed company.

D. Transportation

- a. For the safety of everyone involved in the youth ministry, drivers must obey all the rules of the road including speed limits. Reckless or unsafe driving will not be tolerated.
- b. For church related activities it is preferred that parents both drop off and pick up their youth at the event location. For out of town events, priority will be given to making use of a commercial carrier when possible.
- c. All ministry personnel drivers transporting youth during church activities must complete the following prior to the youth event:
 - i. Be pre-approved by the ministry lead
 - ii. Provide a copy of their valid drivers license
 - iii. Provide a copy of their current automobile insurance policy.
- d. The number of occupants in the vehicle will not exceed the number of seat belts. Seat belts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times while the vehicle is in motion.

E. Communication via Text, Internet and Social Media

- a. Communication with a student 12 years or younger, via text or social media, is prohibited with the following exceptions:
 - i. Ministry personnel may communicate with students 12 years or younger if written permission is granted by the parents and parents are copied onto any communication.
 - ii. Communication should also be copied to the ministry leader.

- b. Communication with students 13 and above, via text or social media, should be limited to the exchange of information regarding youth programming, and should be done in public or group format (ie. group texts or threads).
- c. Private correspondence should not be initiated by ministry personnel. If a student initiates a private conversation, all communication must be saved and documented and limited to daytime hours (8am - 11pm). Priority will also be made to move the conversation to an in person format as soon as possible. Video calling will be prohibited unless it is a training or group call approved by the ministry lead.
- d. Youth ministry personnel will agree to allow the ministry lead access to any and all communications with students via text or social media in order to facilitate regular supervision.
- e. Ministry personnel will demonstrate and model purity, integrity, transparency and accountability with all communications including text and social media.

Reporting Abuse Procedures

An effective response and reporting procedure should take into account the following principles:

- All allegations need to be taken seriously.
- Situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
- Full co-operation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of the church lawyer.
- Adequate care must be shown for the well-being of victims.
- The victim should not be held responsible in any way.

Obligation to Report

Any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child(ren) is in need of protection is required legally by Section 7 of the Family and Child Service Act to report the matter to the superintendent of Family and Child Service or delegate. Failure to report in these circumstances is an offence. A person who knowingly fails to make such a report is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offence.

No person is personally liable for anything done or omitted in good faith in the exercise or purported exercise of the powers conferred by this Act.

When to Report

Church personnel are required to report to the Ministry of Social Service and to the designated church personnel any suspected case of child abuse immediately. It is not a breach of confidence between church personnel and the child involved. Church leaders have a double accountability before God to be aware of the great responsibility they have in defending and protecting one of God's little ones.

A child is in need of protection under the Family and Child Service Act if he/she is:

- abused or neglected so that his safety or well being is endangered
- abandoned
- deprived of necessary care through the death, absence or disability of his parent

- deprived of necessary medical attention
- absent from his home in circumstances that endanger his safety or well being.

The following are some indications which may suggest that a child has experienced abuse or neglect:

- has an unexplained injury (burn, limp, bruises)
- has an inordinate number of “explained” injuries such as bruises on his/her arms and legs over a period of time
- gives verbal testimony
- mentions incidents in writing, drawings, or through prayer requests, etc.
- complains about numerous beatings
- complains about others “doing things to them when others are not at home”
- indicates fear of going home
- expresses sexual knowledge beyond his/her years and normal experience
- is dirty and smells or has bad teeth or hair falling out
- is inadequately dressed for bad weather

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

Historical abuse or neglect, that is abuse or neglect which occurred in the not very recent past, must be reported wherever there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child may be in need of protection. If the alleged offender is in regular contact with a child, irrespective of whether it is the same child or children abused in the past, there may well be grounds to believe that the child is at risk based on the offender’s past behaviour. It is particularly vital to report these cases where the alleged abuser is in a position of trust respecting children, such as a teaching position. Where the information is obtained from a victim, the victim should be told how to file a complaint with the police irrespective of whether there are any current protection concerns.

The only claim of confidentiality, which overrides the legal duty to report, is solicitor-client privilege. Thus physicians, clergymen and others who consider their professional relationships confidential for certain purposes are not exempt from the duty to report child abuse or neglect. There is one narrow exception to this that results from the confidentiality provisions of the Venereal Disease Act and applies primarily to health care professionals.

Social workers designated to receive reports are trained to investigate and assess the need for intervention. Other professionals must not usurp this function. A professional who does so and fails to report commits an offence. The Act protects you when you make a report, no action lies against a person making a report unless he/she makes it maliciously or without reasonable grounds for his/her belief.

How to Report

Under no circumstances should the matter be raised or discussed with the person alleged to have harmed a child until after the authorities have made an initial contact.

Complete the Child Abuse Report Form immediately. If possible, complete the form in the presence of the program leader or the Senior Pastor or the chairman of the Elder's Board.

The Lead Pastor or the chairman of the Elder's Board, in consultation with the program leader, will take appropriate action commensurate with the allegation; including full disclosure of the incident to the Board of Director's (Elder's board); this may include contact with the Children's Aid Society of Lambton County, or the police, in accordance with the law.

In the event that allegations are raised against a pastor or program leader, a worker will first contact the chairman of the Elder's Board with the understanding that the matter will not be discussed with the person alleged to have harmed the child without the approval of the appropriate authorities. The chairman will contact CAS or the police if the allegations are found to warrant such action.

Immediate suspension shall result when a staff member or volunteer is suspected of child abuse and reasonable evidence exists as to his/her alleged involvement until a complete investigation and decision has been made. The FEB superintendent shall be immediately informed of all cases when a pastoral staff person is suspected of child abuse.

After the authorities have contacted the alleged abuser, a team of three members (lead pastor, board chairman and the person with reasonable grounds) shall interview the person suspected of abuse. This process shall be undertaken with the knowledge of the authorities.

A confidential written report with conclusions, action taken, and recommendations for follow-up action, if appropriate, shall always be made by the lead pastor or board chairman following a child abuse interview. These reports shall be kept in a confidential personnel file.

Church Follow-up and Discipline

If it is found that child abuse by a member or adherent of the church has taken place, the church will practice discipline according to Matthew 18:15-17. The church should seek to minister to the victim and his/her family with the knowledge and approval of the appropriate authorities. The church should maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with those suspected or guilty of child abuse as long as these persons exhibit a willingness to listen, change and look to Christ for help. This does not exclude the need for hurting individuals to receive professional counseling.

Responding to the Media

In the event charges are laid against an alleged abuser or if any incident involving Temple Baptist Church comes to the public attention for whatever reason, the Lead Pastor or a designated member of the Board will be identified as the spokesman for the church.

The spokesman, on behalf of the church, will confirm:

- Our church is committed to the well-being and safety of the children involved in our ministries. We have a child abuse policy and procedures which are designed to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for children.
- We take the allegation seriously, are concerned for the victim(s), and are acting in a responsible way. We are co-operating with the authorities and are following procedures.
- Any worker who is alleged to have been responsible for any abuse of a child has been suspended from all involvement in any children's ministry until the matter has been brought to a conclusion.

Child and Family Service Act

Child and Family Services Act

Rev. Statutes of Ontario, 1999

S 72 (1) "to suffer abuse", when used in reference to a child, means to be in need of protection within the meaning of clause 37 (2) (a), (c), (e), (f) or (h).

(2) A person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be in need of protection shall forthwith report the belief and the information upon which it is based to a society.

(3) Despite the provision of any other Act, a person referred to in subsection (4) who, in the course of his or her professional or official duties, has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a society.

R.S.O. 1990,c.C.11,S. 72(1-3).

(4) Subsection (3) applies to every person who performs professional or official duties with respect to a child, including, (a) a health care professional, including a physician, nurse, dentist, pharmacist or psychologist; (b) a teacher, school principal, social worker, family counselor, priest, rabbi, member of the clergy, operator or employee of a day nursery and youth and recreational worker; (c) a peace officer and a coroner; (d) a solicitor; (e) a service provider and an employee of a service provider.

R.S.O. 1990, c.C.11,S. 72(4); 1993, c. 27, Sched.

(5) In clause (4) (b), "youth and recreation worker" does not include a volunteer.

(6) A society that obtains information that a child in its care and custody is or may have suffered abuse shall forthwith report the information to a Director.

(7) This section applies although the information reported may be confidential or privileged, and no action for making the report shall be instituted against a person who acts in accordance with subsection (2) or (3) unless the person acts maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief or suspicion, as the case may be.

(8) Nothing in this section abrogates any privilege that may exist between a solicitor and his or her client.

S 37 (2) A child is in need of protection where,

- (a) the child has suffered physical harm, inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by that person's failure to care and provide for or supervise and protect the child adequately;
- (c) the child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited, by the person having charge of the child or by another person where the person having charge of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and fails to protect the child;
- (e) the child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical harm or suffering and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, the treatment;
- (f) the child has suffered emotional harm, demonstrated by severe,
 - (i) anxiety
 - (ii) depression
 - (iii) withdrawal, or
 - (iv) self destructive or aggressive behaviour and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, treatment to remedy or alleviate the condition.

Under Definitions in the CFSA

"child" means a person under the age of eighteen years. The exception is in Part III, Child Protection 37(1) re: the child's responsibility to report his abuse once he is 16 years of age.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1985

Section 15

Every individual is equal before the law and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.

Human Rights Code, Ontario

Revised Statutes of Ontario, 1990, Chapter H.19

Every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status or handicap.

Source of Materials:

Willow Creek Community Church – Protection Ministry

People's Church – Child Safety and Abuse Policy

Child and Family Service Act – Ontario Government

Plan to Protect – Winning Kids Inc.

