

MAKING CHURCHES SAFER

REDUCING THE RISK OF ABUSE IN YOUR CHURCH



The Evangelical Covenant Church

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PREFACE

Making Churches Safer has been developed to help educate local Covenant churches in reducing the risk of abuse, injury, and sickness for children and youth. All forms and information in this resource are for illustrative purposes. Although you may adapt this information to help produce your own policies and forms, under no circumstances should they be relied upon without the express written advice of an independent and qualified attorney following a full legal analysis of all the circumstances. Applicable laws and *requirements* do vary from state/province to state/province.

- If we did not live in a fallen world this resource would not even be necessary.
- Churches are not immune from worldly influences.
- Making Churches Safer is a statement that we value children and youth and are willing to undergo some extra work and inconvenience to help ensure their safety and the safety of those who minister with them.

Because the Evangelical Covenant Church values children and youth, it is our hope that this resource will assist local Covenant churches in developing their own procedures for reducing the risk of abuse, injury and sickness.

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me and do not stop them for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (Matthew 19:14, NIV).

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INTRODUCTION

What Is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is a legal classification for the maltreatment of children. Some variations exist within individual state/provincial laws.

Types of Abuse

Physical abuse is non-accidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise harming a child, that is inflicted by a parent, caregiver, or other person who has responsibility for the child.¹ Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child. Physical discipline, such as spanking or paddling, is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child.

Neglect is the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect may be:

- Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision)
- Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment)
- Educational (e.g., failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs)
- Emotional (e.g., inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs)

Sexual abuse includes activities by a parent or caregiver such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

Sexual abuse is defined by CAPTA as “the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children.”

Abandonment is now defined in many States as a form of neglect. In general, a child is considered to be abandoned when the parent's identity or whereabouts are unknown, the child has been left alone in circumstances where the child suffers serious harm, or the parent has failed to maintain contact with the child or provide reasonable support for a specified period of time. Some States have enacted laws—often called safe haven laws—that provide safe places for parents to relinquish newborn infants. Child Welfare Information Gateway produced a publication as part of its State Statute series that summarizes such State laws.

Infant Safe Haven Laws is available from Child Welfare Information Gateway at:
https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/safehaven.cfm

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support or guidance. Emotional abuse is often difficult to prove, and therefore child protective services

my not be able to intervene without evidence of harm or mental injury to the child. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other types of maltreatment are identified.

Factsheet is available from Child Welfare Information Gateway at:
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm>

National Incidents Study—4 Facts (2006 study published in 2010)

- 42% of sexually abused children were sexually abused by someone other than a parent and 36% were sexually abused by a biological parent.
- Abusers—62% males versus 41% females
- Sexual abuse—87% by male 11% by female
- Abuse by non-biological parents—74% by males versus 26% by females
- Children are consistently vulnerable to sexual abuse from age three on.
- Rural children had a nearly 2 times higher rate of abuse and neglect compared to urban children.

Why the Church without a Safety Policy Is Vulnerable

- Children can become isolated and vulnerable to abuse
- Workers can be isolated with children and vulnerable to false accusations
- There is the possibility of abduction
- The church may unknowingly provide an abuser access to children
- Children may be left unattended if a single teacher needs to attend to an emergency
- Parents, teachers, and staff may all have differing expectations when they are not explicit

The Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

- Victimization of children
- Shattered trust
- Damaged families
- Psychological, emotional, and spiritual damage
- Congregational disunity
- Litigation and financial cost

How Can We Reduce the Risk in Our Church?

Set a climate

- Recognize the equal value of all people
- Solve problems in a climate of openness
- Encourage relationships which are open, not secret
- Acknowledge that persons have the right to say no
- Set boundaries

- Report observed or experienced misconduct

Establish policies and procedures (see Policy for Reducing the Risk of Abuse, Injury, Illness)

- Recruiting, Selecting, and Training Volunteers and Paid Staff
 - Qualifications
 - Procedures
 - Application
 - Background check
 - Training
- Procedures
 - Team Approach
 - Pre-school bathroom policies
 - Reporting procedures
 - Response plan
 - Disclosure
 - Release guidelines
 - Parental consent form

Train and educate

- Who receives training?
- Who will train?
- How often training will take place?
- What material will be covered in training?

SAFETY POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The following samples include:

- Needs Assessment Checklist
- Letter of Introduction
- Policy for Reducing the Risk of Abuse, Injury, and Illness
- Sample forms

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In addition, it is important that the leadership of the church is aware of the risks to children, youth, and volunteers, as well as corporate and personal liability when a church lacks policies and procedures designed to reduce the risk of abuse. The church may wish to meet with their insurance broker to review its needs and to confirm proper and adequate insurance coverage. It is recommended that the entire church body have an opportunity to meet and discuss the procedures and policies, which will be put into place to help reduce the risk of abuse, injury, and illness. This will serve to educate the congregation and assure them that the church values children and youth and is therefore working to reduce the risk of abuse and establish safety policies and procedures.

Needs Assessment Checklist

The following checklist will help your church conduct an assessment of its policy needs. Please take a moment and check each statement that is true for your church. Statements left unchecked indicate a procedure or policy area in which your church or organization may be vulnerable to abuse or possible litigation if an incident occurs.

- We currently screen all paid employees, including clergy, who work with youth or children.
- We currently screen all volunteer workers for any position involving work with youth or children.
- We do a reference check on all paid employees working with youth or children.
- We train all paid and volunteer staff who work with children or youth, both paid and volunteer, to understand the nature of child sexual abuse.
- We train all of our staff (both paid and volunteer) who work with children or youth on how to carry out our policies to prevent sexual abuse.
- We take our policies to prevent sexual abuse seriously and see that they are enforced.
- Our workers understand state law concerning child abuse reporting obligations.
- We have a clearly defined reporting procedure for a suspected incident of abuse.
- We have a specific response strategy to use if an allegation of sexual abuse is made at our church.
- We have insurance coverage if a claim should occur.
- We are prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

SAMPLE POLICIES AND FORMS

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Letter of Introduction

Introduction

Child abuse affects the lives of thousands of children every year in North America. Churches have long been seen as organizations, which are lax or negligent in the screening, education, and training of their children's and youth workers. The result has been embarrassing false accusations, or missed opportunities to protect a child in need. Churches have a responsibility for their ministry programs and for the actions of the volunteers that staff them. Court decisions throughout the nation are holding churches liable when they can prove that the church did not properly screen their volunteers, educate their workers, or provide adequate supervision. Much can and should be done by churches in North America to make their children's workers more aware of the seriousness of child abuse and the procedures that the church can and will implement to protect their children from being abused.

Our Response

We desire to respond in earnest to make our facilities and programming a safe place for all children's, youth and church workers through implementation of a Safety and Wellness Program. The physical condition of our facilities must continue to be evaluated for safety and effectiveness in ministry. Where necessary, remodeling or updating may be required. Steps must be taken proactively to screen and to train children's and youth workers. Precautionary measures must be communicated by providing guidelines and procedures that offer assistance to parents and workers. Through increased awareness and supervision, we hope to prevent any incidents from occurring, and hence support effective, caring ministries, which continue to further the cause of Christ and lead individuals to a personal relationship with him.

Statement of Purpose

The main purpose for Safety and Wellness Guidelines is to protect children and youth.

This purpose is accomplished in part by educating and training childcare workers, both members and friends, on issues, which may contribute to dangerous and unsafe conditions affecting children and youth. These issues include how best to avoid neglect and abuse. Individual members and friends of the church are encouraged to act responsibly not only in caring for children and youth, but also in caring for each other (Matt. 19:13-14; John 15:9-17).

We will develop guidelines and procedures to address concerns and/or allegations concerning safety, wellness, and abuse. The governing board of the church will assume responsibility for evaluating the conditions under which the church ministries are carried out and for investigating charges and reporting misconduct.

If charges against a child-care worker are substantiated, the goal of the church will include pursuing reconciliation and restoration to the fellowship of Christ. (Matthew 18:15-35; 1 Corinthians 6:1-11).

(Adapted from A Letter of Introduction—Northwest Covenant Church, Mt. Prospect, IL. Used with Permission.)

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Policy for Reducing the Risk of Abuse, Injury, and Illness

Recruiting, Selecting, and Training Volunteers and Paid Staff

Qualifications: Every volunteer and staff person who works with children and/or youth shall:

- Confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior
- Adhere to the affirmations of faith of the church
- Either be a member in good standing or a regular attendee for six months
- Have no history of being an abuser

Procedures: Every volunteer and staff person who works with children and/or youth shall:

- Complete a confidential application
- Agree to a confidential check of public records and references
- Meet with a person(s) designated by the church governing board to discuss and pray about his/her role in the ministry of the church

A. Application Form

1. The application for volunteers and staff shall be maintained in a confidential file and include:
 - Personal information: Name, address, etc.
 - Ministry information: Area of interest, gifts, talents, etc.
 - Procedures: Concerning the care and guidelines for ministering to children and youth.
 - A place for volunteers and staff to sign stating that they have read the procedures and agree to observe the safeguards.
 - Church history information: a five-year church, volunteer, and ministry history for staff and volunteers, and leaders and supervisors.
 - All references must be contacted by the church (see Reference Contact Form).

B. Public Records Release Form

1. A brief form completed by volunteers and staff that will be sent to the appropriate agency for a background check.
2. Churches can also do a quick no-cost check search at nsopw.gov to access (DOD's National Sex Offenders database)

Education

A person(s) designated by the church governing board will be responsible to educate volunteers and staff on the abuse prevention policy.

Procedures

Parental Consent and Medical Authorization

1. The parent or legal guardian will fill out a parental consent certificate and medical authorization form for each child who will be participating in the ministries of the church.
2. The person designated by the church governing board to be in charge of these issues will keep the forms in a portable file for each ministry.
3. The forms should accompany any activity, which takes place outside the church facilities.
4. At the start of each calendar year parents or legal guardians will fill out new forms.

Release Guidelines

Justification: A class release policy for children from church programs will help to reduce the opportunities for both abuse and abduction.

A. Nursery

1. Each parent or guardian will sign children in and out of the nursery and note where he/she (parent/guardian) will be in case of an emergency.
2. No child will be released from the nursery except into the care of the person who signed him/her in, unless noted at the time the child is signed in that another (named) person will be picking the child up.

B. Children

1. Sunday: Each parent or guardian will sign his/her children (and designated age of child) in and out of class. Parents and guardians will also note where they will be in case of an emergency. No child will be released except into the care of the parent or guardian who signed him/her in, unless noted at the time of sign in that another (named) person will be picking up the child.
2. Weekday Programs: Children will only be released into the care of their parent, guardian, or sibling (sixth grade or older). If no one comes to pick up a child the teacher or counselor will take the child to a designated area in the church where he/she will stay with the child until the child is picked up.

Two Staff Rule

Adult volunteers and staff are to observe the two-staff rule. This requires that adults are never to be in an isolated setting with an individual child or youth.

1. Classroom and building: There must always be two or more staff in each location where children or youth are present and a nursery supervisor present in the nursery with other volunteers.
2. Events: When away from the church on an outing or at a church “overnight,” volunteers and staff are to work together as a team and never be isolated with a child or adolescent.
3. If it is necessary for a volunteer or staff member to meet individually with a child or youth, it should be done so in a public setting, where they are clearly visible by others.

4. Staff members should not spend time alone with a child or adolescent without the awareness and written consent of that individual's parents or legal guardians.

Transporting Children and Youth

1. Drivers must be at least 25 years of age or older, with a valid drivers license, no outstanding violations, no DUI, no reckless driving charges, and no chronic history of speeding. Persons should also refrain from driving if they are on medication or have a physical condition that could impair their driving. (Check with your insurance carrier to see if they have further restrictions)
2. When transporting children and youth, two volunteers and/or staff persons should be in each vehicle. Church volunteers and staff are not to be alone while transporting a child or adolescent to/from a church activity without the expressed written consent from a parent or legal guardian. (Your church may choose to write a policy that always requires at least two adults in a vehicle. In all cases parents or guardians should give written consent for children or youth being transported by church volunteers or staff.)
3. Always leave locations, including the church, as a group and do not make stops while en route. If taking students home leave no later than the last car out of the parking lot. Staff and volunteers can return to clean up after transporting students.

Teenage Workers

There may be times when it is necessary or desirable for childcare workers (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Teenage workers must be at least age 14
- Teenage workers will be screened as specified above with exception of background check
- Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children

Touch

Touching is a difficult area because touch can be very positive and it's important for children to understand and receive positive touch. Context and situation must always be taken into consideration. It is quite appropriate to hold and comfort an infant, toddler, and young child or one who is in discomfort. In the same way it can be appropriate to hug children or youth who are grieving or hurt or when a child initiates the hug. Ask children for permission before hugging them and respect the child's right if they say "no."

It may be best to consider the types of touch that are okay to initiate and not okay to initiate. Below are some examples of both.

1. Appropriate to initiate in proper context
 - a. Celebrating: high fives, handshakes, side hugs
 - b. Circle prayer: holding hands, hands on shoulders
 - c. Comfort and redirection: a hand on the shoulder, side hugs

2. Inappropriate to initiate
 - a. wrestling, sitting on laps, caressing, grabbing, slapping, hitting, or spanking
 - b. In a family situation, wrestling, and tickling can be just fine, but in ministry settings it's best to avoid it especially as children move toward adolescence.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children in our care. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should not be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from the other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medication Policy

It is the policy of the Evangelical Covenant Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medication to children under our care. Medications should be administered by parents at home. Parents should also be notified of the Sick Child Policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents with potentially life-threatening conditions (e.g., asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the children's ministry pastor or director to determine a plan of action.

Accidental Injuries

In the event a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide first aid as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once a child has received appropriate medical attention, an Accident/Injury Report Form (see page 32) will be completed and kept on file at the church.

Nursery Procedures

1. Follow Parental Consent & Medical Authorization Guidelines.
2. Follow Release Guidelines.
3. Eliminate any toys or objects that may present a choking hazard.
4. Clean and disinfect toys in the nursery after each session.
5. Change bedding for each child and wash bedding at the end of day.

6. Disinfect changing station after each changing, dispose of dirty diapers in a closed container that children cannot get into, then wash hands.
7. Always strap child into the changing station and never leave a child unattended.
8. Cover all outlets.
9. Clean and disinfect the room thoroughly after each use.
10. For infants under 12 months of age, follow these practices to reduce the risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) and prevent suffocation:
 - a. Place baby on his/her back in a crib with a firm, tight-fitting mattress.
 - b. Do not put pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, pillow-like bumper pads or pillow-like stuffed toys in the crib.
 - c. Consider using a sleeper instead of a blanket.
 - d. If you do use a blanket, place baby with feet to foot of the crib. Tuck a thin blanket around the crib mattress, covering baby only as high as his/her chest.
 - e. Use only a fitted bottom sheet specifically made for crib use.
11. Crib Safety
 - a. The mattress should be firm and tight-fitting so a baby cannot get trapped between the mattress and the crib.
 - b. No missing, loose, broken, or improperly installed screws, brackets, or other hardware on the crib or mattress support.
 - c. No more than 2 3/8 inches (about the width of a soda can) between crib slats so a baby's body cannot fit through the slats; no missing or cracked slats.
 - d. No corner posts over 1/16 inch high so a baby's clothing cannot catch.
 - e. No cutouts in the headboard or footboard so a baby's head cannot get trapped.
 - f. If there is a drop-down side, always make sure it is securely fastened. Never leave it down while the baby is in the crib
12. Mesh Cribs
 - a. Mesh less than 1/4 inch in size, smaller than the tiny buttons on a baby's clothing.
 - b. Mesh with no tears, holes, or loose threads that could entangle a baby.
 - c. Mesh securely attached to top rail and floor plate.
 - d. Top rail cover with no tears or holes.
 - e. If staples are used, they are not missing, loose. or exposed.

Preschool Bathroom Procedures

1. Responsibilities of Parents

Parents should toilet their children immediately prior to a scheduled church activity.

If the child is not toilet trained:

 - a. Parents must give written consent for an adult or teenage worker to change the diaper of their child (see Child Toileting Parental Consent Form on page 39).
 - b. If the child is toilet trained:
 - c. Parents must give written consent for an adult or junior worker to escort the child to the restroom (see Child Toileting Parental Consent Form on page 39).
2. Responsibilities and Restroom Guidelines for Volunteers
 - a. A child is escorted to the bathroom only upon their request or if the child shows obvious signs of needing to go. When possible, a restroom break may be considered, allowing several children to go at the same time.

- b. When a child is being escorted to the restroom, the other qualified worker(s) must supervise the class.
- c. Spend as little time as possible in the bathroom.
- d. The adult or teenage worker escorting the child is not to enter the child's stall unless absolutely necessary. When modesty permits, the worker should stand in the hall or at the hall door entrance with the door ajar. Children should be encouraged to help themselves with procedures.
- e. If the child requests a worker's help in the stall, the worker should explain to the child how to help himself. If the worker's help is essential, the worker should avoid direct contact with the child, and keep the stall door open. Use the "hand-over-hand" method. This technique enables the worker to place his/her hands over the child's hands in helping with fastening clothes, wiping skin, and the like. The parent(s) should then be informed that extra help is needed at home teaching the child to use the facilities independently.
- f. Both worker and child should wash their hands thoroughly after toileting.
- g. Worker and child should return promptly to the classroom, spending as little time in the bathroom as possible.

Reporting Procedures

- 1. Reporting Obligations:
 - a. Volunteers or staff are to immediately report any behavior, which seems abusive or inappropriate, or any incident reported by a child or adolescent.
- 2. Line of Reporting:
 - a. Volunteers shall report directly to a program coordinator, director, or staff person.
 - b. Directors and program coordinators shall report directly to the pastoral staff.
 - c. If the allegation is directed toward a pastoral staff member, reporting may be made to another pastoral staff member and/or the acting church chair.
 - d. The pastoral staff or church chair shall report directly to the police department for any allegation of abuse.
 - e. The police department will then investigate the allegations.
 - f. In some states the police may require the person to report the incident to Child Protective Services. In that case the Incident Report Form should list the contact person and case number.

Response Plan

- 1. When an allegation of abuse is brought to the attention of a designated care person the designated care person should fill out an Incident Report Form and immediately arrange a meeting with the complainant and any other witnesses to clarify the allegation.
- 2. If the complainant is a minor, the church staff should meet with the child's parents, notifying them of the incident and the steps that are being taken, as well as offering support and prayer.
- 3. If the alleged perpetrator is a volunteer, the pastoral staff will:
 - a. Meet with the volunteer to notify them that an allegation has been made and will be investigated by local authorities. If the volunteer is a minor this meeting should also include the parent(s).

- b. Inform the volunteer that he/she may not participate in children's or youth ministry until the investigation into the allegation is complete.
 - c. Offer support and prayer during the investigation.
- 4. The church will report any allegation of abuse to the local police and in some states to Child Protective Services.
- 5. The pastoral staff will also make note of the allegation and its outcome on the volunteer's confidential application form, as well as the allegations outcome.
- 6. If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member, then another pastoral staff member and/or the church chair will:
 - a. Meet with the staff member and notify them that an allegation has been made and will be investigated by local authorities as well as the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) conference office.
 - b. The conference office should be notified immediately. They will assist the church through the process and notify the ECC's Ordered Ministry who will be involved in the investigation.
 - c. Inform the staff member that he/she may not participate in children's or youth ministry until the investigation into the allegation is complete.
 - d. Offer support and prayer during the investigation.
- 7. Notation of the allegation and its outcome will be made in the staff person's confidential file.
- 8. The pastoral staff and/or church chair will report the allegation to police, conference office, and insurance company.
- 9. Written records can be subpoenaed.

Disclosure

It is recommended that the local church leadership consult their church attorney before disclosing any information and that there be only one official spokesperson for the church.

Training and Educating

- 1. Once a year all volunteers who work with children and youth will attend training to educate them on the policies and procedures for reducing the risk of abuse, injury, and illness.
- 2. All church staff members will review together the policies and procedures for reducing the risk of abuse, injury, and illness on an annual basis.
- 3. All church staff will have a copy of "Making Churches Safer" policy in print form.
- 4. Copies of the policy will be available for any church member through the church office.

Facilities

- 1. All classrooms will have windows in either walls or doors.

2. Half doors will be closed on the bottom, kept open on the top. Whole doors will be kept open unless there is a window into the room.
3. There are bathroom facilities that will accommodate small children in the nursery and childcare rooms.
4. There will be at least two exits in case of fire.
5. In nursery, at least one crib will have heavy-duty casters so infants can be put into the crib and rolled out of the building in case of a fire.
6. Diaper changing stations should be equipped with straps.
7. Each room should be equipped with a first-aid kit.

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Application Form for Children or Youth Work

This form is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. This is not an employment application. It will be used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Personal Information

Date:

Name:

Address:

Home Phone:

Business Phone:

Do you have a current driver's license?

- Yes
- No

Driver's license number:

Initial here that we have your permission to check your records with the Department of Motor Vehicles:

Ministry

Please indicate which youth or children ministry you desire to serve in:

List any gifts, training, education, or interests that will help you in your ministry to children or youth:

Please indicate any medical conditions and physical limitations that could impact the scope of our ministry with children or youth:

References

List all previous church and non-church work involving children and youth

Church or agency:

Address:

Position:

Dates:

Church or agency:

Address:

Position:

Dates:

Church or agency:

Address:

Position:

Dates:

Please list all the churches you have attended in the last 5 years

Church name:

Address:

Phone #:

Church name:

Address:

Phone #:

Church name:

Address:

Phone #:

Procedure

The following policies reflect our commitment to provide protective care to all children, youth, volunteers, and staff who participate in church-sponsored activities.

1. All adult volunteers and staff shall confess Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, adhere to the affirmations of faith of the Covenant Church and either be a member in good standing or a regular attendee for six months of [name of church].
2. Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse of a child or children will not be permitted to serve as volunteers in any church-sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
3. Adult volunteers and staff are to observe the “two adult” rule. This requires that adults never be in an isolated setting with children or youth without an adult partner.
4. Volunteers or staff must immediately report (in accordance with Reporting Procedures as outlined on page 18) any behavior, which seems abusive or inappropriate or any incident reported by a child or adolescent.
5. When an allegation of abuse is brought to the attention of the staff, it will be reported. The volunteer or staff member accused will be informed that he/she may not minister to children or youth at [name of church] until the investigation is complete.

As a church volunteer, do you agree to observe all church policies regarding working with youth or children?

- Yes
- No

I certify that the information contained in this application is correct, complete, and accurate. I give my permission for any references checked to give [name of church] any information they may have regarding my suitability and fitness for children’s or youth work. I have read the above policy and agree to observe the safeguards listed.

Signature:

Date:

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Informed Consent Form

(Note: Be sure to check with your local and state/provincial criminal agencies concerning statutes on background checks and specific information they may require on forms.)

First Name:

Middle Name:

Last Name:

Date of Birth:

Sex:

1. Have you ever been charged with or convicted of any offense related to child abuse?

Please explain:

2. Have you ever been charged with or convicted of any offense involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a child or teenager?

Please explain:

3. Have you ever been charged with or convicted of any offense involving kidnapping, criminal sexual conduct, or prostitution-related crimes?

Please explain:

I certify that the information contained on this consent form is correct, complete, and accurate. I authorize [name of agency from which background information will be obtained] to disclose any criminal background information to [name of church].

Signature:

Date:

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Interview Questions

*Become blameless and pure, children of God...In which you shine like the stars in the universe.
Philippians 2:15*

Before an interview, the volunteer should have filled out both the application and informed consent form and the policy for reducing the risk of abuse should be clearly explained.

Welcome each server of the Lord with a pure heart, helping him/her to understand who you are, the ministries at work, and what your vision is for the future of the church, in order that each of you can work together towards one goal.

Spiritual Background

Briefly describe your relationship with Christ and how it impacts your life

How do you keep your spiritual life fresh?

Church Experience

What brought you to this church?

How long have you been attending this church?

Are you a member here?

Ministry Experience

How did you hear about this ministry?

Why are you interested in serving in this ministry?

Describe your experience in related ministries or service.

What do you believe your spiritual gifts are?

Where do you believe you can best serve?

Are you currently involved in any other ministries?

Is there anything about our procedures or the application you wish to discuss or have clarified?

Close the interview with prayer.

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Reference Contact Form

Please fill out a copy of this form for each reference. Four references are recommended.

Person Making Contact:

Name of Applicant:

Name of Contact:

Title of Contact:

Name of Church (if applicable):

Date and Time of Contact:

Method of Contact (e.g., phone, letter):

Questions:

1. How long have you known [name of person]?

2. Describe this person's character.

3. Share any experience you have had with this person in a similar ministry.

4. Do you have any concerns to share with us?

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Accident/Injury Report

Report any accident or injury as soon as possible

Name:

Date of Birth:

Address:

Phone:

Date and Time of Injury:

Who Was Notified:

What Happened:

Treatment Required:

Filled Out By:

Date:

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Incident Report Form

Reason for report:

Date of incident:

Time:

Place of incident:

Name of Reporter:

Title:

Child Protective Services Case Number and contact:

Name(s) of Child(ren)/Youth:

Age:

Age:

Briefly describe what happened:

What action did you take?:

Has the incident been resolved? Yes No

Explain:

Were there any witnesses? Yes No

Insurance Company Informed:

Date:

Conference Superintendent Notified:

Date:

Names:

Signatures (if possible):

Report submitted to:

Date:

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Incident Report Form for Staff Use

Date contact made with complainant's/complainants' family(ies):

Name of staff person:

Title:

Name of caregiver:

Briefly describe what complainant(s) says/say happened:

Is additional investigation needed? Yes No

Explain:

Was the incident reported to local authorities? Yes No

By whom:

Date:

Date contact made with accused:

Name of staff person:

Title:

Name of caregiver:

Briefly describe what accused says happened:

Reported to:

Time:

Date:

Investigating Police Officer:

Star/Badge #:

Police Case Number:

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Parental Consent and Medical Authorization

Name of child/youth:

Grade:

Age:

Address:

Phone:

As the parent (or legal guardian) of: [child's name],

I understand that my child will be participating in a number of activities for the calendar year [yyyy], which carry with them a certain degree of risk. Some of the activities are swimming, boating, hiking, camping, field trips, sports and other activities, which the church may offer. I consent for my child to participate in these activities.

I also represent that my child is physically fit and has the necessary skills to safely participate in these activities. Particularly, I state that my child can cannot swim.

I also understand and give consent for my child to travel to and from these events in transportation provided by volunteer drivers.

Medical Treatment Authorization

It is my understanding that the church will attempt to notify me in case of a medical emergency involving my child. If the church cannot reach me, then I authorize the church to hire a doctor or other health-care professional, and I give my permission to the doctor or other health-care professional to provide the medical services he or she may deem necessary. I will pay for any medical expenses so incurred.

I will notify the church if I feel there are any health considerations that would prevent my child's participation in any of the activities listed above.

I also give my permission for the church's children's and/or youth leaders to restrict my child from participation in any activity for the sake of their health or safety.

Allergies and Other Health Considerations:

Insurance Company:

Policy/Group #:

Phone Day:

Phone Evening:

Signature:

Date:

[CHURCH NAME][CHURCH ADDRESS]

Child Toileting Parental Consent Form

Because the Evangelical Covenant Church seeks high safety standards to protect the children who participate in our programming, we are requesting your informed consent regarding your child's restroom or toileting needs when he/she is under the care of the nursery/toddler room or preschool staff. The members of the staff of these rooms have been instructed and trained according to the Restroom Guidelines that are on the reverse side of this form. The staff and volunteer workers will take every reasonable precaution to provide a safe and healthy environment for all children while they are involved in the ministries of the church.

Permission for Diaper Changing Care

I give permission, when necessary, for one adult or teenage worker to change my child's diaper under the Nursery Guidelines of appropriate care and hygiene.

Name of Child (Children):

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Date:

Permission for Restroom Care

I give permission, when necessary, for one adult or teenage worker to escort my child to the restroom. I understand that my child should be capable of independently caring for his/her restroom needs, but if requested, the worker may assist with basic tasks of care and hygiene.

Name of Child (Children):

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Date:

Restroom Guidelines for Adults Caring for Children

Responsibilities of Parents

Parents should toilet their children immediately prior to a scheduled church activity.

If the child is not toilet trained

- Parents must give written consent for an adult or teenage worker to change the diaper of their child (see Child Toileting Parental Consent Form).

If the child is toilet trained

- Parents must give written consent for an adult or junior worker to escort the child to the restroom (see Child Toileting Parental Consent Form).

Responsibilities and Restroom Guidelines for Adult Volunteers

- A child is escorted to the bathroom only upon their request or if the child shows obvious signs of needing to go. When possible, a restroom break may be considered, allowing several children to go at the same time.
- When a child is being escorted to the restroom, the other qualified worker(s) must supervise the class.
- Spend as little time as possible in the bathroom.
- The adult or teenage worker escorting the child is not to enter the child's stall unless absolutely necessary. When modesty permits, the worker should stand in the hall, or at the hall door entrance with the door ajar. Children should be encouraged to help themselves with procedures.
- If the child requests a worker's help in the stall, the worker should explain to the child how to help himself. If the worker's help is essential, the worker should avoid direct contact with the child, and keep the stall door open. Use the "hand-over-hand" method. This technique enables the worker to place his/her hands over the child's hands in helping with fastening clothes, wiping skin, and the like. The parent(s) should then be informed that extra help is needed at home teaching the child to use the facilities independently.
- Both worker and child should wash their hands thoroughly after toileting.
- Worker and child should return promptly to the classroom.

