

# **PLAN TO PROTECT POLICY**

*Guidelines Governing Ministry to  
Members of Vulnerable Populations*

For all  
Church Staff and Leader Volunteers  
of

**THE GATHERING HOUSE**

Chesterville, Ontario K0C 1H0

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**POLICY STATEMENT GOVERNING**  
**THE PERSONAL LIFESTYLE OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**  
**IN ALL AREAS OF CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRY**

The nature of the Mission and Purpose of this church requires a lifestyle of godliness and holiness, integrity and trust. Sensitivity towards others in the spirit of Christian love is expected in all relationships throughout the congregation.

Therefore, sexual misconduct of any kind including, but not limited to, premarital sex, adultery, homosexual conduct, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, the sensual use of sexually explicit materials and sexual abuse of any kind is clearly forbidden in scripture and is recognized as a violation of this church's commitment to its Mission and Purpose.

Any staff or volunteer worker of this church proven to be engaged in any of these behaviors will be dealt with in a manner consistent with scriptural principles and, in cases of criminal misconduct, will be subject to criminal prosecution as legislated by provincial and federal law.

Every three years, each church staff member and volunteer working with members of vulnerable populations will be required to provide a police certificate indicating whether that staff member or volunteer has a criminal record that could call into question their suitability for ministering to members of vulnerable populations.

**DEFINITIONS**

The personnel terms used in this document are defined as follows:

Staff	a person hired full-time or part-time by the church
Volunteer	a person ministering in the church who is not hired by the church <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Leader or Assistant</li></ul>
Leader	a staff member or volunteer who professes faith in Jesus Christ and is responsible for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Program</li><li>➤ Health and Safety Issues</li><li>➤ Coordination of Assistants</li></ul>
Assistant	a person assigned to assist the leader of the program An assistant volunteer must always work alongside a leader
Worker	a person, staff or volunteer, ministering in a specific program

## **POLICY RATIONALE**

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. When everyone in a church is doing his or her part, a church normally grows spiritually and numerically (Ephesians 4:16). Therefore, a healthy church utilizes a large number of volunteers in a variety of ways both within and outside the church.

Encouraging believers to get involved in church ministries is a spiritual service. Church leaders have been given the assignment “to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.”

The following Scriptures must be kept in mind as the following paper is read:

1 Thessalonians 5:22 - “Avoid every kind of evil.”

Ephesians 5:3 - “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality...because these are improper for God’s holy people.”

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

Matthew 18:15-17 - “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the Church, treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector.”

The Gathering House 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. There will be some, however, who may come in with impure motives. We have therefore developed the following procedures to help prevent the possibility of abuse occurring.

## RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

### Volunteer Leaders

Volunteers will be recruited by church staff.

All names of potential volunteers will be discussed with the Sr. Pastor before they are individually approached regarding a ministry assignment.

In cases where members of vulnerable populations such as children, youth or developmentally disabled adults are to be supervised by volunteers, a formal application, the “Volunteer Personnel Form” (see Appendix) will be filed by the volunteer before final approval is considered.

The “Volunteer Personnel Form” 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 developmentally disabled adults. 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 fill out a “Volunteer Personnel Form” and keeping these forms on file, the church greatly reduces its liability in cases of abuse.

Two personal references are asked for on the “Volunteer Personnel Form.” These references will be phoned and asked to affirm the appointment of the volunteer. A record of the person making the phone calls, the date of the calls and a summary of the reference’s comments will be maintained by the appropriate member of staff.

All volunteers will be asked to complete a police check form. The result from this check **will not automatically disqualify a volunteer from ministry**, however, further investigation may be deemed appropriate in cases when a volunteer’s Police Check indicates a criminal record.

After the “Volunteer Personnel Form” has been filled out and returned, the “Police Check Form” has been completed, returned and cleared, the volunteer will have an interview with the appropriate member of staff.

All volunteers in Children’s & Youth Ministries must be part of the church community for a minimum of six (6) months before they are eligible to serve. This waiting period does not prevent the potential volunteer from completing the “Volunteer Personnel Form” or the “Police Check Form”. **All volunteers in Children’s & Youth Ministries will receive annual training on the Plan to Protect Policy.**

## **CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

### **CLASSROOM RATIO**

The Gathering House desires to provide a safe, loving classroom where the child/youth feels comfortable and learning can take place. Therefore, the following ratios shall be standard:

- 👍 There will be a minimum of 1 leader and 1 assistant in any room with children/youth, except in the event of an emergency situation.
- 👍 When it is necessary that only one leader be in a closed room with children (i.e. the assistant leaves the room to take children to the bathroom), the door of that room will remain open unless the door is equipped with a window or sidelight.
- 👍 Ideally, in addition to 1 leader, there will be a minimum of 1 assistant for every
  - 6 pre-school children
  - 10 children in Grades 1-5.
  - 12 Youth in grades 6 and up.

### **RECORD KEEPING**

- 👍 The names and addresses of parents and children shall be carefully maintained
- 👍 An accurate sign-in procedure will be maintained for each child up under the age of 6. (See Appendix)
- 👍 An accurate record of the name of each volunteer shall be maintained.
- 👍 Attendance is to be recorded for all children or youth programs (i.e. Sunday School, youth group, K2 VBS etc).

### **DIAPER CHANGING**

- 👍 Diaper changing should always take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child that is being changed as well as the other children and workers in the room.

### **REST ROOMS**

- 👍 A worker will not be allowed into a rest room alone with a child or youth. A second worker will need to accompany them or be within visual contact. A worker may take a child/dren or youth to the rest room if she/he stands in the open doorway only.



A child should not be sent to the washroom alone unless the washroom is in close proximity to the class. Otherwise, the child should be accompanied by another person

### **OUT OF CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES**

Older Children and Youth may occasionally participate in activities outside of their regular meeting times and in locations other than the church facility. The following precautions will be taken in these situations:

- ✓ A leader will be accompanied by at least one other adult, preferably of the opposite sex (in the case of mixed gender groups), at each of these events
- ✓ Each child/youth must have a signed Permission/Waiver/Medical Release Form (see Appendix) in order to participate in any off-property event.
- ✓ Leaders are to check that the church's off-property insurance policy will cover the specific activities planned for the event.
- ✓ Drivers providing transportation to and from these events must be at least 25 years of age and possess both a valid Driver's License and proof of adequate automobile insurance. An adult should never be alone in a vehicle with an individual child or youth.
- ✓ Parent involvement is to be encouraged and, in cases of supervising isolated events, parents are not required to fill out a "Volunteer Personnel Form."

### **ONE-TO-ONE YOUTH MENTORING**

An integral part of Youth Ministry is meeting with individual youth for mentoring. This could range from going out to lunch with a youth to individual counseling. It is critical that leaders are prudent in remaining above reproach in these situations. To that end, the following guidelines are to be followed:

1. All interactions between a youth and youth leader are to take place in a public setting ensuring there are other people present in the room
2. A youth leader may have a social meeting (for the purpose of building trust and camaraderie) with a youth of opposite sex (ensuring guideline #1 is also followed)

3. It is preferable for youth counseling to be single gender; however, if this is not possible, it is acceptable for a leader to counsel a youth of the opposite sex as long as another youth leader is nearby or a member of church leadership is aware the counseling is to occur (ensuring guideline #1 is also followed)

### **BEHAVIOURAL EXPECTATIONS**

Children and Youth Workers should always conduct themselves in a manner that is exemplary or above reproach. This includes using only positive and constructive language, discipline strategies that do not include physical consequences or corporal punishment, and touch that is respectful and appropriate. (see Appendix)

Volunteers working with children or teens are at no time permitted to use corporal punishment as a means of discipline.

The following progression is the constructive approach to discipline to be employed when a child or youth's behavior is counterproductive to the objective of the class:

- Redirect focus
- Verbal warning, stating clearly the behavior that is being corrected
- Verbal warning with a timeout
- Verbal warning with a longer time out
- Contact parent/guardian of the child/youth concerning the behavior and to transfer care of the child/youth to the parent/guardian

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES**

#### **SICK CHILDREN**

- A child who is not feeling well should not be received into the classroom, exposing other children and workers to illness. Some signs of illness are unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat. Common sense is to be used.

#### **MEDICATIONS**



- Workers are not to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medication, the parent must administer it to their child/youth. No medication will be left in the classroom or with a worker or a child/youth. In extreme cases (i.e. peanut allergies) arrangements should be made with written instructions and the permission of the child's parent.

#### FIRE EMERGENCIES

- Emergency procedures in the event of a fire, including exit routes, will be reviewed with the children/youth twice a year.

#### FIRST AID PROCEDURES

- Updated First Aid boxes will be kept on hand and all workers are to know their whereabouts.
- All church staff will remain current in their First-Aid and CPR training.

#### CLEANLINESS

- Nursery and Toddler toys, equipment, and furniture will be sanitized.

#### **SUGGESTED BUILDING REQUIREMENTS**

It is recommended that all classrooms and/or office doors have windows so that all classes/groups can be visible even when doors need to be closed for safety or confidentiality reasons.

## **REPORTING PROCEDURES WHEN ABUSE IS DISCLOSED OR SUSPECTED**

### **OBLIGATION TO REPORT**

If a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, the person must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society.

Professional persons and officials have the same duty as any member of the public to report a suspicion that a child is in need of protection. The Act recognizes, however, that persons working closely with children have a special awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect, and a particular responsibility to report their suspicions, and so makes it an offence to fail to report.

Any professional or official who fails to report a suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection, where the information on which that suspicion is based was obtained in the course of his or her professional or official duties, is liable on conviction to a fine of up to \$1,000.

### **WHEN TO REPORT**

Despite the provisions of any other Act, if a person, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, has reasonable grounds to suspect one of the following, the person shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to The Children's Aid Society.

1. The child has suffered physical harm, inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person's,
  - i. failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child, or
  - ii. pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child.
2. There is a risk that the child is likely to suffer physical harm inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person's,

- i. failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child, or
  - ii. pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child.
3. 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.
4. There is a risk that the child is likely to be sexually molested or sexually exploited as described in paragraph 3.
5. 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.
6. The child has suffered emotional harm, demonstrated by serious,
  - i. anxiety,
  - ii. depression,
  - iii. withdrawal,
  - iv. self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, or
  - v. delayed development,and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the emotional harm suffered by the child results from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child's parent or the person having charge of the child.
7. The child has suffered emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i, ii, iii, iv or v of paragraph 6 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, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm.
8. There is a risk that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i, ii, iii, iv or v of paragraph 6 resulting from the actions, failure to act or

pattern of neglect on the part of the child's parent or the person having charge of the child.

9. There is a risk that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i, ii, iii, iv or v of paragraph 6 and that 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, services or treatment to prevent the harm.
10. The child suffers from a mental, emotional or developmental condition that, if not remedied, could seriously impair the child's development 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.
11. The child has been abandoned, the child's parent has died or is unavailable to exercise his or her custodial rights over the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care and custody, or the child is in a residential placement and the parent refuses or is unable or unwilling to resume the child's care and custody.
12. The child is less than 12 years old and has killed or seriously injured another person or caused serious damage to another person's property, services or treatment are necessary to prevent a recurrence 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, those services or treatment.
13. The child is less than 12 years old and has on more than one occasion injured another person or caused loss or damage to another person's property, with the encouragement of the person having charge of the child or because of that person's failure or inability to supervise the child adequately.

## THE REPORTING PROCESS

It is critical that any staff or volunteer ensure that abuse or suspicion of abuse is reported to the Children's Aid Society; however, The Gathering House does not want a member of staff or a volunteer reporting without first indicating their intention to report to either their supervisor or a member of the Board of Elders. This permits the following to take place:

- The volunteer or staff member will have an opportunity to voice their concern to a more senior staff member or church leader, thus ensuring that they are acting appropriately and not alone while going through the process.
- The church leadership will be able to prepare for contingencies should the disclosure or suspicion be related to activities on church property or by agents of the church.

In no way, does this suggest that the church will attempt to restrict a member of staff or a volunteer from reporting a disclosure or a suspicion. We absolutely recognize and support the need for an individual to report and will ensure the highest degree of confidentiality.

Once a report has been made, the staff member or volunteer may be asked to meet in person with a Social Worker from the CAS.

Following the report, the reporting staff member or volunteer is required to complete an Incident Report Form (see Appendix)

Following the report to CAS, a member of the church leadership will report the incident to the Church Insurance Company.

## APPLICATION FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH, OR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PERSONS

PERSONAL DATA  
(please print)

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## CHURCH ACTIVITY

What type of work with children, youth or developmentally disabled persons are you considering?

On what date would you be available? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the minimum length of your commitment? \_\_\_\_\_

When did you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour? \_\_\_\_\_

I will (1) cheerfully abide by the decisions of this church,  
(2) regularly attend church services and,  
(3) teach and live according to the beliefs, of this church.

\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

List other churches you have attended regularly during the past five (5) years, if not this one.  
(Give names and complete mailing address):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What type of volunteer work with children have you done with churches over the past 5 years?

Church	Type of volunteer work	Person overseeing this ministry
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

### References

Please provide the names of two individuals, excluding relatives, who could provide a reference for you.  
If you are a minor, you may use the name of a parent and/or teacher. If possible, include at least one reference from The Gathering House.

1. Name of reference \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name of reference \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Check all of the ministry positions listed below in which you have experience:

#### HELPING

\_\_babysitting  
\_\_nursery  
\_\_preschooler  
\_\_children, Gr. 1-5  
\_\_Youth worker \_\_youth

#### TEACHING

\_\_preschool  
\_\_grades 1-3  
\_\_grades 4-5  
\_\_children church

#### SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

\_\_music  
\_\_storytelling  
\_\_crafts  
\_\_game/fun times

#### OTHER

\_\_transportation  
\_\_SS/Club Admin.  
\_\_VBS work  
\_\_Club work

Circle the ministry positions listed above that interest you (experience not necessary).

I have received training on matters concerning child safety and child abuse prevention.

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I am willing to receive training on child safety and child abuse prevention when provided.

☐ Yes ☐ No

### **APPLICANT'S STATEMENT**

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give The Gathering House any information they may have regarding my character and fitness to work with children, youth or developmentally disabled persons, and I release all such references from liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such evaluations to The Gathering House.

I understand that should my behavior, character and/or morality be determined to be inappropriate and /or criminal, my volunteer assistance will be discontinued and that The Gathering House shall be entitled to terminate my volunteer capacity at any time, without expressed cause or prior notice to, at or following the date of the commencement of volunteer service, unless set out in writing, dated and signed by both parties.

The Provincial government provides a criminal records check service to non-profit organizations. Use of that service helps to insure a safer environment for those to whom we minister, as well as protection for volunteers and compensated staff members, should a false allegation occur. Since attorneys for the Associated Gospel Churches recommend that such services are often important, I consent to The Gathering House conducting a criminal records check, as long as the results are kept confidential.

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

**The Gathering House**

Chesterville, ON  
(613) 448-1758



APPENDIX B

<p><b>INCIDENT REPORT FORM</b> <b>SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE</b></p>
---

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CHILD

\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS:

\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER:

\_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PERSON FILING REPORT: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of suspected abuse: (Physical, sexual, emotional, neglect)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Indications of suspected abuse: (Including facts, physical signs and course of events where necessary) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Action taken: (Including date and time) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The above information will serve as a guide and will be necessary if a formal report is filed with the police or appropriate government agency. All information received is to be kept **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Person reporting) (Pastor)

**The Gathering House**  
Chesterville, ON  
(613) 448-1758

## APPENDIX C

### DEFINITIONS OF TOUCHING

*Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Be aware and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, personalities and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate.*

*Appropriate Touch* can be a genuine and positive display of God's love.

- *Taking a child's hand to lead him to an activity.*
- *Taking both hands to establish his attention.*
- *Patting on the head, hand, shoulder, or back for affirmation.*
- *Putting an arm around the shoulder for comforting or quieting.*
- *Holding by the shoulder or hand to keep his attention while redirecting his behaviour.*
- *Gently holding the chin to help the child focus on what is being said (important for children with Attention Deficit Disorder).*
- *Holding a pre-school child who is crying.*

#### ***Inappropriate Touch***

*Avoid the following:*

- *Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you.*
- *Extending hugging.*
- *Tickling.*
- *Touching in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting with toileting).*
- *Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.*