

Willowdale Christian Reformed Church

Child Safety Policy

September 2010

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Child Safety Policy Summary

As members of Willowdale Christian Reformed Church (WCRC) we are the body of Christ and wish to redeem the world for Him. We believe that every person is a child of God and must be treated with dignity, respect and love. As such, we must especially care for and protect the vulnerable in our community from all forms of abuse – namely physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as harassment and neglect. WCRC has a zero tolerance policy for abuse committed by staff and volunteers working with children and youth. Any verified report of abuse will result in disciplinary action up to and including removal from the position. Some situations may also result in discipline from the church.

The council of WCRC believes the best solution is to prevent abuse from occurring in the first place. There are procedures and guidelines in place to reduce the risk for abuse to occur. In the event that there is an allegation or suspicion of abuse, the council of WCRC will take any report seriously and will ensure it is dealt with in a caring and confidential manner. Synod 1992 called on church councils to “help their congregations to publicly acknowledge that the sin of abuse exists among us; to support efforts that such abuse be addressed promptly so that abused and abusers may experience the healing power of God’s grace; and to take positive steps to make their congregations safe for all persons.” (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 673).

The purpose of this policy is to educate the members of WCRC by explaining how to define, recognize and report abuses and to establish a procedure for dealing with allegations of abuse. Adherence to this policy will also protect staff and volunteers from false or wrongful allegations and will protect God’s church.

Any questions or comments about this policy can be directed to the WCRC Safe Church Coordinator or an elder of the church.

Any suspicions of abuse of a child must be, by law, reported to the Children’s Aid Society (416-924-4646).

Ministries Covered by the Child Safety Policy

Any program or position which involves a paid staff member or volunteer in a position of authority or responsibility over children is covered by the Child Safety Policy. The following list includes, but is not limited to, the applicable ministries at WCRC:

Pastor
Youth Leader
Elders
Deacons
Pastoral Care Workers
Nursery (Baby and Toddler)
Sunday School
Church School
Youth Group
Junior Youth Group (Boys & Girls Club)
Vacation Bible School/Camp

Child Safety Policy Glossary of Terms

Adult: age 18 and over.

Child: a person under the age of eighteen years.

Child Neglect: the chronic inattention or omission on the part of the parent/caregiver to provide for the basic emotional and/or physical needs of the child, including food, clothing, shelter, health, hygiene, safety, adequate supervision and medical attention. Neglect causes both physical and emotional harm to the child. Emotionally neglected children do not receive the necessary psychological nurturance to foster their growth and development. More information can be found in Appendix A.

Safe Church Coordinator: a volunteer member of the church who oversees and ensures implementation of the Child Safety Policy.

Child Safety Training: a review of the full WCRC Child Safety Policy and the reporting requirements. A checklist is provided in Appendix B.

Emotional Abuse: a consistent pattern of overt rejection, belittling, blaming, accusing, finding fault or shouting at a child. More information can be found in Appendix A.

Harassment: any verbal, physical or visual conduct, which is offensive to the recipient or which impairs their ability to perform their task or undermines their personal dignity. It is illegal to harass others on the basis of their race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, record of offenses, marital status, family status or handicap. More information can be found in Appendix A.

Helper: anyone who assists a program or ministry once a month or more regardless of age.

Member: all baptized and confessing members of WCRC.

Ministry Coordinator: paid staff member assigned to assist the ministry teams of WCRC.

Physical Abuse: any intentional means of inflicting pain or injury to another person whether or not it leaves a wound, mark or bruise. Physically abusive behavior ranges from slapping, shoving, punching, and biting to more serious forms like choking, severe spanking, burning, kicking, stabbing and shooting. More information can be found in Appendix A.

Police Check: also referred to as "Vulnerable Sector Reference Check", "Police Reference Check" or "Criminal Record Check".

Sexual Abuse: the exploitation of a person regardless of age or circumstances for the sexual gratification of another. Sexually abusive acts includes exposure, fondling, masturbation, intercourse, obscene phone calls, lewd remarks, pornography and engaging someone in sexual activity through threats, bribes, force or misrepresentation. More information can be found in Appendix A.

Volunteer: any adult involved in leading or supervising a program once a month or more. In situations where there is a dispute about whether an individual or position is considered 'volunteer', the church council in consultation with the Safe Church Coordinator reserves the right to make the final decision.

WCRC: Willowdale Christian Reformed Church.

Youth: older children and teens up to and including age 17.

Child Abuse Prevention Policies

The council of WCRC is committed to carefully screening and monitoring the involvement of all who have access to children and youth in our community. In addition, a number of policies are in place to reduce the risk for abuse or neglect to occur.

Screening & Training

1. All adult staff and volunteers in the ministries covered by the Child Safety Policy must provide a copy of a police check to the Ministry Coordinator every three years. The police check will be paid for by the church and can be arranged through the Ministry Coordinator.
2. All information from the police reference checks will be handled with discretion by the Ministry Coordinator, Safe Church Coordinator and church council. Only one copy will be kept in a locked file in the church office.
3. If there is an item of concern, the Safe Church Coordinator will make a recommendation to council at which time a decision will be provided to the applicant.
4. WCRC reserves the right to reject any applicant for any reason.
5. Findings which may result in a rejection are indictable and summary convictions, crimes against a minor, drug use, drug possession, etc.
6. Staff and volunteers who are not baptized or confessing members of WCRC must also provide a Volunteer Application Form (Appendix B) and attend an interview with the Ministry Coordinator and Team Leader or member of council prior to working with children.
7. All elders and staff covered by the Child Safety Policy must attend a training session annually and sign a Letter of Acknowledgement every year. A list of all training attendees must be given to the Ministry Coordinator upon completion of the session. The Training Checklist & Attendance Record and Letter of Acknowledgement are provided in Appendix B.
8. All other volunteers and helpers age 16 and older in the programs listed must attend a training session once every three years and sign a Letter of Acknowledgement every year. A list of all training attendees must be given to the Ministry Coordinator upon completion of the session. The Training Checklist & Attendance Record and Letter of Acknowledgement are provided in Appendix B.

Program Policies

1. Staff and volunteers meeting with a child or youth must do so in a public space, in an office with a window, with the door open or with a second unrelated adult present.
2. Groups meeting in off-site facilities will adhere to the same prevention policies and safety considerations as those meeting in the church building.
3. Off-site and over-night activities involving children or youth require a Parent/Guardian Consent Form (Appendix B).
4. For over-night activities, all adults involved must have a police check on file.
5. Two adults must be in the building to hold a meeting or event of any of the programs covered by the Child Safety Policy.

Discipline Policy

1. Do not use physical discipline, including but not limited to spanking, slapping, hitting or any other physical force. If the participant exhibits uncontrollable or unusual behavior, notify the program supervisor and a parent or guardian. Concerns about a child's behavior or the appropriate response to a child's behavior should be reported in writing to the program supervisor. The team leader or a parent/guardian should be involved in situations where misbehavior is an ongoing problem.
2. Do not physically restrain someone, except when that person's safety is at risk.
3. Do not speak to children or youth in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as being harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating.
4. Do not use profane language and never use any discipline that frightens or humiliates the participant.
5. Do not engage in physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment of any person at any time.

Harassment Policy

1. While it is not possible to list all behavior that is considered to be harassment or sexually inappropriate, prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. slurs, epithets, derogatory comments;
 - b. unwelcome jokes, comments, and teasing of an offensive nature;
 - c. inappropriate physical contact or gestures; or
 - d. sexual advances.
2. Do not provide or possess any sexually explicit, inappropriate, or offensive material to children or youth while conducting the work of the church (emails, websites, books, magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.).

Restroom Policy

Children age six and under needing to use the washroom during a program must be accompanied by a screened volunteer.

Supervision Policy

At the close of programs or activities, children age six and under should be released only to parents, legal guardians or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. In the event that there is uncertainty of the propriety of releasing a child, consult with the program supervisor before releasing the child.

Code of Conduct

1. Avoid individual photography of children, unsupervised internet access and vehicle transportation alone with unrelated participants.
2. Do not discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, record of offenses, marital status, family status or handicap.
3. Do not engage in any sexually-oriented conversations whether orally, in writing, or electronically. It is expected that from time to time, youth ministry and educational lessons and discussions for teenagers may address human sexuality issues related to dating and sex. Moreover, it is expected that children or youth may raise issues relating to sexuality during counseling sessions. Lessons and counseling must convey to youth the Church's teaching on these topics. If youth have further questions not answered or addressed, they

- should be referred to their parents or guardians for clarification or counseling. Do not discuss personal sexual preferences, activities, practices or history.
4. Physical contact beyond a handshake or a “high-five” can be misconstrued both by minors and adults, and should not occur except under appropriate public circumstances. The following are examples (not an exclusive list) of behaviors which are considered unacceptable with a child or youth:
 - a. inappropriate or lengthy embraces;
 - b. kisses on the mouth;
 - c. holding minors over five years old on the lap;
 - d. intentionally touching bottoms, chests, legs, or genital areas;
 - e. showing affection while in an isolated location;
 - f. giving massages, piggyback rides, wrestling; or
 - g. giving compliments that relate to physique or body development.
 5. Do not use or supply alcohol and/or illegal drugs when working with minors or while participating in a church activity.
 6. Do not be under the influence of alcohol or impairing drugs (including prescription medication not used as directed) while conducting the work of the church.

Child Safety Policy Monitoring

1. Approximately twice a year, the leaders of the ministries covered by the Child Safety Policy must provide a list of all staff and volunteers involved in their ministry to the Ministry Coordinator.
2. The Ministry Coordinator will provide to council in approximately two to three times a year a current list of the staff and volunteers involved in the noted ministries. Included in this list will be their membership status, the date of their most recent training and the date of their last police check. Any deficiencies greater than three months must be highlighted and a member of council must be assigned to follow-up on the deficiency. The council member in consultation with the Safe Church Coordinator can decide whether the deficiency is warranted and what action, if any, is required. Any unexplained failure of the staff member or volunteer to comply with the requirements must result in their removal of involvement in any program covered by the Child Safety Policy.
3. WCRC will not be responsible for the negligence or activities of any groups renting the church facility.
4. Every year, council must include on the meeting agenda a review of the Child Safety Policy to ensure compliance of all policies and procedures.

Abuse Reporting Procedure

Allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and acted on immediately. All allegations and discussions are to be held in strict confidence to avoid rumors and any additional hurt. Any deviation from these procedures can lead to serious legal liability for any person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children.

Any suspicions of abuse of a child must be, by law, reported to the Children's Aid Society (416-924-4646).

1. The person who has heard or received the allegation or suspicion must first notify the appropriate civil authority (i.e. police or Children's Aid) and shall not rely on any other person to report on his or her behalf. Do not attempt to investigate the situation. Immediately contact the Children's Aid Society (CAS) who will conduct the investigation. The accused and the victim should NOT be confronted by anyone other than the CAS staff or police for any information. Doing so may harm the possible legal case against the alleged perpetrator.
2. The Safe Church Coordinator or an elder of the church must be notified next and the Safe Church Coordinator must complete an Incident Report (Appendix B) and keep it on file. These reports can serve as a reference in the event that a pattern of abuse emerges. The Definitions and Indicators of Abuse found in Appendix A can be used as a guide in gathering the basic information.
3. The Chair of Council must be notified and is responsible for managing the process and is to be the primary contact. If the Chair of Council is named in the allegation or is unavailable then the Vice Chair or another designated member of council is to assume the Chair's responsibilities.
4. All documentation and discussions are to be handled with discretion and should not be reviewed or discussed with anyone outside of the people involved in the investigation. No public statements are to be made without the direction of legal counsel.
5. In any verified situation of abuse of a minor, the church's insurance agent or broker must be notified immediately to satisfy conditions of the church's liability policy.
6. While an investigation is ongoing, the individual against whom the allegation has been made must be put on a leave of absence from his or her responsibilities with any ministry covered by the Child Safety Policy, without prejudice, until the matter is resolved. In the case of paid staff, WCRC will decide, based on all the circumstances, whether the leave of absence should be with or without pay. If person against whom the allegation has been made is a council member, he or she must excuse him or herself from any discussions of the allegation. The council of WCRC may reinstate the person to his or her role if and when the council determines that it would be appropriate to do so.
7. The alleged victim and the person(s) named in the allegation must be contacted by their ward elders within one week of the allegation to provide pastoral care to both parties. If the ward elder is named in the allegation, is managing the investigation or represents both parties, another elder or individual designated by council must be assigned. These elders are to provide spiritual care and guidance only and are not to investigate or become involved in the investigation. The pastor should not be involved in the pastoral care to avoid a potential conflict of interest.

8. Upon completion of the process, the council member responsible for the process must respond in person to the complainant and accused. All written responses must be reviewed by legal counsel. A complete copy of the documentation is to be kept in a locked church file.
9. The council will decide, at the conclusion of the investigation and based on all of the circumstances, whether the person against whom the allegation has been made should be removed from his or her role(s) at WCRC and/or terminated from his or her employment, with or without just cause.

Appendix A: Definitions and Indicators of Abuse

The following definitions of abuse are in agreement with 1992 Synod definitions. Indicators are provided as guidelines only when attempting to determine whether abuse has occurred. Any doubts should be brought to the attention of the Safe Church Coordinator or an elder of the church.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any intentional means of inflicting pain or injury to another person whether or not it leaves a wound, mark or bruise. Physically abusive behavior ranges from slapping, shoving, punching, and biting to more serious forms like choking, severe spanking, burning, kicking, stabbing and shooting.

Physical indicators may include:

Bruises, Welts, Lacerations or abrasions:

- Suspicious locations for injury (face, nose and eyes; neck, back of torso, buttocks, back of legs)
- Suspicious shapes of injuries (clustered injuries that form regular patterns, teeth marks, handprints, imprint of articles used – i.e.: cord/belt)

Burns

- Cigarette or cigar burns, scalding
- Burns patterned like an electric burner, iron etc.
- Burns suggesting use of rope or restraint on arms, legs, neck or torso

Head Injuries

- Absence of hair in patches, due to pulling
- Serious eye injury or sensitivity to light

Fractures/dislocations

- Multiple fractures in various stages of healing
- Any fracture in a child under the age of two is suspect, since the bones are generally quite pliable

Behavioral indicators may include:

- Unlikely or inconsistent explanations for injury or denial that injury exists
- Resistance to being touched or shows anxiety to any physical contact – may cringe or flinch if touched unexpectedly
- Extremely aggressive or extremely withdrawn
- Is dressed inappropriately to hide bruises (long sleeves/pants in hot weather)

Possible behavioral indicators of the abuser:

- Vague about details of the cause of the injury
- Gives inconsistent explanations
- Inconsistent explanations from more than one parent/caregiver who claims to have been present at the accident or time of injury

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is the exploitation of a person regardless of age or circumstances for the sexual gratification of another. Sexually abusive acts includes exposure, fondling, masturbation, intercourse, obscene phone calls, lewd remarks, pornography and engaging someone in sexual activity through threats, bribes, force or misrepresentation.

Physical indicators may include:

- Frequent psychosomatic complaints (headaches, nausea, abdominal pains) with no apparent cause
- Pain or difficulty sitting down or walking
- Pain when urinating

Behavioral indicators may include:

- Age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self, others (replication of explicit sexual acts or sexually explicit drawings and/or descriptions)
- Nervous, sudden avoidance or hostile behavior toward adults
- Child is apprehensive or afraid
- Depression

Possible behavioral indicators of the abuser may include:

- Acting in an extremely overprotective manner, discouraging social contact of child with adults or peers
- Being jealous of child's relationships with peers or other adults

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a consistent pattern of overt rejection, belittling, blaming, accusing, finding fault or shouting at a child.

Physical indicators may include:

- Facial expression and body carriage may reveal feelings of sadness, lack of confidence, confusion, discouragement or suppressed anger
- Eating disorders, chronic physical complaints, stuttering

Behavioral indicators may include:

- Suffering from severe development lags (speech, motor, sensory) without an obvious physical cause
- Severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, withdrawal, aggression or self-destructive behavior
- Unusual fearfulness of the consequences of their actions

Possible behavioral indicators of the abuser:

- Blames, belittles, humiliates, discriminates and finds fault with others
- Constantly withholds physical and verbal affection from the child and ignores the child's attempts to interact
- Makes excessive demands of the child beyond his/her ability

Harassment

Harassment is any verbal, physical or visual conduct, which is offensive to the recipient or which impairs their ability to perform their task or undermines their personal dignity. It is illegal to harass others on the basis of their race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, record of offenses, marital status, family status or handicap.

Child Neglect

Neglect is the chronic inattention or omission on the part of the parent/caregiver to provide for the basic emotional and/or physical needs of the child, including food, clothing, shelter, health, hygiene, safety, adequate supervision and medical attention. Neglect causes both physical and emotional harm to the child. Emotionally neglected children do not receive the necessary psychological nurturance to foster their growth and development.

Physical indicators may include:

- Consistent hunger or malnutrition
- Poor hygiene – may have severe diaper rash or other persistent skin disorders or rashes resulting from improper or lack of hygiene
- Untreated injury or illness
- Consistently dirty, unwashed and/or dressed in clothing that is inappropriate for the weather

Behavioral indicators may include:

- Suffering from severe developmental lags (speech, motor, sensory) without an obvious physical cause
- Demonstrating severe lack of attachment to parents and/or other adults
- Demanding of affection and attention
- Dull apathetic appearance
- Assuming adult responsibility
- Vandalism

Possible behavioral indicators of the abuser may include:

- Consistently delivers child to care very early and/or picks up very late
- Is unresponsive when approached by others with concerns regarding the child
- Appears to be very depressed or under great emotional stress

Appendix B: List of Attached Documents & Forms

The following forms are to be used in the monitoring and administration of the Child Safety Policy. Copies of the forms are provided in the pages following.

Volunteer Application Form

To be used for any volunteer who is interested in one of the ministries covered by the Child Safety Policy and is not a baptized or confessing member of Willowdale Christian Reformed Church.

Training Checklist & Attendance Record

To be completed annually by the elders and the staff covered by the Child Safety Policy and at least once every three years by all other volunteers and helpers age 16 and older. Upon completion of the training session, attendance must be taken and the form must be given to the Ministry Coordinator.

Letter of Acknowledgement

To be completed annually by all staff and volunteers of the ministries covered by the Child Safety Policy.

Parental Consent Form

To be completed for all off-site activities and on-site activities where food will be served.

Incident Report

To be used as a guideline when gathering initial information about an allegation or suspicion of abuse.

**WCRC Child Safety Policy
Volunteer Application Form**

This form is to be used for any staff member or adult volunteer who will be in a leadership role with children or youth in the course of their work and is not a baptized or confessing member of Willowdale Christian Reformed Church.

The Ministry Coordinator and the Team Leader or a member of Council will review this application with you prior to you being cleared to work with children. WCRC reserves the right to reject any application for any reason.

Name: _____
(Last) (First) (Initial)

Present Address: _____

Phone Number: _____(home) _____(work)

Ministry(ies) applying to: _____

Please list previous volunteer experiences (in church and community)

How long have you been attending Willowdale CRC? _____

Please list the names and addresses of all the churches you have been attending regularly during the past five years. (Use other side of page if necessary)

Continued ...

If you have been a part of this congregation for less than one year, please provide the name, address and telephone number of three individuals (other than spouse or relative) who could provide a reference for you, and indicate their relationship to you.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ Relationship: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ Relationship: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ Relationship: _____

Signature

Date

**WCRC Child Safety Policy
Letter of Acknowledgement**

Please read carefully, sign and return to the church Ministry Coordinator.

I have received and have reviewed a copy of the Willowdale Christian Reformed Church (WCRC) Child Safety Policy. I understand that it is my obligation to abide by the Policy. It is understood that my activities at WCRC place me in a leadership role with children and youth and I am therefore responsible for complying with the reporting requirements contained in the Policy, including, but not limited to, the reporting requirements for suspected abuse of a minor. I have received training on these requirements. I agree to report suspected abuse of a minor in accordance with the law and the reporting procedures contained in the Policy.

I understand that the Council of WCRC may change, modify, and/or revise any part of the Policy at any time but that the Council will notify staff and volunteers as soon as possible.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

**WCRC Child Safety Policy
Parent/Guardian Consent Form**

PROGRAM or ACTIVITY _____

Date(s) _____ Time(s) _____

Activity Leader(s): _____

Child's Full Name: _____ Age: _____

Health Card #: _____

Allergies: _____

Medications: _____

Other Concerns: _____

Child's Full Name: _____ Age: _____

Health Card #: _____

Allergies: _____

Medications: _____

Other Concerns: _____

Terms of Consent:

I am the parent or legal guardian of the above mentioned child(ren). I grant them permission to attend this program/event and to ride in vehicles with approved drivers. I will not hold those drivers responsible in the event that injuries occur while driving to and from the program/event. I agree to give permission for the leaders to make any necessary decisions regarding the health and welfare of my child(ren) while in their care. The leader will notify me at any time regarding any problem involving my child(ren). I clear the leaders from WCRC from any responsibilities should my child(ren) be injured while under their care.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Print Name

Emergency Contact Number: _____

Alternate Contact Person & Number: _____

**WCRC Child Safety Policy
Incident Report**

This form should be used to report and file a record of all allegations of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or spiritual), harassment or neglect.

Name of Person Reporting: _____
Phone#: Day _____ Evening: _____

Name of Alleged Victim: _____
Age: _____ (if the victim is 16 or under there is a legal obligation to report the incident to the Children's Aid Society)

Date & Time of Incident: _____
Alleged perpetrator: _____
Location: _____
Church Program or Activity: _____

Briefly describe the incident (use the back of the form if necessary):

Does this incident appear to be abuse, harassment or neglect as outlined by the Child Safety Policy?
Please explain.

Has the parent or guardian been advised? If not, why?

Were there witnesses present? If so, please name (especially adults):

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please complete this form and give in person to the Safe Church Coordinator or a Consistory member.

All information on this form is to be handled with discretion and only shared with those involved in the investigation.