



# **FCRC SAFE Church Policy Summary for Parents and Caregivers of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Participating in Ministry**

## **Why a Safe Church Policy?**

God speaks so highly of children throughout all of Scripture that as followers of Christ, it is incumbent upon us to protect our children when we gather. We are thankful for resources from our denomination as well as from Winning Kids, who helps churches develop safe policies to protect children in ministries like ours.

The following is a summary of the church's policy as adopted and approved by Council and how it applies to all Ministries.

## **Abuse**

“Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health, or a child's welfare.” (Faith Trust Institute, 2006)

Abuse can be physical, emotional, spiritual, sexual or can come in the form of neglect. For any further definition, refer to the Safe Church Policy in full.

There is zero tolerance for instances of abuse in Children and Youth Ministry.

## **Responsibility**

The church is responsible not only to God but also civilly and legally. We are to be morally upstanding, and especially in our relationships with those within our community who may be vulnerable to abuse. There are laws for organizations concerning the protection of children and therefore we must adhere to these laws.

## **Safe Church Implementation and Maintenance**

First CRC has an Education Committee who work together with the church Administrator, Ministry Leaders, and Pastoral staff to help enforce and shape the Safe Church Policies of FCRC. The policies are maintained by the Education Committee, church Administrator, and Pastoral staff and submitted to Council. If you have any question about who is on this committee and staff, please contact the church office or a Pastor.

## **Registration**

All children will need to be registered. This is a simple collection of information and permissions to guide the ministry leaders in making planning decisions. The policy asks that all guests who attend more than once in a ministry year to return with a registration form. Anyone under the age of 18 should register for ministry. The following procedures should be followed:

1. Copies of Registration form will be kept onsite
2. For any off-site activities, copies of the forms shall be taken for emergency contact and allergy information
3. Ministry personnel are responsible for maintaining registration forms and that reasonable effort is exerted to keep information updated and current
4. Original copies will be kept on hand at the church office under lock and key

## **Process to become Adult Volunteer Ministry Personnel**

1. Minimum age of 18 years
2. Church Membership (or demonstrated attendance and approval)
3. Review of application by Ministry leader, any concerns addressed by Pastoral staff and/or council chair.
4. Sign the:
  - a. Registration form
  - b. Release of Information/Declaration of Intent Form
  - c. Ministry Agreement
  - d. Confidentiality Agreement
5. CPIC form returned (Criminal Record Clearance check and Vulnerable Sector Search)
6. Attend Training
7. Approval from Safe Church/Education Committee(s) or Council

This information will also help us understand how the gifts and talents of the applicant can best serve the Children and Youth Ministry.

## **Process to Become Youth Volunteer Ministry Personnel**

1. Under 18 years
2. Church Membership (or demonstrated attendance and approval)
3. Review of application by Ministry leader
4. Sign the Registration form
5. CPIC form returned (Criminal Record Clearance check and Vulnerable Sector Search) if 16 years of age or older
6. Attend Training
7. Approval from Safe Church/Education Committee(s) or Council

## **Supervision**

Leaders of Children and Youth Ministry will maintain the record of adherence to the process and to policy. They also will ensure adherence to the weekly operation of the policies on the Committee's behalf. (compare to old intro)

The supervision of children requires Ministry personnel:

- A minimum of two (2) unrelated Ministry Personnel are present for supervision, except in the event of an emergency  
**(OR)**
- One Ministry Personnel is present with the door open and Hall Monitors circulating periodically from room to room  
**(AND)**

- Ministry Personnel between the ages of 11 and 17 may assist only under adult Ministry Personnel supervision. Ministry Personnel must be 18 years of age or older to supervise Children and Youth alone in a room, always with Hall Monitors
- Ministry Personnel will never be alone with a Child or Youth without a Hall Monitor or a second Ministry Personnel
- Numbers and ratios will be maintained for activities outside on church grounds. Any activity located off church property will be treated as an off-site activity.
- All overnight activities with children of mixed genders must be supervised by at least four (4) unrelated, adult Ministry Personnel of opposite gender.
- Female and male Youth are not allowed in each other's rooms or tents for any reason during retreats and overnight events and they are not permitted to sleep in mixed company.
- A single Youth should not be left alone in a hotel room for off-site trips. Unrelated ministry personnel will not share a room with a Youth.
- Two (2) unrelated Ministry Personnel should be in each vehicle if transporting a single Youth during First Christian Reformed, Red Deer, sponsored activities.

## Ratios

### *Ministry Personnel / Child Ratios*

Room settings should comply with established ratios for Ministry Personnel and Children at all times. Established ratios are:

1. Two unrelated Ministry Personnel for every 6 infants (birth to 15 months old)
2. Two unrelated Ministry Personnel for every 10 toddlers and pre-schoolers (15 months old to 5 years of age)
3. Two unrelated Ministry Personnel for every 6-20 elementary age Children (6-year olds to gr. 6)
4. Ratios for off-site trips should be two ministry personnel for every 10 Children, or half of recommended classroom ratios stated above; one male, one female, not related

### *Ministry Personnel / Youth Ratios*

1. Programs for Youth should comply with established staffing ratios as follows:
  - "Jr. High" (gr. 6 to 8) – two Ministry Personnel for every 16 Youth
  - "Sr. High" (gr. 9 to 12) – two Ministry Personnel for every 20 Youth
2. For high-risk activities, ratios should be adjusted to two Ministry Personnel for every 5 Youth.
3. There must be at least two (2) unrelated Ministry Personnel at all events. Events with mixed genders must be supervised by both male and female Ministry Personnel.
4. It is recommended there be at least a five (5) year age difference between Ministry Personnel and the Youth they supervise.

## Sign In/Out and Pass-off

The Safe Church Policy is to have each child be signed in and out under the following rules:

*-For Children Birth to Senior Kindergarten (up to and including age 5):*

1. The receiving and releasing Children under the age of 6 will be closely monitored. A mandatory sign-in and sign-out form is to be used for all programs.

2. Children are not to be dropped off or left in a room without Ministry Personnel present.
3. Children will only be released into the care of the Child's Parent or designate utilizing a signature, security number or identification card.
4. Parents and visitors are not to enter the nursery or preschool area when picking up their Child unless requested to do so.

*For Children Grade 1 to 2 (ages 6 to 7):*

1. Children are to be received in the designated room by Ministry Personnel using a mandatory sign-in and sign-out form. Children are not to be dropped off or left in a room without Ministry Personnel present to receive them.
2. Children will only be released into the care of the Child's Parent or designate utilizing a signature, security number or identification card.

*For Children Grade 3 to 5 (ages 8 to 10):*

1. Children are received in the designated room by Ministry Personnel using a mandatory sign-in and sign-out form. Children are not to be dropped off or left in a room without Ministry Personnel present to receive them.
2. Children will only be released into the care of the Child's Parent or designate utilizing a signature, security number or identification card.

*For Youth Ministry:*

The Safe Church Policy states for Youth to be signed in and out to the ministries participated in. A sign in/out sheet should be provided every time the YOUTH MINISTRY meets. Any Youth over the age of 11 can sign themselves in and out, given parental permission on the registration form.

## **Washroom Use**

Parent/guardian(s) will take care of all their child's toileting needs. Ministry Personnel are never to assist a Child or vulnerable Adult in the washroom, be alone with them in an unsupervised washroom, and they are never to go into a cubicle with them and shut the door. The parent/guardian can be contacted through the Projected Number System in place during the worship service.

## **Nursery Diapering Policy**

Parents are to be encouraged to deal with their Child's toileting needs prior to the start of each program or worship service. **Diaper changing is to be done only by the parent of the child, or registered guardian.** No Nursery personnel should ever change a diaper. The parent/guardian can be contacted through the Projected number system in place during the worship service.

## **Visibility**

All of our classrooms and washrooms used for Children and Youth Ministry are equipped with windows in the doors to ensure that there is always the possibility of parent(s) or guardian(s) to observe Children and Youth Ministry, but also for the Children and Youth Ministry Hall Monitor is able to ensure policy adherence.

# Physical Touch

In Children and Youth Ministry, if a situation were to arise, we encourage Ministry Personnel to:

- Hold a preschool Child who is crying,
- Speak to a Child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears,
- Hold a Child's hand when speaking, listening or walking with him or her to an activity,
- Gently hold the Child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour,
- Put your arm around the shoulder of a Child when comforting or quieting is needed,
- Pat a Child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.

**Note: All touch must be done in view of others and Ministry personnel must never be left alone with a child behind a closed door with no visibility.**

# Punishment

In Children and Youth Ministry, no form of corporal punishment will be administered. Instead, preventative discipline will be encouraged. This includes creating a safe environment for all children and leaders. Remedial discipline is also encouraged to help other children and youth understand acceptable behavior at Children and Youth Ministry, especially as it relates to loving others. We provide an environment which does not require discipline by exemplifying a grace-filled environment. If the situation cannot be resolved, the parent(s) of the child will be asked to attend the situation.

# First Aid

In regards to first aid, we encourage Ministry personnel to become certified and trained in First Aid, but it is not expected. A first aid kit will be provided in the kitchen for use during Children and Youth Ministry. We will publicly post names of those trained in First Aid in each Children and Youth Ministry classroom. The Hall Monitor will be contacted in the event of a child's need for First Aid, so that the parent(s)/guardian(s) can be contacted immediately. An Incident Report will be filled out and filed any time first aid is administered.

**Illness:** If your child is ill, including fever, unusual fatigue, irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat, they are not fit for Children and Youth Ministry.

**Medication:** Medication will not be administered by Children and Youth Ministry personnel.

**Cuts or injuries with blood:** The child involved will be quarantined, the parent(s) contacted, and the wound addressed as well as any area that may have come in contact with the child's blood, immediately. First Aid will be applied as needed by those trained and certified.

## Anti-Bullying Policy

Bullying will be defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and is repeated or has the potential to be repeated. These activities will not be tolerated and parent(s) will be contacted immediately to deal with the child.

## Photo and Video Policy

The photo and video policy is laid out in the registration for Children and Youth Ministry. No photos or videos will be used or distributed without prior parental approval.

## Proper Ministry Personnel Contact

There are many details concerning Ministry personnel contacting those involved in Children and Youth Ministry.

1. Ministry personnel may not date a student registered for the program
2. Ministry Personnel are to avoid any activity that would involve isolation and meet in group settings with a team member.
3. Communication with Children 12 years of age and under is prohibited unless a parent is included in the contact, permission is given by the parents, and that the Youth Pastor is included in all emails/other electronic communication (this includes texting and social media)
4. Communication with Youths 13 years of age and older via Social Media, telephone and texting is permitted given:
  - a. parental permission is granted at registration
  - b. be limited to daytime hours (8am-11pm)
  - c. online communication will not involve video messaging
5. Church members, adherents and Ministry Personnel are encouraged to demonstrate and model purity, integrity, transparency and accountability with all communications

## Reporting an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse

According to the Child and Family Services Act, any person with a reasonable suspicion of child abuse has a legal responsibility to immediately report the matter to child protection authorities (Children's Aid) or the police. Reporting must be done by telephone or in person promptly at the point of observing signs of abuse or receiving a report of abuse. The reporting must be immediate, a direct report, and an on-going report. The report may be done in conjunction with any pastoral staff or the immediate Ministry Leader.

No persons, including Pastors and Council members, are to assume the function of assessing, substantiating or investigating the need for intervention or interpretation of suspected child abuse.