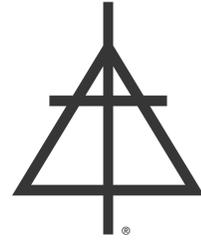




Grace Church
Gathering People to Grow
in the Love and Ministry of Jesus Christ



ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

This Document is Under the Authority of the Risk Management Committee
It has been approved by Grace CRC Council – April 2006
Revised November 2006
Changes are to be made following the Policy Change Procedures

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1.0 INTRODUCTIONIn accordance with the recommendations of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church and Classis Quinte, Grace Christian Reformed Church adopts the following guidelines on abuse prevention.

The principles explain the basic teaching, direction, and goals for our church. The policy statement outlines steps we are taking to create a safe environment for all members and participants of the congregation.

2.0 BIBLICAL TEACHINGS

All persons, male and female, adult and child, are created in the image of God and therefore are worthy of respect. (Gen. 1: 26,27)

Women and men are equal in the sight of God. (Gal. 3:28)

The human body is good, including human sexuality (I Cor. 3:16, 6:19; II Cor. 6:16).

Through the fall of the human race into sin, the goodness of God's creation was distorted. One result of this is the evil of abuse. Through Jesus Christ, God calls people to wholeness again and to participation in the Body of Christ, the community of faith, whose quality is redemptive love (I John).

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3.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Grace Christian Reformed Church desires to create a community that reflects the goodness of God's creation and our new life in Christ. We strive to achieve an environment that nurtures the dignity and safety of each person.

We recognize, however, that we live in a broken world and that abuse also occurs within the church family. Abuse of any kind inside or outside of the church is not to be tolerated. Appropriate steps will be taken to prevent abuse, and if it occurs, appropriate action will be taken.

As a community, Grace Christian Reformed Church is committed to prevent abuse, foster the development of healthy relationships through our programs, protect and promote the healing of those who have been abused, and work toward repentance and healing for those who abuse.

The spiritual root of all forms of abuse is the irresponsible and selfish use of power, influence and the misuse of God-given trust. At Grace Church we will address the roots of abuse by teaching and practicing what Christ's gospel teaches about power, trust, justice, and mercy. This will include regular education for the congregation and its leaders on matters of abuse. The gospel assures victims of the Lord's compassion and healing grace. We recognize the damaging effects of the sin of abuse and pledge to provide support for victims of abuse and help them find recovery.

At the same time we believe God's love can set abusers free from attitudes and behaviours which are destructive. This can only happen when the sinful patterns are exposed with full acknowledgment of the truth and accountability for it. On the other hand, abusers who refuse to recognize the sin of abuse and repent of their ways will be subject to the exercise of church discipline.

In the community of faith, those who have suffered abuse can find wholeness and abusers can be redeemed, but the road to restoration may not be easy. Grace Church pledges to walk with victims and abusers along the road to recovery, following the Scriptural teachings about justice, forgiveness, and restoration, and using the resources available through the church (Christian Reformed Church of North America) and the community social services.

Grace Church acknowledges what the Bible teaches concerning the legitimate mandate of civic authorities, and we pledge to co-operate with them in seeking justice in the area of abuse and the protection of children and the vulnerable. However, we will not leave the matter of abuse and its impacts solely to the courts of law and social services because abuse and healing, acknowledgment and recovery all have a spiritual basis. The church has its own calling to be Christ's ambassadors, offering protection, warning against the abuse of authority, and providing a healing ministry for those whose lives have been affected by the sin of abuse.

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4.0 DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

Grace Church agrees with the 1992 Synod definitions of three types of abuse:

Physical abuse is any non-accidental act that violates the dignity of another person, inflicting pain or injury. Physically abusive behaviour also includes physical neglect, which means not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care.

Emotional/verbal abuse is any attempt to control another person's life through words, threats, fears, and/or deprivation in such a way that it impairs a person's God-given sense of self-worth.

Sexual Abuse (verbal or physical) is any sexual experience forced on one person by another, which may or may not involve physical contact between people. Sexual abuse also includes any role-inappropriate sexual encounter, even if consensual at the time.

5.0 POLICY STATEMENT/SELECTION PROCESS FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

1. A waiting period of six months for all new or relatively unknown persons is required before they can hold a position of trust or to be a volunteer with vulnerable people.
2. A volunteer application must be completed including 2 references. These references will be contacted by Risk Management.
3. A full police check which includes a driver's abstract and vulnerable sector screening must be obtained prior to the start of every position and renewed every three years. These will be kept on file in the church office under the jurisdiction of Council indefinitely. These checks will be locked in the filing cabinet to ensure confidentiality.
4. A personal interview must take place for new or relatively unknown person(s).
5. Each volunteer must adhere to the discipline policy and sign the Code of Ethics (*Appendix A*)
6. Specific policies designed for each program must be adhered to.
7. When there are allegations of abuse or when evidence of abuse is recognized the procedures for responding to an abuse allegation must be followed. (see section 14.0)

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6.0 GRACE CHURCH CODE OF ETHICS

Believing that God is calling me to serve in this congregation I as a member/leader pledge that:

1. My first priority is to seek the welfare of all church members and participants and promote their healthy development spiritually, physically, socially, and educationally.
2. I will keep parents or caregivers informed about the program I am teaching and what time it begins and ends.
3. I will not knowingly do anything that will damage a person's trust, and I will try to protect the people from all forms of abuse while he or she is in my care.
4. I will set agreed to guidelines for acceptable behaviour within the group, and expect members of the group to act on the basis of the agreed guidelines. If a person consistently breaks the guidelines, I will seek help from other leaders and parents or caregivers to assist me in responding to the issue.
5. If a person is distressed, I will try to offer comfort and help, and I will encourage the person to find appropriate help for their needs.
6. If I wish to talk with a vulnerable person alone, I will ensure that the discussion will be in an open area where others are in the vicinity.

7.0 DISCIPLINE POLICY

All discipline is carried out in love, not anger. The goal of discipline is changed behaviour, not vengeance. The following guidelines apply for all programs.

1. No corporal punishment is appropriate under any circumstances. If a person misbehaves, leaders should try to:
 - a. distract the person with another activity;
 - b. help the person focus on another more acceptable behaviour;
 - c. isolate the person from others (time-outs).
2. Abusive verbal punishment (insults, yelling) is not permitted.
3. Inform and involve the leader, parent or caregiver whenever a person misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehaviour increases.
4. Report to the program supervisor concerns about recurring behavioural issues.
5. Involve an aide in a classroom where misbehaviour is an ongoing problem.
6. Report any suspected abusive discipline; follow established protocol.

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8.0 SPECIFIC ADDITIONAL POLICIES FOR CHURCH VISITATION

1. When visiting a single person, it is recommended that the Pastor, Elder or Deacon take along another member of Council of the same gender as the person being visited. Whenever possible same gender visitation should occur.
2. If there is mutual consent then the council member may visit on his or her own. We suggest whenever possible the meeting take place in public.

9.0 SPECIFIC ADDITIONAL POLICIES FOR THE NURSERY

1. There should be at least 2 caregivers in the nursery at all times. One adult should always be present and no person under 18 years of age will be left alone in charge of the children. Another attendant will be called if the ratio of infants/toddlers to attendants exceeds 5:1.
2. Adults who are scheduled for nursery duty must have another adult to replace them, should they be unable to serve.
3. Youth (12-17) are welcome to volunteer for nursery duty. It is preferable that a baby-sitting course has been taken to ensure a high level of safety for the children. Youth may not bring friends into the nursery.
4. Only one member of a family should serve in the nursery at a given time unless another unrelated adult is present.
5. Parents or caregivers will be asked to sign in when they bring a child. They will indicate if someone else is authorized to pick up the child. Only a parent or authorized person may pick up a child from the nursery.
6. Any significant medical problem should be reported immediately to the parents/guardian.
7. Attendants, please check & change diapers as necessary. Diapering must take place within sight of another attendant. Plastic gloves are required when changing a diaper. Dirty diaper and gloves are to be discarded in the pail provided. Be sure to wash hands after each diaper change.

10.0 SPECIFIC ADDITIONAL POLICIES FOR THE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

1. A teacher plus an assistant, minimum age of 12 will be in charge of each class for the three, four, and five-year-olds. Consideration will be given to gender and age in the appointment of teaching teams.
2. Children should not leave the classroom except for illness, bathroom privileges, or other compelling reasons.
3. Whenever Sunday School is in session, the door window is to provide an unobstructed view of the classroom.
4. Children under the age of five will be accompanied to the washroom. For children who do not require assistance in the washroom, the attendant will remain outside the washroom. For children who require assistance, the attendant will assist the child with the washroom door left slightly open.

11.0

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**Abuse Prevention Policy
SPECIFIC ADDITIONAL POLICIES FOR G.E.M.S. AND CADETS**

1. Counselors should provide supervision of the youth in their care. No function should be held without adequate supervision. There should always be two leaders, and in the event of a couple leading, there should also be another adult volunteer.
2. G.E.M.S. and Cadets counselors should identify abusive behaviours among participants in their program and implement strategies to discourage these behaviours.
3. Counselors and respective Cadet Boys and G.E.M.S. girls may meet privately once or twice and thereafter only with the permission of a parent and/or with another counselor in attendance. Any such meeting must occur in a public place.
4. If a child needs significant medical attention, the parent and/or legal guardians should be notified immediately.
5. Cadets and G.E.M.S. should not arrive more than ten minutes before the start of the class. No counselor shall retain a Cadet Boy or G.E.M.S. girl for a one-to-one for more than ten minutes after the end of the program.
6. Any Cadet or G.E.M.S. activities away from the church facility, out of town, or overnight should be conducted in compliance with the policies above and the excursion policy. Counselors or designated volunteers transporting a child must have parental permission to do so, via a signed consent form. (The number of passengers in any vehicle will not exceed the number of safety belts in use.)
7. Appropriate displays of affection between Cadet and G.E.M.S. counselors and their respective Cadet boys and G.E.M.S. girls is often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another. Such displays of affection should be limited to actions like a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, and open-handed pat on the back, or a handclasp. All parties have the right to refuse and it must be respected.

12.0 SPECIFIC ADDITIONAL POLICIES FOR TEEN CLUB/YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Youth group leaders should provide supervision of the youth in their care. No function should be held without adequate supervision. There should always be two leaders, and in the event of a couple leading, there should also be another adult volunteer.
2. Youth leaders or designated volunteers transporting a child must have parental permission to do so.
3. Appropriate displays of affection are often part of conveying support and encouragement. Displays of affection between youth leaders and youth group members should be limited to actions like a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-handed pat on the back, or a handclasp. A youth leader or member's right to refuse such display of affection must be respected.
4. Gifts, phone calls, letters or emails that are directed to a youth group member by a youth group leader should only be ministry-related.

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13.0 RESPONDING TO AN ABUSE ALLEGATION

1. All suspicions/allegations of child abuse must be taken seriously and be handled confidentially.
2. There are two legal duties to report under the Child and Family Services Act of Ontario

Mandated Reporting

The Child and Family Services Act (C.F.S.A.) (1985) is the legislation that, among other goals, seeks to protect children from abuse and neglect. Specific clauses within it require the reporting of child abuse and neglect by the general public and, in a more rigorous way, by the professional public. This mandate to report child abuse relates to the church in 2 ways:

Firstly, any member of a church community falls under the general “duty to report” which states, “Secondly, there are special responsibilities imposed on professionals and officials by Section 68.3 which states:

Professionals in the church context would include clergy and others employed to work with children and youth.

Section 81 of the C.F.S.A. goes on to say that a professional who fails to act and report abuse is guilty of an offense and on conviction is liable to a fine of up to \$1000.00.

“Every person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be in need of protection must report promptly the belief and the information upon which it is based to a children’s aid society.” (Child and Family Services Act {C.F.S.A} Section 68.2)

“A professional who in the course of his/her duties with respect to a child has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse shall report forthwith the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a children’s aid society.”

Abuse, for the purposes of reporting, includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, failure to protect a person from abuse, and failure to obtain medical treatment.

There are a number of comments that pertain to the church’s role in Mandated Reporting.

First, as a church worker you are protected from liability if you report child abuse. The professionals’ duty to report overrides the provisions of any other provincial statute, specifically those provisions that would otherwise prohibit disclosure by the professional or official. The only privilege not subject to the reporting law is that between a solicitor and his client.

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Second, on close examination, the Act says if you have reasonable grounds to suspect abuse you must report. Reasonable grounds is not defined in the Child and Family Services Act and requires your professional judgment. Reporting child abuse is a serious matter and it is understandable that one would seek the greatest possible clarity prior to making a report. However, what is clearly required in the report is a suspicion of child abuse, not proof. You do not need to conduct an investigation. You do not need to find proof or even be sure about child abuse before calling Children's Aid Society (CAS) is mandated to investigate all allegations of child abuse. It is up to the child welfare investigator to determine whether child abuse actually occurred, is occurring, or may occur.

Third, the phrase "shall forthwith report the suspicion" means that the report must be made immediately. The church must ensure an effective communication system so that reports are never delayed. Church workers must know how to access the Children's Aid Society in their local areas.

Fourth, under the regulations, only the CAS or the police may question the alleged victim or offender so that the investigation may proceed unhindered. Pastoral support is appropriate. Cooperation with the CAS worker is an ideal to be sought.

3. In case of uncertainty about a duty to report, church representatives can consult with the Children's Aid Society by phone, on a confidential basis if necessary.
4. Complete an incident reporting form (*Appendix B*) for suspected abuse referring to the guidelines in section 14.0
5. The program leader and one member of council executive shall be notified of any allegation or reasonable suspicion of abuse. If the accused is the program leader, then report directly to the council executive.

Council Responsibilities:

- a. Satisfy statutory legal obligations by reporting all cases of suspected abuse to police authorities and/or child protective agencies.
- b. Consult a lawyer for advice.
- c. Without admitting legal liability express Grace Church's concern to the complainant and their families and assure them of our commitment in assisting the investigation.
- d. Assure confidentiality for the benefit of both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator.
- e. Immediately suspend the alleged perpetrator from children's or youth ministry duties without presuming guilt, pending the outcome of a police investigation.
- f. Avoid public statements to individuals, the media or from the pulpit, without first obtaining legal counsel.
- g. All statements must be made by the appointed Media Relations person.
- h. Contact our insurance agent or broker to report the incident in order to satisfy the statutory conditions of your liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage response.
- i. Resource Available: Classis Abuse Response Team

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14.0 CHILD/YOUTH - GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF ABUSE

1. Take the child seriously when he/she tells the story.
2. Do not investigate the child's story; rather, listen to the story and take notes immediately afterwards to refresh your memory as to what the child told you.
3. Do not make judgmental statements, such as "I think you had a bad dream."
4. Do not appear frightened or disgusted by the child's story since this may cause the child to stop talking or to believe you are upset with the child.
5. Do not try to convince the child that the story isn't true or that it did not happen the way the child reports it did.
6. Do not make promises to the child that you will not tell anyone what has been shared with you.
7. Do not offer a child a reward for telling the story or promising a gift if the child tells another adult.
8. Do not frighten the child by talking about police involvement or medical examinations to verify the complaint; instead, share with the child that other people need to know about what happened and they will talk to the child later.
9. If a child reports bruising do not ask the child to show you any bruises that are beneath their clothing tell the child that you believe him/her without seeing the bruise. Only examine those bruises that are visible to you. If a child insists on showing a bruise beneath the clothing, ask another adult to witness this.
10. Do not tell the child he/she has been abused.
11. Offer to support the child, remind the child you care about him/her.
12. Assure the child that it was a good decision to tell someone what happened to him/her.
13. Do tell the child that you want to find help, so the incident can be prevented from happening again.
14. Follow through in consecutive weeks and months by speaking to the child and offering support to him/her, especially when an investigation is being pursued, and also when no investigation was initiated. Remind the child that whatever happened was not the fault of the child.

15.0 TRAINING AND INFORMATION

1. Staff and program volunteers are required to attend a training session on Grace's policy and procedures pertaining to abuse prior to the start of a program. The objective is to help leaders discuss preventative measures in their programs as well as to recognize the signs of abuse and inappropriate behaviour. Children and youth will be informed of these policies through their programs, including information on how to protect themselves and whom they can consult for help.
2. Reading of the Abuse Prevention Policy on a yearly basis is required.
3. Staff and program volunteers are required to sign the yearly Abuse Prevention Register (see *Appendix C*)

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APPENDIX 'A' – Grace Church Code Of Ethics**

Believing that God is calling me to serve in this congregation I as a member/leader pledge that:

1. My first priority is to seek the welfare of all church members and participants and promote their healthy development spiritually, physically, socially, and educationally.
2. I will keep parents or caregivers informed about the program I am teaching and what time it begins and ends.
3. I will not knowingly do anything that will damage a child or youth's trust, and I will try to protect the vulnerable person from all forms of abuse while he or she is in my care.
4. I will work with the vulnerable person to set agreed guidelines for acceptable behaviour within the group, and expect them to act on the basis of agreed guidelines. If a child consistently breaks the guidelines, I will seek help from other youth leaders and parents or caregivers to assist me in responding to the child.
5. If a vulnerable person is distressed, I will try to offer comfort and help, and I will encourage the child to find appropriate help for their needs.
6. If I wish to talk with a vulnerable person alone, I will ensure that the discussion will be in an open area where others are in the vicinity.

Name: _____
SIGNATURE

Date: _____

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APPENDIX 'B' – Incident Reporting Form**
For any injury on church property or suspected abuse

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Name of Person Involved: _____	Phone #: _____
Address: _____	
Name of Witness: _____	Phone #: _____
Address: _____	

More space provided on back if needed

Description of Incident:

Action Taken:

Persons Notified:

Suggested Future Prevention

Signature: _____
*Please place completed form in confidential mailbox outside church office.
This report must be forwarded to Chair of Council*

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APPENDIX 'C' – Abuse Prevention Register**

It's that time of year again! It is required every year that the Abuse Prevention Policy be reviewed.

Please review the policy with your members and have each member sign below.

Ministry Title: _____

By signing below I agree that I have read and understand the Abuse Prevention Policy:

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please Note: It is the chairperson's responsibility to ensure the yearly review is done by all those participating under your particular ministry.

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APPENDIX 'D' – Volunteer Application Form**

Full Name: _____ Address: _____

Maiden Name: _____

Date Of Birth: _____

Type of Volunteer Placement Requested: _____

Previous Church Affiliation

Church: _____ Address: _____

Contact Person: _____

Please provide 2 references that we may contact

Name: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Phone #: _____ Phone #: _____

Relationship: _____ Relationship: _____

I hereby give my consent for Grace CRC of Cobourg to contact all the above-mentioned references:

Signature: _____ Date: _____