

ABUSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

POLICIES and PROCEDURES

of the

**STRATFORD
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

MISSION AND MANDATES

AUGUST 2008 revised OCTOBER 2020

MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

*As people called by God,
We gather to praise God, listen to Him
and respond
We nurture each other in faith, and
obedience to Christ
We love and care for one another as God's
people
We commit ourselves to serve and to tell
others about Jesus
We pursue God's justice and peace in
every area of life.*

PURPOSE OF ABUSE PREVENTION / ABUSE RESPONSE POLICY

As a family of believers we share the responsibility to care for and protect one another. The Bible tells us that we are made in the image of God. (Gen. 1:27, Gen. 5:1, Gen. 9:6, James 3:9) Through our creation therefore, God bestowed upon us an inherent special concern for children and the vulnerable members of society. (Matt. 18:6, 10:14).

The purpose of this Abuse Prevention / Abuse Response Policy is:

- to prevent harm to children of our church and children in our church programs.
- to prevent harm to vulnerable adults of our church and church programs.
- to provide an environment for teachers, nursery attendants, leaders, pastors and all those involved in ministering to others that will allow them to do their work without the threat of false accusation or suspicion.
- to respond diligently, caringly and in a supportive manner to all persons involved when an allegation of abuse has been made.

MANDATES of ABUSE PREVENTION and RESPONSE POLICY

The following mandates apply to everyone in the Stratford Christian Reformed Church (Stratford CRC) and pertain to all on- and off-site activities. Stratford CRC Council, through the Stratford CRC Safe Church Committee (Stratford SCC), ensures that the **Ministry Providers** adhere to this policy and its mandates. A **ministry provider** is a person who serves in any program of the Stratford CRC

I. Mandate of Stratford CRC Safe Church Committee (Stratford SCC)

Stratford CRC Safe Church Committee provides:

Recommendations to Stratford CRC Council respecting content/updates for this Abuse Prevention and Response Policy.

Ongoing education to keep the congregation informed of the importance, content, and meaning of the policy and its mandates.

Ongoing training on abuse awareness and prevention.

Clear communication on the requirement of reporting abuse through signage, brochures, announcements, etc.

Security for all confidential documents relating to this policy.

II. Mandate for Ministry Providers

Ministry Providers:

1. are screened according to an established protocol for the position.
2. participate in orientation and ongoing training that focuses on abuse awareness and prevention.
3. sign a statement that they understand and agree to abide by the policy. Failure to honour that agreement will result in termination of the person's position.
4. complete a police check every five years.
5. who are age 16 or younger may assist only under qualified adult supervision.

III. Mandate for Screening Staff, Leaders and Ministry Providers

Purpose:

To ensure that ministry providers in the Stratford CRC possess the personal qualities to provide safe and effective service.

Assumptions:

1. Abuse prevention screening is required for all ministry providers {16 years and over} who work with children, youth, and the vulnerable, as well as for the minister, paid staff, all ministry providers, elders, deacons and deaconesses.
2. Screening packages include an application form, a memorandum of agreement and information on how to obtain a police check. A police check must be submitted with the completed application package.
3. If a person is absent for a period of two or more years from any position for which screening is required, the screening must be repeated. A police check must be completed for every ministry provider every three years.
4. Training, support, and other resources with respect to abuse prevention are available to all ministry providers.
5. A confidential and secure filing system is maintained, to archive materials from the screening process of ministry providers.

Procedure:

Prior to the start of a program, the program coordinator provides Stratford SCC with a list of names of all ministry providers. Stratford SCC identifies which candidates must undergo screening. For candidates requiring screening, the following occurs:

1. Stratford SCC provides a screening package to the candidate.
2. Typically, a candidate will have been a member of Stratford CRC for at least 6 months. All church ministry volunteers who are not members of Stratford CRC must be interviewed by the pastor, an elder or the leader of the church ministry. The volunteer must provide the following documents:
 - a. Current police record check;
 - b. Form 1: Application for Ministry Position;
 - c. Form 2: Memorandum of Agreement;
 - d. Two background letters of reference;

3. Members who have never undergone screening or have been absent for two or more years from a ministry position requiring screening, sign memo of agreement and submit it with police check to Stratford SCC.
4. Stratford SCC conducts reference checks, reviews, records and returns police check, and advises program coordinator when screening process is complete.
5. Stratford SCC maintains all screening documentation in ministry provider's file located in the secure filing system.

IV. Mandate for Training / Educating Ministry Providers

TRAINING IS REQUIRED for all ministry providers who regularly work with children, youth and vulnerable adults to assist in the prevention of abuse through the following means:

1. Circulation of a staff handbook containing this policy (**ABUSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES of the STRATFORD CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**)
2. Formal abuse prevention training through the presentation of resource materials, videos, “in-house” seminars, etc.
3. Educating ministry workers about their legal obligation to report suspected abuse and to recognize and identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and molestation.
4. An initial period of intensive training for all children’s workers at the time of implementation of “new” policies and procedures respecting prevention and reporting of abuse.
5. Follow-up with periodic refreshers and reassessment of policies and procedures on an annual basis (usually each August or September prior to the startup of children’s and youth and other ministry programming).
6. Reviewing the ongoing suitability of existing workers.

V. Mandate Respecting Discipline of Children and Youth by Ministry Providers

1. No physical discipline of any nature shall be used for the correction of children and youth within the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church of Stratford.

2. Potentially abusive behaviours such as wrestling, body-checking, prolonged tickling, excessive teasing and other activities which are physically or verbally aggressive are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
3. No abusive verbal discipline is permitted. Abusive verbal discipline includes:
 - shouting, yelling, threatening, using insults, using obscenities.
 - discipline that is intended to humiliate a child or youth.
 - discipline by refusing to speak to a child or youth.
 - discipline that involves bribery, coercion or threats.
 - discipline followed by a request or threat not to report the discipline.
4. Acceptable discipline techniques include:
 - verbal correction that is not abusive.
 - age-appropriate "time-out" interval.
 - suspension from the present activity.
 - suspension from the present day's session.
5. Misbehaviour that requires significant discipline (eg. suspension from the present day's session) or repeated discipline shall result in resolution efforts by the leader which include:
 - prayer.
 - reconciling the child/youth to the group by public apology.
 - advising the supervisor.
 - advising the child's /youth's parent of the misbehaviour and the discipline.
6. Ministry Providers immediately refer health concerns and injuries to a minor's parent(s)/guardian(s) for care. Exceptions may apply in an emergency situation when immediate response is required.
7. Ministry Providers record all incidents of restraint or discipline in an incident report.

VI. Mandate Respecting One-To-One Meetings / Transportation

1. No one-to-one meetings or excursions, including transportation to or from church meetings or church events, shall occur between a leader/volunteer and a child/youth within any ministry of the Christian Reformed Church of Stratford except in one of the following circumstances:
 - (a) Prior specific approval has been given by the parent of the child/youth and prior specific approval has been given by the ministry provider's supervisor or superior.

- (b) A ministry provider in Catechism ministry or Youth Group ministry may meet one-to-one with a youth in a public place (e.g. restaurant) on only one or two occasions. Subsequent one-to-one meetings must have the approval of Council and must occur in a public place.

VII. Mandate Regarding Facilities / Physical Environment

1. All classrooms have doors with windows and mirrors where necessary to ensure a clear view of the entire room. Infant and toddler nurseries have divided doors; the upper door remains open.
2. Programs for youngest children occupy rooms closest to washrooms.
3. Classrooms and closets remain locked when not in use during ministry programs.
4. Building Committee conducts regular audits to ensure safety and cleanliness of facilities.

VIII. Mandate for Ministry Providers in Nursery

The Nursery Supervisor ensures that:

1. Names of children and caregivers present are recorded each week.
2. Children are signed in and signed out by a parent/guardian.
3. Children are picked up by a parent/guardian only, unless **prior** arrangements are made.
4. Children are picked up within 10 minutes of the end of the service/activity.
5. Children remain in designated appropriate areas; exceptions may apply in emergency situations.
6. Change tables remain in clear view of other attendants and ministry providers.
7. At least two adults, not related to each other, remain in the nursery at all times.
8. A sanitary and healthy environment is maintained in the nursery area.

IX. Mandate for Ministry Providers in Church School, Cadet, Gems, Youth Programs

The Program Leaders ensure that:

1. A designated hall monitor circulates periodically throughout the church premises to ensure the safety of all ministry program participants and ministry providers.
2. Parents/Guardians are regularly and fully informed of program guidelines.
3. Children who are pre-grade 1 are signed in and out by a parent/guardian.
4. Parents/Guardians pick up children within 15 minutes of the end of the program/activity.
5. Children wait inside the church building or alternate facility to be picked up.
6. Prior to any off-site or overnight activities, the ministry provider organizing the activity submits a written plan of supervision and care of participants to a Program Leader for approval. The ministry provider organizing the activity or the Program Leader obtains written parental/guardian permission for the participants, using the appropriate consent form. The Program Leader keeps the written plans and consent forms on file.

X. Mandate Respecting Reporting Abuse and Responding to Abuse

1. Ministry Providers report and respond to abuse following the directives of Ontario legislation; in situations not covered by Ontario law, the requirements follow the policy of Stratford CRC.
2. Any reasonable suspicion that abuse has been committed against a child or youth under the age of 16 years, committed by a person having charge of the child, together with the information upon which the suspicion is based, shall be reported to the Children's Aid Society of the County of Perth. This information shall also be reported to the supervisor of the particular church ministry and to the Council of the Christian Reformed Church of Stratford.
3. The Council of Stratford CRC responds to the needs of all persons affected by an allegation of abuse as required by law and as set out in the Appendices of this Policy.