



Abuse Prevention Plan Checklist

The following seven (7) items are generally acknowledged by experts as essential elements in establishing an effective formal abuse prevention plan:

1 STATEMENT OF POLICY drafted by an abuse prevention implementation committee affirming your organization's commitment to providing a safe environment for children and declaring zero tolerance for abuse, harassment or neglect committed by any children's or youth ministry worker, including employees, members and volunteers. This policy should be expressed in terms of your organization's statement of faith, scriptural standards and the duty of care owed to children in our society. The declared purpose of the policy should be clearly expressed; that is, preventing harm to the children in your programs, and, protecting your staff and volunteers from false or wrongful allegations.

2 DEFINITION of abuse and related issues so that all of your workers will clearly understand and be able to identify unacceptable behavior, including:

- PHYSICAL ABUSE
- SEXUAL ABUSE
- EMOTIONAL ABUSE
- CHILD NEGLECT
- HARASSMENT
- IMPROPER TOUCHING/
DISCIPLINE

3 SCREENING all children's and youth ministry workers to a degree that is appropriate with their interaction with children in your organization's care. Proper screening and guidelines should also apply to personnel who have management authority and power over other staff with respect to career advancement and performance review in order to discourage harassment. For example, assessment of risk could be based on the following type of classification:

Low Risk - fundraisers, property maintenance, general membership, etc.
Medium Risk - personnel who are never alone with children/vulnerable persons but who have contact by virtue of their position or responsibilities.
High Risk - personnel who have opportunity to be alone with children, youth and vulnerable persons, or who have power or a position of trust.

Depending on this risk assessment, some or all of the following screening procedures may be appropriate:

- Targeted recruitment of personnel
- Employee and volunteer applications
- Background reference checks
- Criminal/police record checks
- Personal interviews
- Minimum waiting periods for new volunteers prior to eligibility to work with children (6 months or more)

4 OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES should be outlined in a written manual summarizing your organization's specific guidelines for preventing abuse and harassment, including:

- Establishing advance protocol and guidelines for an Abuse Incident Response Committee to respond to particular incidents of alleged abuse or harassment
- "Team" approach to children's/youth ministries
- Discouraging "out of program" or "off-premises" contact between children/youth and your workers
- Prohibiting corporal punishment
- Identifying permissible and unacceptable forms of touching and disciplining of children
- Addressing health, safety, sanitation issues and documenting the receiving and releasing of infants and toddlers in nursery programs



- Avoiding activities that could easily lead to allegations of abuse or harassment, such as individual photography of children, unsupervised internet access, vehicle transportation by workers alone with unrelated youth, or improperly supervised sleepovers
- All workers should sign a ministry covenant agreeing to comply with policies and procedures
- Keeping documentation on file indefinitely for all workers
- Obtaining parental consent and permission for off-premises or unusual activities
- Drafting incident reporting forms which must be completed for all reports of suspected abuse

5 PREMISES modifications or alternations of your facilities which can assist in preventing and discouraging abuse incidents, including:

- Open door policy for Sunday School and boys' and girls' clubs (including windows in classrooms)
- Designated monitors circulating periodically from room to room for surveillance and to protect against false allegations
- Controlled access/entry for signing children in and out of sponsored activities, especially for nurseries
- Adequate lighting inside and outside of building where children's activities take place
- Appropriate design of washroom and shower facilities
- Locking rooms and closets when not in use during children's programs

6 TRAINING for all staff members and volunteers who regularly work with children to assist in the prevention of abuse through the following means:

- Circulation of a staff handbook containing the organization's policies and procedures
- Formal abuse prevention training through the presentation of resource materials, videos, "in-house" seminars, etc.

- Educating workers to recognize and identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and molestation
- An initial period of intensive training for all children's workers at the time of the launch of your prevention plan
- Follow-up with periodic refreshers and reassessment of your plan on an annual basis (usually each August or September prior to the startup of your Fall children's and youth ministry programming)

7 RESPONDING to all allegations or complaints of misconduct in an appropriate manner, including the appointment of an Abuse Incident Response Committee to deal with allegations in the following manner:

- Completing incident reporting forms for suspected abuse
- Satisfying statutory reporting obligations to police authorities or child protective agencies
- Expressing your organization's concern to the complainant and assuring them of your commitment in assisting the investigation
- Assurance of confidentiality for the benefit of both the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator
- Suspending alleged perpetrator from children's or youth ministry duties, pending outcome of investigation
- Refraining from admitting liability or from making public statements (to media or from the pulpit) without obtaining formal legal counsel
- Contacting your 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

"But be sure that everything is done properly and in order."
1 CORINTHIANS 14:40

ABUSE PREVENTION: *A Resource Directory*

Many church denominations and Christian associations have already established risk management initiatives to assist local church congregations and organizations in implementing abuse prevention plans. Following is a sampling of suggested resources that may be of assistance to your organization in establishing an effective prevention plan:

Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in Your Church

A complete and practical guidebook for prevention and risk reduction, including the audio tape, "What Church Leaders Should Know About Sexual Abuse", and the video tape, "Reducing the Risk". Very strongly recommended. This kit is written by Steven W. Klipowicz and others under the auspices of the Church Law and Tax Report and is available in Canada through the Pioneer Clubs Canada, P.O. Box 5447, Burlington, Ontario, L7R 4L2, Tel # 1-800-465-5437.

Preventing Child Abuse, A Guide for Churches

by Beth Swagman

How can a church prevent child abuse from occurring in its facilities and among its members? This informative handbook will help you set in place a comprehensive child abuse prevention program. Available through Faith Alive Christian Resources, an alliance member of Gospelcom. 1-800-333-8300 or <http://www.shop.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/CRCPublications.storefront/EN/product/155240>

Child Abuse and Neglect: Considerations for Youth-Serving Nonprofits

Criminal History Record Checks: Screening Out Unsuitable Personnel

Screening Staff and Volunteers.

These and other articles of interest are available through "Risk Facts", a publication by the Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 410, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202)785-3891.

Policies and Procedures Manual For Dealing With Sexual Misconduct,

available through The Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee, 401 Cumberland Avenue, Knoxville, Tennessee, 37902 http://easttennessee.anglican.org/policy/sexual_misconduct.htm .

Recommendations Concerning the Development of a Church Policy for Child Abuse Prevention and A Child Abuse Prevention Sample Policy.

Prepared by Rev. M. McCormick and Dr. L.P. Mitchell for the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces and available on their website at <http://www.baptist-atlantic.ca/Child.htm>

Harassment and Abuse: Developing A Prevention Plan,

a paper presented to the Canadian Council of Christian Charities Annual Conference (1999) by William R. Appleby. Contact David Amy at Amy, Appleby and Brennan, Barristers and Solicitors, 372 Erb Street West, Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 1W6, Tel. (519) 884-7330 email: aab-lawoffice@rogers.com

Prevention Plan: Policies and Procedures;

"That a child would be spared abuse... That a worker would be cleared of false allegations... this is why this Prevention Plan exists." Available through the Evangelical Missionary Church, Canada East District, 130 Fergus Avenue, Kitchener, Ontario, N2A 2H2, Tel. (519) 894-9800.

A Plan To Protect the Children, Youth and Leaders at your Church,

an excellent abuse prevention plan available through the Canadian Ministries Department of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), 2450 Milltower Court, Mississauga, Ontario, L5N 5Z6, Tel (905)542-7400 .



DISCLAIMER: This resource directory is not intended as a complete listing of the abuse prevention plans available for Christian ministries. Many other valuable resource materials and sample prevention plans are available through various church denominations, professional associations, umbrella organizations, governmental agencies, law offices and consultants in Canada and the United States. Although Robertson Hall Insurance Inc. is making this directory of worthwhile resources available to its client organizations, we do not recommend any one particular plan. If you have not already done so, we strongly urge your organization and its leaders to research, develop, implement and maintain a formal abuse prevention plan that is appropriate for your particular childrens' and youth ministries and activities.



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