Administration of Children’s & Family Ministry

Church Risk Management Policy Template

A Note to Students:

What follows is a template you can use to update or create a risk management policy for a local church. While I have tried to cover every area recommended by the Robertson Hall insurance guidelines and consulted a variety of sources in creating this (see below), before using it in a local church you need to do two things (i.e., you can’t just plug in your church info and use this ‘as is’):

1. Consult your senior pastor (obviously!). S/He will have insights on the culture and context of the church and may have some additional items to include or consider.
2. Do not forget that ***YOU WILL NEED TO CONSULT THE CHURCH’S INSURANCE PROVIDER AND LEGAL COUNSEL*** before it is implemented, so make sure you send them a copy to have them look it over.

You should also be aware of the following:

* It is a good idea to list the inception and/or revision dates on your policy, so you always know you are working with the most up-to-date version.
* Red type indicates places where you will need to replace the text with information specific to your local context (e.g., the church name, etc.).
* Green type denotes items or information that may not be required by insurance but is still ***highly recommended*** to include in your risk management policy.
* In places where there was variance between the Robertson Hall insurance guidelines and other sources, I have usually sided with Robertson Hall because they insure churches while the other sources don’t (an example of this is the age that ministry personnel are permitted to be in a class alone).
	+ The few exceptions to this are (a) the section dealing with ratios (Section 4, ‘supervision’, #5): Robertson Hall recommends ‘reasonable ratios’ but does not make any specific recommendations as to what these are, whereas other sources do. This is also why the ratios are not listed in green type (i.e., because — in my opinion — it looks like Robertson Hall requires — or at least recommends — ratios, they just don’t specify what they should be). (b) the number of references required: Robertson-Hall says minimum of two whereas *Plan to Protect* requires three.
* While much of this is adapted from *Plan to Protect*, I would still advise against calling your policy by that name (even though you own the manual) unless you can definitively prove that 80% of it (i.e., the amount they require for you to use their title) came from them. This is why I use ‘Risk Management Policy’ instead.
* A note on Criminal Record Checks: Who can be subject to a CRC and what the police can disclose may vary depending on your province, so check with your local police detachment. Getting them done by the police is recommended but Robertson Hall does list alternative options — I recommend that you consult with your insurance provider before you pursue those alternatives.

Sources Used:

Alley, S. (2002) *Growing a healthy children’s ministry*. Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing

Bissel, M. (2016) *Plan to protect*. Winnipeg, Canada: Word Alive Press

Boe, L. (2009). “Safety and security in children’s ministry” *In It worked for us* (Edited by Judy

Comstock). Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Robertson Hall Insurance Inc. (2019) *Abuse prevention made easy(er)*

Insurance Bureau of Canada website

Government of Alberta website

Government of Alberta Childcare Licencing Act

***BEST CHURCH EVER***

Risk Management Policy

Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults and Leaders

**Section 1: Statement of Policy**

***BEST CHURCH EVER*** recognizes that we have a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults participating in church programmes that are under our auspices and authority. ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** recognizes that we not only have a duty of care towards, but a scriptural mandate to care for them. Because of this, we recognize that abuse, harassment and neglect of children, youth and/or vulnerable adults are criminal acts that are morally and spiritually wrong. They violate human conscience and dignity and cause emotional, physical and spiritual trauma. They are a violation of God’s moral law within the trusted context of a relationship. They have devastating effects on the credibility of the church’s ministry and the name of Christ. Because of this we have adopted a ‘zero tolerance’ attitude towards and take all appropriate steps to prevent abuse, harassment and neglect from occurring.

It is also a concern of ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** that leadership and workers not be subject to false allegations and/or accusations of improper conduct towards children, youth and/or vulnerable adults in our care. This policy provides guidelines for church leadership and ministry personnel regarding acceptable behaviour. It also establishes due process for handling allegations and complaints that ensures fairness to all parties involved.

Everyone who teaches, ministers to or cares for children, youth and vulnerable adults under the auspices of ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** is required to follow the policies and procedures as defined in this document. The church leadership of ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** have formally approved this policy and are responsible for its implementation and ensuring that its requirements are fulfilled. We will do this by conducting an annual audit of our policies and facilities to ensure compliance. Church leadership may not modify or overrule any provisions stated here, but where circumstances arise that are not addressed herein, they shall exercise their discretion in deciding on appropriate courses of action.

**Section 2: Definitions**

Because different churches define ministry roles in a variety of ways using many diverse titles, we want to clarify the following terms regarding the internal operations of the various ministries of ***BEST CHURCH EVER***:

***Church ministry terms*** (these are not required, but are good ideas to include):

*Church leadership*

Referring to the Church Board of Elders, deacons, ministers and senior staff.

*Ministry Lead*

Individuals who have successfully completed ***BEST CHURCH EVER’S*** recruitment and screening process and who have been given the responsibility to give direction to programmes or ministries for children, youth and/or vulnerable persons. The term includes screened volunteers, full-time, part-time, short-term or contract staff and pastoral staff whether or not they receive a stipend/salary.

*Ministry Personnel*

Individuals who have successfully completed ***BEST CHURCH EVER’S*** recruitment and screening process and is now deemed to be a person who can be put in a position of trust with children, youth or vulnerable persons. Ministry personnel include screened volunteers, full-time, part-time, short-term or contract staff and pastoral staff whether or not they receive a stipend/salary.

*Prospective Ministry Personnel*

Students or adults associated with the church congregation either by membership or regular attendance as an adherent and awaiting approval by church leadership or ministry leads for service.

*Risk Management Committee*

A group of people responsible for coordinating, screening and placing approved ministry personnel into the ministry of the church.

*Ministry Personnel File*

A file kept on each prospective ministry personnel which includes the ministry application form, record of criminal records check, record of reference checks and record of the interview by the ministry lead.

*Position of Trust*

Leadership roles that may place ministry personnel in situations where they are involved in making decisions about the health or welfare of those in their care, may require them to provide intimate care (e.g., diapering, washroom and/or off-site supervision, etc.) of children, youth and/or vulnerable adults and (while not desirable or recommended) may find themselves alone with those in their care.

*Occasional Observer*

Individuals who visit and observe a ministry programme on rare occasions. This term includes parents assisting their own children. Occasional observers do not need to be screened and trained, however, their access to minors will be limited and they will never be placed in a position of trust with children who are not their own. That means they will not be asked to assume responsibility for children and will not be allowed or asked to take children to the washroom.

*Children/Youth*

While we recognize that children are defined as anyone under the age of 18, for clarity we will explain this further. We consider ‘children’ to be anyone under the age of 13 and ‘youth’ between the ages of 13 — 17.

*Vulnerable Adults*

Persons who, because of their age, disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, are in a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by persons in a position of authority or trust relative to them.

***Terms Denoting Abusive and/or Unacceptable Behaviour and Actions: (These are required)***

In order for our ministry personnel to better understand and be able to identify unacceptable behaviour, the following definitions are used:

*Harassment*

A single or repeated incident of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, comment, bullying or action intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group.

*Discipline*

Should be restorative, not punitive, and involves establishing clear boundaries of acceptable behaviour by children, youth and/or vulnerable adults. It includes informing them of our expectations and maintaining them with firm and kind expressions of authority. Inappropriate discipline includes yelling or screaming, making threats and physical harm. Corporal punishment is unacceptable and will never be used by ministry personnel at ***BEST CHURCH EVER***.

*Neglect*

Any lack of care that causes serious harm to a child’s development or endangers children, youth and/or vulnerable adults in any way. Failure to meet their day-to-day basic physical needs includes not providing adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter and health care; appropriate supervision; and protection from harm. Emotional neglect is not meeting their ongoing emotional needs for affection and a sense of belonging.

*Emotional Abuse*

Verbal attacks on a child’s, youth’s and/or vulnerable adult’s sense of self, repeated humiliation or rejection. Exposure to violence, drugs, alcohol abuse or severe conflict in the home, forced isolation, restraint or causing him or her to be afraid much of the time may also cause emotional harm. Emotional abuse is usually part of a pattern of how he or she is being treated.

*Physical Abuse*

Is the intentional use of force on any part of a child’s, youth’s and/or vulnerable adult’s body that results in injuries. It may be a single incident or a series or pattern of incidents.

*Sexual Abuse*

Is the improper exposure of a child, youth and/or vulnerable adult to sexual contact, activity or behaviour. It includes any sexual touching, intercourse, exploitation or exposure and can be perpetuated by anyone, including a parent or guardian, caregiver, extended family, friend, neighbour or stranger.

*Improper Touching*

This includes behaviour with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults such as kissing (or coaxing them to kiss you), extended hugging or tickling, touching in any area that would be covered by a modest bathing suit (except when assisting a child, youth and/or vulnerable adult with toileting as outlined below), carrying or having them sit on your lap.

*Appropriate Touch*

This behaviour done in full view of others and includes taking the hand of a child, youth and/or vulnerable adult to lead him/her to an activity, putting an arm around them to quiet or comfort them, patting a child, youth and/or vulnerable adult on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her, and holding a pre-school aged child who is crying.

**Section 3: Recruitment and Screening**

As part of our responsibility to care for and protect the children, youth and vulnerable adults in our care, all those who desire to serve in ministry are required to go through our screening process. All information is considered confidential and any documents will be kept in a locked and secure location indefinitely that will only be accessible by the ministry lead, church leadership and the risk management committee.

1. Church leadership and/or the ministry lead determine if an individual is a suitable or potential candidate for ministry and has been part of the congregation of ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** for a minimum of six months prior to applying.
2. Prospective ministry personnel go through the recruitment and screening process managed by the ministry lead. Individuals will complete and submit the following before they receive final approval:
	* A ministry application form
	* A signed ministry covenant
	* A personal interview
	* Reference checks
	* A Criminal Record Check (for those age **16+) — Edmonton RCMP can perform a CRC on anyone aged 12+, so put your required age here — 16 is the age recommended by *Plan to Protect*.**
	* Orientation that includes initial risk management training

This process must be completed within a three-month period of time and final approval will be signed, dated and placed in the ministry personnel file.

Qualifications for ministry

1. A minimum six-month waiting period is required for those who would like to work with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults, during which they must regularly attend.
	1. The only exception to this will be because they have transferred from another ***BEST DENOMINATION EVER*** church in which they have been long-time members and ministry volunteers in good standing. Reference checks from at least three unrelated individuals must still be received including one from their previous senior pastor or children’s ministry lead.
2. Ministry personnel serving with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults are members or adherents of ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** in good standing who support its doctrines, constitution and/or bylaws.
3. All ministry personnel are required to participate in risk management training twice each year (see below).
4. All ministry personnel must sign a ministry covenant that includes a statement confirming that they have read, understood and agree to comply with the policies and procedures outlined in this document.
5. Criminal record checks will be renewed every **3-5 years (insurance requires that this be done every 5 years or less, so put whatever your church requires here)**.
6. Individuals that have been accused, convicted or are under the suspicion of crimes against children, youth and/or vulnerable adults or who have been convicted of violent (or other relevant) crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programmes involving children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.
7. Failure to comply with these qualifications could result in suspension or release from ministry placements. ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** reserves the right to reject applications for any reason including prior criminal history. However, prospective ministry personnel may withdraw from the application process at any time without penalty should they choose to reapply in the future.

Ministry leads will periodically review the ongoing suitability of all ministry personnel and ensure that criminal record checks are kept up to date.

**Section 4: Ministry Operations**

***BEST CHURCH EVER*** has adopted a team-based approach in everything we do. All ministry personnel strive towards the same goal: to ***BEST MISSION STATEMENT EVER***. The following operational procedures will help us do that.

Supervision:

The following supervision requirements apply to programmes, ministries and ministry events under the auspices and authority of ***BEST CHURCH EVER***.

1. Only ministry personnel will be allowed in ministry areas during programmes and events. The only exceptions to this are occasional observers (see below) who will be clearly identified and parents/guardians who are specifically asked to enter to assist with their children at drop-off and pick-up times by ministry personnel. All ministry personnel will be clearly identified with a nametag and/or approved clothing so they can be recognized.
2. To provide adequate supervision of children, youth and vulnerable adults in our care (and to comply with our insurance requirements) one of the following will always be in place:
	* A minimum of two unrelated ministry personnel will be in place for supervision (except in the case of an emergency), or,
	* One ministry personnel will be present — only when *absolutely* necessary — with windows having clear lines of visibility in place or the door open.
3. Ministry personnel between the ages of 12 and 17 must be assigned to work alongside another ministry personnel aged 18 or older. It is recommended (you could even require if you want to) that there be at least a four-year age gap between ministry personnel and the people they serve.
4. Designated adult ministry personnel will circulate through the different areas of ministry (i.e., ‘hall monitors’) every 15-20 minutes.
5. Occasional observers will have their attendance recorded and kept on file with the attendance for that day. They will be clearly identified in a way that is distinct from ministry personnel and will never be placed in a position of trust with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.
6. To ensure adequate supervision, we will maintain the following ratios as a minimum standard in our ministry activities. More supervision may be required for off-site events, higher-risk activities (e.g., hiking, swimming, etc.) or special circumstances:
	* Nursery (Infants - 17 months): 1:3
	* Toddler/Preschool (18 months - 5 yrs.): 1:5
	* Elementary (Gr. 1-6) and youth: 1:10
7. We will make every effort to avoid high-risk activities like sleepovers or overnight events, but if they do happen, only ministry personnel will be allowed to supervise at such events (i.e., no occasional observers will be permitted unless they undergo full screening prior to the event). In addition to this, the following will also be enforced:
	* There will be separate sleeping quarters for males and females
	* Sharing beds between ministry personnel and children, youth and/or vulnerable adults is prohibited.
	* Ministry personnel must be awake as long as the children, youth and/or vulnerable adults to ensure adequate supervision.
	* Ministry personnel will not change in front of children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.

Washroom Supervision:

Parents/guardians will be encouraged to take care of their children’s diapering/toileting need prior to placing them in our care.

General guidelines:

1. Children are never to go to the washroom alone.
2. Ministry personnel under the age of 16 will not be allowed to take children, youth and/or vulnerable adults to or assist them in the washroom unless accompanied by an adult ministry personnel.
3. No ministry personnel will ever be alone with a child, youth or vulnerable adult in an unsupervised washroom and will never enter a cubicle with them and shut the door.
4. Children should be accompanied to the door of the washroom and ministry personnel will check inside to make sure nobody is hanging around in the washroom. They will wait by the washroom entrance in the hallway until they hear anything suspicious or are called upon for assistance.
5. If someone needs assistance in a washroom cubicle, ministry personnel may enter to assist under the following conditions:
	1. The door to the washroom must be propped open and the adult ministry personnel must stand in the open cubicle doorway while a second adult waits by the washroom entrance.
	2. Ministry personnel must consider the privacy of those using the washroom.
	3. Male ministry personnel may never assist females in the washroom.

Nursery:

1. When possible, diapering should always be done by the parent/guardian in the designated change area and follow the posted diaper changing guidelines.
2. If necessary, adult ministry personnel will change diapers in full view of other ministry personnel.

Preschool:

One of the following will be adhered to when taking preschool children to the washroom:

1. Two ministry personnel will escort a group of children to the washroom, or,
2. One ministry personnel will escort a group of children to the washroom with a designated hall monitor appointed to assist with washroom duties.

Elementary:

Because we have designated ministry personnel circulating through hallways and ministry areas on a regular basis, children in grades 1-6 may go to the washroom using a ‘buddy system’ (i.e., at least two at a time) unaccompanied by ministry personnel.

Supervision for Off-Site Activities and Vehicle Transportation:

Any off-site trips, activities or events will not be undertaken unless the following are in place:

1. A minimum of two adult ministry personnel (in keeping with the ratios listed above) are present at all times.
2. Signed parental permission, informed consent and authorization of medical release is obtained prior to participation in each event. These will be kept on file permanently.

Vehicle transportation:

Whenever possible, ministry personnel are not to drive children, youth and/or vulnerable adults in their personal vehicles. If the need arises for them to do so, the following guidelines must be observed:

1. Children, youth and/or vulnerable adults are never to be transported one-on-one.
2. All drivers must fill out a volunteer driver agreement.
3. A minimum of two unrelated adult ministry personnel will be in the vehicle at all times. (Robertson Hall allows for ***but does not recommend*** one adult ministry personnel can drive as long as there are at least two minors in the vehicle)
4. The driver of the vehicle will be at least 25 years of age. (Robertson Hall also states that exceptions can be made for safe, mature ministry personnel)
5. Driving records will be checked to ensure that drivers have no at-fault accidents and no more than two minor traffic violations in the last three years. (Robertson Hall lists this under their ‘best’ practices, but does not *require* it)

Receiving and Releasing Children:

1. Attendance of children, youth and/or vulnerable adults (and the ministry personnel on duty) will be taken at all classes/ministry events. These records will be kept on file permanently.
2. Children, youth and/or vulnerable adults are never to be dropped off or enter ministry areas without ministry personnel present.
3. Children in nursery and preschool must be signed in and out of programmes and/or ministry events by a parent/guardian indicated by initialing the appropriate spaces on a printed sign-in/out sheet. These records will be kept on file permanently.
4. Elementary aged children are not required to sign-in or out, but they will not be dismissed after the ministry event is over. Rather, they must remain in the ministry area until a parent/guardian (or his/her designate) arrives to pick them up and the children demonstrate recognition.

Computer and Internet Use: (this is required, but the specific wording and guidelines are up to you)

1. Computers and/or Tablets are used for ministry purposes (e.g., taking attendance, ministry presentations, etc.) and will not be left out and are not available for children, youth and/or vulnerable adults to use. All of these devices will require a password that will not be shared with non-ministry personnel.
2. Wi-Fi passwords will not be distributed to children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.

Appropriate Communication, Relationship and Social Media Guidelines:

1. Relationships between ministry personnel and children, youth and/or vulnerable adults are to be conducted within the parameters set by ***BEST CHURCH EVER***. Communication outside of scheduled programmes should only be done with the knowledge, consent and (where possible) involvement of the parents/guardians. When communicating with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults, we recommend:
* When communicating by telephone, the parent/guardian will be included on the call.
* All email communication will be copied to the parent/guardian and ministry lead.
* Communication via SMS and online social networks (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, etc.) must be avoided for the protection of the child, youth and/or vulnerable adult as well as ministry personnel.
* No photographs or video will be taken by ministry personnel of children, youth and/or vulnerable adults without prior written consent from the parent/guardian.
* No photos or video taken by ministry personnel that identify children, youth and/or vulnerable adults will be used in advertising, shared internally (e.g., watching a video of day camp in a service), posted on the internet or to online social networks administered by ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** without prior written consent from the parent/guardian.
1. Any counselling session between adult ministry personnel/leads and children, youth and/or vulnerable adults will be conducted in a public place or in an office with an unobstructed window, the door open and (ideally) others nearby.
2. One-on-one mentoring must be done in public settings and only under the following conditions:
	* The ministry lead is informed of the time and place of the meeting prior to the meeting and,
	* Written consent from the parent/guardian is obtained, and,
	* When separate transportation is obtained.
3. Ministry personnel may not pursue dating relationships with youth and/or vulnerable adults in their care.

Health and Safety Guidelines:

General Guidelines:

1. Parents/guardians will be contacted when an injury, accident or medical emergency occurs.
2. Incident reports are to be completed for any and all accidents. Injuries are to be reported to the ministry lead.
3. Individuals are encouraged to become certified and trained in first aid/CPR.
4. The names and contact information of first aid/CPR certified individuals will be posted in prominent places in ministry areas for easy access.
5. Children, youth and/or vulnerable adults who have severe allergies will have the information brought to the attention of the ministry lead and noted on their registration form. This information will be posted in ministry areas for easy access and ministry personnel who care for them will be informed.
	* We are ‘nut aware’ and ‘scent aware’ and as such we will take reasonable precautions to avoid their use. All snacks we serve are nut-free, and ministry personnel will be asked to avoid using products with strong scents (e.g., perfume, cologne, etc.).
	* However, because outside functions (e.g., facility rentals, etc.) may bring in things like snacks that contain nuts, and visitors may use scented products, we cannot absolutely guarantee a nut or scent-free environment.
6. The cleanliness of toys, tables and surfaces will be performed regularly between services and/or ministry events (this is a recommendation in Alberta for COVID-19 but is a good idea to keep regardless).
7. We will make sure that all toys are in good working order and any broken or damaged toys will not be used.
8. Any precautions you are taking because of COVID-19 (e.g., physical distancing in classrooms, no singing, etc.) in accordance with your provincial recommendations should be listed here (or included as an amendment in an appendix).

Illness:

A child, youth and/or vulnerable adult who is ill and could therefore expose others to illness will be refused entry into ministry events and programmes (the same applies to ministry personnel when they are scheduled). Factors and symptoms to consider are:

* 1. Fever, unusual fatigue, irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhoea, inflamed mouth and throat.
	2. Children, youth and/or vulnerable adults (or ministry personnel) with a known communicable disease.

Medications:

1. Ministry personnel are not to give or apply any medications. Parents/guardians are to be contacted and should administer all medications.
2. Medication is not to be left in a classroom. When a child brings medication, the medication is to be kept in the possession of the ministry lead or his or her designate.
3. In the extreme case where Epi-pens and puffers are needed for allergies or asthma, written instructions are to be provided by the parent or guardian to the ministry lead. Requests should be written, signed, dated and filed permanently.
4. Topical medications for diaper changing purposes are to be used only when instructed and provided by the parent or guardian.

Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood:

1. Blood pathogen policies will be posted in all ministry areas.
2. When a person is injured, the individual is to be separated from others. The area where the injury occurred or where any blood may have dropped on the floor or toys is also to be isolated.
3. Ministry personnel need to ensure that no other people have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury.
4. Non- latex gloves are to be used when bandaging the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.
5. Extreme care will be taken in cleaning up all blood and bloody bandages and the safe and secure removal of waste and disposal of gloves to a secure waste removal container.
6. Hands are to be washed carefully with sterilizing soap (for at least 30 seconds) available in first aid kit.
7. When ministering to children with HIV or Aids, specific guidelines for the education and care of these children will be developed and followed.

Field Trips and Overnight Events:

In addition to the supervision requirements outlined above, the following provisions will be in force regarding these events:

1. They will be approved by the ministry lead and parents/guardians will be notified of them at least one week in advance.
2. A detailed itinerary will be provided to parents/guardians and a copy will be placed on file in the church office.
3. If transportation is required, one of the following will apply:
	* Commercial transport (e.g., chartering a bus, etc.) will be used, or,
	* Parents/guardians must drop-off and pick-up children, youth and/or vulnerable adults at the event location. Ministry personnel will not drive children, youth and/or vulnerable adults (besides their own) to and from events.

Registration and Compliance with the Personal Information Protection Electronic Data Act (PIPEDA):

1. Registration forms will be available for all programmes. It is the responsibility of the ministry lead or ministry personnel to ensure that forms are completed and submitted for all participants. In the case of a visitor attending, the person bringing the child, youth and/or vulnerable adult will be considered the guardian and the registration form must be sent home at the conclusion of the first programme. All effort will be made to keep registration forms updated and current. Registration forms will be filed and stored indefinitely.
	* A statement will be included on all registration forms which stipulates the purpose and extent for collecting personal information (‘Purposes and Extent’).
2. A release and permission statement will be included on all registration forms releasing the church from unforeseen and accidental damages along with contact information in case of an accident.
3. The inclusion of ‘liability shields’ on permission forms will be used for activities that involve a level of risk.

Policy Maintenance:

1. Church leadership and ministry leads will make sure that an annual internal or external audit of our policies and facilities is conducted to ensure risk management policy compliance.
2. All records will be kept indefinitely in a locked and secure location to ensure confidentiality and to avoid misplacing or allowing the wrongful abstraction of documents.
3. In compliance with privacy laws, we will disclose the reasons we are collecting and storing this information on each application.
4. All ministry personnel will be required to participate in risk management training twice each year (see below).

**Section 5: Facilities**

The following are measures ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** has taken with our facilities to promote safety and prevent and discourage abuse instances:

1. We will ensure that all rooms where ministry to children, youth and/or vulnerable adults takes place will have either a window in the door or wall with an unobstructed view into the ministry space. Where this is not possible, the door will be left open at all times.
2. We will have ministry personnel circulating through all ministry areas every 15-20 minutes.
3. Adequate lighting shall be maintained at all times in any room or place where activities for children, youth and/or vulnerable adults is being conducted.
4. Ideally, entrances to ministry spaces will not be lockable, but in cases where this is not possible or unavoidable (e.g., locking the sanctuary to prevent sound equipment theft, etc.) the following is required:
	* Rooms (including storage rooms and closets) not in use during ministry times will be locked.
	* Locked rooms and storage areas should be designed in such a way that anyone locked inside can safely get out.
5. Emergency evacuation procedures will be reviewed annually by church leadership. These procedures are to be posted in a visible place in each ministry place stating the planned route of escape to the nearest exit.
6. Church leadership, in cooperation with the ministry lead, will arrange for annual fire and evacuation drills.
7. A first aid kit will be kept in each classroom/ministry space with ministry personnel being educated on the kit’s contents. As a minimum standard, each kit will contain a pair of disposable non-latex gloves, disinfectant towelettes, two or three 4” x 4” gauze pads for blood absorption, small scissors and band-aids.
8. In addition to the first aid kits, a master first aid kit will be available in the church building and in any church-owned vehicle. These kits should include a micro shield CPR mask, instant ice packs, sterilizing soap, tweezers, thermometer, an emergency instruction manual and additional quantities of the items mentioned above in the classroom first aid kit.
9. Washrooms, classrooms, hallways and all premises shall be maintained and kept orderly and clean.
10. Outdoor playground facilities will have safe use instructions (including any age restrictions on its use) posted at various points around the space.

**Section 6: Risk Management Training**

Training is required twice each year for all ministry personnel who regularly work with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults to assist in the prevention of abuse through the following means:

1. Initial formal training on the full risk management policy that includes:
	* Educating ministry personnel about their legal obligation to report suspected abuse.
	* How to recognize and identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and molestation.
	* Reviewing sample case studies.
	* Distribution of handbooks (i.e., ‘pocket guides’) that contain a summary of our risk management policies and procedures.
2. Follow-up refresher training that emphasizes operational procedures, facilities and response requirements (sections 4, 5 and 7 of this policy document).

**Section 7: Responding to Allegations**

In order to respond to allegations or complaints of abuse appropriately, ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** will do the following:

1. Incident report forms will be completed for all instances of suspected abuse or injury.
2. We will make sure that all ministry personnel are aware that they are legally required to report suspected abuse to the authorities (see below).
3. No persons, including church leadership, will assume the function of assessing, substantiating or investigating the need for intervention or interpretation of suspected abuse.
4. When an allegation is made, the senior pastor or his/her designate will notify the church’s insurance provider and seek legal counsel.
5. If the suspected abuse happened in the context of church ministries or was allegedly committed by a church member or attendee, the parents/guardians of the alleged victim will be notified by the senior pastor or church leadership.
6. Without admitting legal liability, ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** will express their concern to the complainant and their families and assure them of our commitment in assisting the investigation.
7. We will make sure confidentiality is maintained at all times for the benefit of both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator.
8. When an accusation is made, the alleged perpetrator will be immediately suspended from all ministry duties without presuming guilt, pending the outcome of a police investigation.
9. ***BEST CHURCH EVER*** will only make public statements to individuals, the media or from the pulpit after obtaining (and on the advice of) legal counsel.
10. If ministry personnel suspect that abuse is occurring, they are legally obligated to report it. They will need to call their local Child and Family Services Authority or Delegated First Nations Agency, or call the Child Abuse Hotline at 1.800.387.KIDS (5437) or police/RCMP (see “What happens when I make a report?” below).

**What are some signs that someone may be neglected or abused?**

* Someone who is continually hungry, dirty or unsuitably dressed for the weather.
* A young child who is often left alone or is inadequately supervised.
* Someone who is extremely withdrawn or is usually aggressive to other people.
* Unexplained bruises or injuries.
* A child who shows unusual knowledge of sexual behaviours beyond their age of development or who exhibits sexualized behaviour around adults or other children.
* A child or adolescent who does not want to be at home or runs away from home.

**When a child, youth or vulnerable adult discloses abuse, ministry personnel will:**

1. Stay calm and react without shock, disbelief, anger, judgement or fear.
2. Let the person tell you what happened in his or her own words without interruption.
3. Listen carefully without asking questions.
4. Support and acknowledge the person’s feelings.
5. Reassure them that it is right to tell someone and that it is not their fault.
6. Acknowledge how they are feeling (scared, angry, embarrassed, hurt, sad).
7. Help them feel comforted and supported by saying things like:
	* + - “I believe you and I will support you.”
			- “It is okay to feel scared, angry and hurt.”
			- “I will try to help you figure out what happens next.”
			- “You are brave for talking about this and it is right to tell someone.”
8. Soon after they tell you what is happening, find a private place. Write down what you heard and saw. Be sure to:
	* + Use the same words they used.
		+ Describe the way they looked, behaved and other things you noticed.
		+ Keep your notes private and secure.
9. **Contact your local Child and Family Services Authority or Delegated First Nations Agency, or call the Child Abuse Hotline at 1.800.387.KIDS (5437), or police/RCMP.**

**What happens when I make a report?**

All reports are confidential, and you can report anonymously or give your name and number. When you make a report, you may be asked to include the following information (it is okay if you don’t have all of it):

*Information about yourself:*

* + How you know them.
	+ How long you have known them.
	+ What you saw, heard or believe may be happening, or what someone else told you.
	+ Whether they or their family knows you are calling.
	+ Anyone else you know who could provide information about them or their family.
	+ If you are willing to assist the person and family going forward.

*Information about the person:*

* + Their name, age, gender, address and phone number.
	+ Any concerns for their immediate safety.
	+ Whether they are with you or someone else right now.
	+ What other support people they have.
	+ Whether they go to child-care or school, and the name and location if they do.
	+ Their cultural identity (e.g., African, Indigenous, European, etc.)
	+ Any medical conditions, behavioural or developmental concerns that you are aware of.
	+ What they may have told you about the abuse, including when and where they said it happened and how long it has been going on.

*Information about the family:*

* + The parents’/guardians’ names, approximate ages and address.
	+ Where they live, work or go to school.
	+ Any information about their family relationships and supports.
	+ Any information about their cultural connections or supports.
	+ Any strengths that they may have.
	+ Whether there are any professionals supporting the family.
	+ Their ability to understand English or any other communication issues.
	+ Whether they know about the concern or are involved in it.
	+ Anything about the situation or the parents or guardians that would cause a threat for an investigator.

*Information about the sexual exploiter:*

* + Their name, approximate age and address.
	+ What they look like.
	+ The vehicle they drive and the license plate number.
	+ Where they live, work or go to school.
	+ Anything about the situation that would cause a threat for the person or an investigator.

After you call, the authorities may connect with you to clarify with you something that you said or ask follow-up questions. Your identity will not be shared with anyone.