

Oxford Church of the Nazarene

PLAN TO PROTECT

***Vulnerable Persons,
Children, Youth
and Leaders***

**Policy #1
January, 2020**

PLAN TO PROTECT

*“For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of man.”
(2 Corinthians 8:9)*

This document addresses the issue of physical and sexual abuse, particularly in the context of children, youth and vulnerable persons. It recognizes the spiritual, legal and moral obligation that the Church of the Nazarene in Canada has in preventing such activities. It acknowledges the necessity for the denomination in Canada to have unified, consistent and thorough policies and practices in this area. It briefly describes the organizational structure of the Church and the responsibilities of each level of administration in addressing issues. It describes the underlying philosophy of the Church and defines the principles and policies that must govern its response.

THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE IN CANADA

The governing document of the Church of the Nazarene around the world is the current edition of the *Manual*. It contains the Church’s Constitution, Articles of Faith, Organizational Structure and Government. The General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene is the supreme doctrine formulating and lawmaking body of the Church. The *Manual* contains the decisions and judgments of the ministerial and lay delegates to this assembly, which convene every four years.

The Church of the Nazarene in Canada contains three levels of organization: National, District and Local. It should be recognized that although there is an organizational relationship between a District and the local churches, each local church enjoys considerable autonomy in terms of staffing, programs and facilities.

1.0 Foundation

1.1 It is recognized that the church has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children and youth participating in programs that are under its auspices and authority. Child abuse is not only a criminal act but is also a behavior that violates human conscience and dignity as well as causing emotional, physical and spiritual trauma to victims. In addition, it has destructive consequences for abusers. It is a violation of God’s moral law within the trusted context of relationship. It has devastating effects on the credibility of the church’s ministry and the name of Christ.

It is essential that the church take all appropriate steps to prevent incidents of abuse from occurring. It is also the concern of the Church that the leadership and workers not be subject to false accusations of improper conduct towards children and youth.

1.2 In the absence of intentional preventative policies, churches can be extremely vulnerable to charges of abuse, whether proven to be true or not. Some of the reasons for this include:

Trust: Churches generally strive for an atmosphere of trust.

Lack of Screening: Churches often allow newcomers, of whom little background is known, to become involved in children or youth ministries. Because of shortage of help and high turnover, potential staff members are often not screened as carefully as they ought.

Opportunity: Unsupervised nurseries, children’s programs and youth activities (especially outings and overnight events) are all potential risk situations.

1.3 Good risk management practices, including prevention guidelines, do not detract from Christian ministries. They help the organization and leaders by:

- a) Covering our children and youth programs in prayer.
- b) Better protecting the children, young people and adults in its care.
- c) Avoiding situations where volunteers and employees are placed in adverse situations and safeguarding them with procedures to defend against false allegations.
- d) Providing a positive testimony to the community by adhering to standards that equal or exceed society's requirements.
- e) Demonstrating that the organization's leaders (i.e. board members and staff) have exhibited due diligence and care in accordance with statutory duties and legal obligations.
- f) Avoiding unnecessary litigation that can drain the organization's time and resources away from its operations and ministries.

2.0 Principles

The Church of the Nazarene in Canada desires that its local churches as well as its district and national organizations be communities of faith that manifest the love of God, demonstrated in His eternal plan of salvation; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ shown in His life, death and resurrection; and the energizing transforming presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Church strives to be a loving, redemptive, nurturing fellowship - a safe place where the dignity of each person is affirmed. We recognize, however, that we live in a broken, sinful world and that even the church is not exempt from this reality. The spiritual root of all forms of abuse is the irresponsible and selfish use of power, including influence that comes in the form of otherwise legitimate and God-given trust.

In formulating policies and procedures to prevent or respond to abuse we are committed to the following guiding principles.

We affirm that:

- a) Prayer is important. All programs are prayerfully considered and all leaders, children and youth covered in protection prayer.
- b) Children are important. Christ put great importance on the welfare of children, as recorded in scripture. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them" (Mark 10:14). Also, Luke wrote, "Stumbling blocks are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come. It would be better if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble" (Luke 17:1-2).
- c) Integrity is important. A high priority is placed on the integrity and witness of the church. We want to do our utmost to protect its reputation and ministry.
- d) Responsibility is important. The protection and well-being of children and youth is the concern of the church as a whole.
- e) Volunteers are important. Those who work with children and youth need to be protected from wrongful accusations.

We concur with the following statement made in 2002 by the Board of General Superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene.

"Recent media coverage of cases of clergy sexual abuse have heightened our awareness of the delicate nature of the relationships which clergy and other Christian workers have with the people to whom they minister, whatever their age, gender, or circumstance. The position of the Church of the Nazarene has always been that those who minister must be above reproach in every regard. They must not abuse the positions of trust and authority given them and must never soil the good name of the Church of Jesus Christ by behavior that is in any way less than utterly pure and trustworthy. . . . We encourage our people to carefully select those persons, whether clergy or lay, who work with children and youth." (The complete statement is available at www.nazarene.org/superintendents/statement)

POLICIES SPECIFIC TO OXFORD CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

This document seeks to protect both those considered to be vulnerable persons and those working with them. It seeks to do this by expounding on Recruitment, Operations, Facilities, Training and Reporting.

Vulnerable persons are defined as a person who, because of his or her age, a disability, or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, is (a) in a position of dependency on others; or (b) otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of trust or authority towards them {Criminal Records Act – C47}

1.0 Recruitment and Selection of Paid Staff and Volunteers

Every worker entrusted with the primary care/teaching of children must be at least sixteen (16) years of age or older, must be a professing Christian, must exhibit Christ-like qualities in his or her life, and must be in harmony with the doctrines, polity, and practices of the Church of the Nazarene.

Assistants to workers of children must be at least 12 years of age and must exhibit a cooperative attitude. Assistants to workers of teenagers must be at least 16 years of age.

No person is eligible to serve as a worker or assistant until he or she has been a member or adherent of the church for a period of not less than eight months. Exception to this would be church members coming from either another Nazarene Church, another denomination with proper credentials or, at the discretion of the Senior Pastor and the Screening Committee.

At no time shall a person who has been guilty of any abuse be entrusted with the care of children and youth.

Every children's or youth worker must complete and submit the appropriate Volunteer Application Form [Appendix 1 or 2], attend training and undergo the related screening process.

The Process for those known to the committee is:

- Application [Appendix 1]
- Criminal Record Check

The Process for those unknown/new to the committee is:

- Application [Appendix 2]
- Interview/References [Appendix 3 & 4]
- Criminal Record Check

There are three important aspects of the policy for unknown prospective ministry adult personnel:

1. **Reference Check:** References are requested for previous church affiliation and ministry as well as personal references. At least three references are required and should include previous employers, pastors, or close friends. If this is not feasible, the application clearance will be left to the discretion of a screening committee. The reference form will be maintained in a locked file cabinet.
2. **Interview:** When deemed necessary, an interview will provide ministry leaders with the opportunity to review the important items from the Ministry Application Form in a personal setting. The interview will be conducted by a screening committee comprised of some staff and lay people of the church.
3. **Criminal Record Check:** A Criminal Record Check will be completed on all individuals including volunteer workers and paid staff. Any individual who will not submit to this procedure is ineligible to work with children and youth ministry. A new/updated criminal record check must be provided upon request.

The Criminal Record Check information is considered strictly confidential. Only the Pastor and Directors of Youth & Children's Ministries will be privy to the information. If there is a record or information which raises some concern, the pastor and ministry leaders will meet to discuss the matter. If the offence is other than child or sexual abuse, the volunteer may proceed with ministry in the church provided both the pastor and the screening committee agree.

No new person shall be eligible to serve as a worker or assistant until he or she has completed the application and screening process described above.

The church will keep records of the status of the application process for its ministry workers. At the completion of the process, all documentation will be filed in a locked space with strict regard for confidentiality. Effective January 2020, these records will be retained indefinitely.

2.0 Operating Procedures

2.1 Child Security

The names and contact phone numbers of guardians of children who attend regularly must be carefully obtained and maintained and easily accessible in case of emergency.

Nursery and Preschool children are not to be dropped off in the nursery or classroom without a teacher present and should have a caregiver sign them in. It is the primary worker's responsibility to release the child(ren) only to the parents/authorized adult.

An increased shift to social media and online communication necessitates guidelines to maintain integrity. Caution will be taken when posting and interacting with youth online. [See Appendix 8 for full guide]

2.2 Washroom Guidelines

Nursery Children (Birth to 2 years)

Diaper changing must always take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child that is being changed. Only workers over 14 years of age should change a diaper.

Preschool Children (3 years to kindergarten)

- a) If just one child has to go to the washroom and it is not feasible to take all children for a washroom break, the adult worker must escort the child to the washroom and prop the outside door open. The worker should then remain outside the washroom or cubicle door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom. The worker should call the child's name if he/she is taking longer than seems necessary.
- b) Workers are never to be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and are never to go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.
- c) When preschool-age children need assistance in the washroom, no worker shall enter the washroom cubicle to assist the child unless a second worker is within visual contact.

Primary, Elementary & Youth (Grades P-6 and Youth)

- a) The worker should call the child's name if he/she is taking longer than seems necessary.
- b) No worker shall ever enter into a washroom cubicle with a child or youth and shut the door.

2.3 Health and Safety Guidelines

Sickness

Should a child become ill or show signs of a communicable disease while in the care of ministry personnel:

1. Separate the child from the other children.
2. Send someone to locate the parent or guardian to retrieve the child.
3. Disinfect surfaces and/or toys as required.

Children and volunteers requiring antibiotics must be on them for 24 hours before joining an activity.

Procedures for Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood

Should a child get injured while in the care of ministry personnel:

1. Separate the injured child from the other children.
2. Send someone to locate the parents and a nurse if available as well as the First Aid Kit.
3. Put on latex gloves and apply first aid avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.
4. Disinfect all surfaces that have come in contact with blood or bloody bandages.
5. If other children have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury, their parents should be informed.
6. Remove and properly dispose of latex gloves. Thoroughly wash hands.
7. Fill out incident report, if necessary. [See appendix 6]

Cleanliness

Disinfect the child care areas as needed when program is finished. This could include disinfecting all surfaces, toys, tables, trays, bedding, bibs and doors. Disposable wipes should be available in all rooms. Ensure rooms are left tidy.

Food

All food that gets brought in for children and youth needs to be approved by the leader of the ministry to ensure there are no allergies or dietary conflicts. Food should also match the leader's objectives.

2.4 Classroom Staffing and Supervision Guidelines

Workers should always conduct themselves in a Godly manner, being an example of God's love, grace and truth to those in their care.

Programs that involve children and youth must always include adequate supervisory personnel. Ideally, this is a minimum of one worker over the age of 16 and one helper.

Supervision should be maintained until all children are in the custody of their caretaker.

The program leader should make sure each class is properly staffed and supervised.

2.5 Open Doors

Classrooms will have windows, window doors or half doors that will allow ministry supervisors to look in occasionally without interrupting the teaching process. The door must remain open when there is one teacher and one student. **Workers should never be alone in a closed space with a child or youth.**

2.6 Proper Display of Affection

Appropriate touch is an essential part in nurturing lives. Workers need to be aware of, and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural upbringing, family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs.

Physical contact with children must be age and developmentally appropriate and minimal.

2.7 Discipline and Classroom Management

God's definition of discipline is outlined in Hebrews 12:7-11. Discipline is not something you do to a child; it is something you do for a child. The word discipline does not mean punishment. It comes from the root word disciple, which means training that molds character, behavior and values. Rather than seeking to merely maintain control or keep children quiet, our goal in managing children's behavior should be to shape their character in such a way that they will become disciples.

Corporal punishment is not permitted. Any words or tones for the deliberate purpose of demeaning a child or youth are not permitted, including derogatory references to anything physical, emotional or mental. If circumstances arise that a worker feels uncomfortable dealing with, the child involved will be taken to the leader of the program.

Primary leaders will put time into prayer and preparation before teaching or guiding children and youth. Thoughtful planning will help to minimize behaviours and increase the reach of the message.

Children will be placed in classes and programs that are appropriate for their age, grade or development level.

2.8 Special Events, Travel and Overnight Policies

Supervision

Ministry to children and youth often involves special activities that might be off church property. Waivers and Medical Release Forms must be in the possession of the leader for all children and youth on away trips or outings. [See Appendix 5]. The following applies to these activities:

- a) All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of two approved adults.
- b) All overnight activities must have a minimum ratio of one leader for every five children and one for every eight youth with a minimum of two leaders at all times. Each leader must have an assigned group of children/youth for whom they are responsible during the overnight event.

Church Travel

- a) All drivers need to be at least 21 years of age and possess a valid driver's license.
- b) All rules of the road must be followed.
- c) All cars used to transport children, teens and/or adults need to have a minimum of \$1 million dollars insurance PL&PD.
- d) Rides should be arranged so that the driver is not alone in the vehicle with a child/youth. Parents will be notified if a situation comes up where this is not possible.

Booster Seat Regulations²

Effective January 1, 2007 in Nova Scotia, a child must be in a booster seat if they are:

- Less than 9 years old
- Or less than 145 cm (4' 9")

3.0 Facility and Equipment Requirements

3.1 Nursery Facilities

- Nursery change table must be in full view.
- Nursery rooms must have a half door.
- Electrical outlets must be covered or out of reach of children.
- Cribs and toys must meet safety standards as per Canada Safety Association.

3.2 Emergency Exits

- An emergency exit plan with maps and procedures must be visible in each classroom and reviewed annually.
- All workers must be familiar with the emergency exit plan.
- Procedures for fire emergency must be discussed or practiced with children semi-annually.

3.3 First Aid

- First-aid boxes must be kept on hand and all workers are to view the location and contents regularly.
- Those involved in children and youth ministries should be encouraged to receive up-to-date first aid training.

4.0 Training

All children and youth workers must attend Plan to Protect training and be reminded of the procedures annually or at the discretion of the Pastor or Director of Children's Ministry. This applies to new and seasoned workers.

All workers must sign a form indicating they have been trained and have read through the Plan to Protect Policy. These records will be kept on file.

5.0 Responding to Allegations or Complaints

5.1 Guiding Procedural Principles

Any suspicion or allegation of abuse must be reported. In the case of suspicion or allegation of abuse an Abuse Incident Report [Appendix 7] must be completed and given to the Senior Pastor.

- a) Each person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has suffered abuse or is or may be in need of protection shall promptly report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to the Senior Pastor or Ministry Leader. They will work together to report the occurrence to the local Child Protection Agency in compliance with the appropriate provincial Child and Family Services Act or equivalent. In these matters it is important to keep the information restricted to those who need to be advised.
- b) Prior to reporting the occurrence, no person shall, apart from complying with the preceding paragraph, conduct any investigation or question any individual.
- c) The accused should be treated with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. The suspension from duties and responsibilities should not be seen as an indication of the "guilt" of the individual, but only as an indication of the priority given to protect all those involved pending the outcome of the investigation.
- d) The only claim of confidentiality which overrides the legal duty to report is solicitor-client privilege. Thus physicians, clergymen and others who consider their professional relationships confidential for certain purposes are not exempt from the duty to report child abuse or neglect.

5.2 Response Strategy

- a) All allegations are to be taken seriously and must be handled promptly and with due respect for the privacy and confidentiality of all persons involved.
- b) The accused will be relieved of their duties promptly and peaceably.
- c) All actions taken should be documented and kept on file, noting specific times and dates. Use Abuse Incident Report [Appendix 7]
- d) Professional advice should be obtained, if necessary, to determine how and when to notify parents and do any investigations.
- e) It is the responsibility of the Senior Pastor, or a board appointed committee, to report the allegation or incident immediately to the local church's lawyer, the District Superintendent and local authorities. In most cases, the Senior Pastor will be the spokesperson for the Church.

6.0 Definitions

Abuse: Includes physical, emotional or sexual harm to a minor.

Physical Abuse: Is the use of physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child or youth. It is more than reasonable discipline.

Emotional Abuse: Is a pattern of hurting a child's feelings to the point of damaging their self-respect. It includes verbal attacks on the child, insults, humiliation or rejection.

Neglect: When parents or caregivers fail to provide a child's basic needs. Neglect is often physical, although it can be emotional. Physical neglect might include failing to provide children with proper food, clothing, or shelter. It may also involve a lack of attention to, or refusal to provide, proper healthcare treatment. Neglect also happens when a person caring for a child does not, or cannot, control or supervise the child.

Sexual Abuse: This occurs when a child or youth is used by somebody else for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may also be sexual abuse if older or more powerful children or youth take sexual advantage of those younger or less powerful. Child sexual abuse includes behavior that involves touching and non-touching aspects.

Abuse that involves touching includes: fondling; oral, genital and anal penetration; intercourse; forcible rape. Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include: verbal comments; pornographic videos; obscene phone calls; exhibitionism; allowing children to witness sexual activity.

Primary Worker: Anyone, paid or unpaid, who has been appointed to serve in a leadership role in ministries to children or youth.

Ministry Leader: A worker who has been given responsibility for a particular area of ministry to youth or children. Examples: Sunday School Superintendent, Youth Pastor, Director of Children's Ministry

Suspicion: Recognized signs or symptoms pointing towards the possible occurrences of abuse.

Allegation: A verbalization or communication disclosure that abuse has occurred.

7.0 Additional Material and References

We acknowledge and are grateful for the following resources and materials which were used in the development of this document. Users of this document are encouraged to avail themselves of any additional information contained therein which may be helpful in preparing their own Prevention Plan.

Note that this is by no means an exhaustive list of available abuse prevention materials nor does the inclusion of a reference imply that we endorse every element of the document.

1. *Plan to Protect*, Elmsdale Church of the Nazarene, Policies & Procedures (Policy #11), 2014
2. *Child and Worker Protection Policy*, Springhill Baptist Church, 2019

8.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Ministry Application Form - Short

Appendix 2 – Ministry Application Form - Long (for newcomers)

Appendix 3 – Ministry Interview Form

Appendix 4 – Reference Call Potential Script

Appendix 5 – Waiver and Medical Release Form - Travel and Special Events

Appendix 6 – Incident/Accident Report

Appendix 7 – Abuse Incident Report

Appendix 8 – Media Guidelines