

# GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES

### A. Recruitment and Screening Process

1. Church leadership and/or the ministry lead determine if an individual is a suitable or potential candidate for children's or youth ministry.
2. Prospective ministry personnel are to submit to the recruitment and screening process managed by the church leadership and/or ministry lead. Individuals will submit and complete the following:

Ministry Application Form (Appendix 1)

Adhere to six month waiting period

Sign statement of faith

Face to face interview

Reference checks

Police records check

Training

Final approval from church leadership

3. Ministry personnel must complete the recruitment and screening process prior to being placed in a position of trust.
4. Ministry personnel who serve children and youth must have a personnel file kept with church records. These files are to be kept permanently.

### B. Qualifications for Ministry

1. A minimum six-month waiting period prior to serving is required for individuals wanting to work in children or youth ministries. All prospective ministry personnel will have regularly attended the church for the previous six months.

Exceptions can be made in circumstances where the ministry personnel have transferred from another church of the same denomination in which they have been long-time members and children's ministry workers in good standing or have come to the church from another church not of the same denomination if reference checks have been made and it has been determined that the potential ministry personnel were members in good standing at the previous church. Reference checks must be received from at least three individuals, including one from their previous minister or children's ministry director.

2. Ministry personnel serving in children's and youth ministry are members or *adherents* in good standing who support the doctrines, direction and by-laws or constitution of the church.
3. Individuals that have been accused, or convicted, or are under the suspicion of crimes against children and/or youth, or who have been convicted of violent crimes or other relevant crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programs where children or youth participate.

### C. Ministry Application Form

1. Prospective ministry personnel are to complete a Ministry Application Form. (Appendix 1) Student leaders are to complete the Ministry Application Form for Youth Working with Children. (Appendix 2)

A verifiable witnessed signature is required for the protection of all parties.

Individuals who transfer from another congregation unknown to the church leadership must include contact information or a reference from a pastoral staff member of their previous church.

In accordance with PIPEDA regulations, the Ministry Application Forms must include the reason for which the information is being collected.

A photo of the prospective ministry personnel is to accompany the Ministry Application Form.

2. Ministry Application Forms are to be kept confidential and available only to the ministry lead, church leadership or the Plan to Protect team.

Ministry Application Forms are to be kept in a secure location.

Ministry Application Forms are to be kept on file permanently.

### D. Reference Checks

1. Designated screening personnel will conduct reference checks on all prospective ministry personnel. (Appendix 3)

Prospective ministry personnel must sign a liability release before reference checks are conducted. Be sure that the references provided fit within the acceptable categories for adults and for youth who work with children. Reference checks are conducted by telephone to confirm the suitability and appointment of prospective ministry personnel.

## **E. Interview**

1. Face-to-face interviews will be conducted by the ministry lead or an individual approved by church leadership. (Appendix 4)

## **F. Criminal Screening Checks**

1. The ministry lead must identify the criminal screening checks available within their region.
2. Police records checks must be conducted on all ministry personnel serving children or youth.

Police records checks are to be renewed every three (3) years.

Police records checks are to be conducted on all ministry personnel 16 years of age and older and are to be kept on file permanently.

3. If a prospective ministry personnel has had a history with the Children's Welfare Agency, a request may be made by the church leadership for the individual to sign consent for a Child Welfare Check.
4. In the case of returning volunteers for another ministry season, a Personnel Renewal Application Form must be filled out and the annual training meeting must be attended. (Appendix 16)

## **G. Plan to Protect Training**

1. Abuse prevention education and training is required for all ministry personnel serving with children and youth and must be completed prior to ministry placement.
2. Attendance should be taken at training courses and noted in the personnel file for each individual.

## **H. Approval Process**

1. All ministry personnel are to be approved by church leadership upon completion of recruitment and screening process. Only members will be able to serve as ministry leads. Adherents will be able to serve in positions of trust if all the screening procedures have been adhered to. Approval must be signed and dated.
2. The recruitment and screening process must be completed within a 3 month period of time.

Workers in process of completing the recruitment and screening process will not be placed in a position of trust. Access to children will be limited until final approval is received.

## **Child Protection Procedures**

### **A. Supervision of Ministry Personnel**

1. For the protection of our children, supervision of ministry personnel will be intentional and will take place through formal and informal visits to classrooms and programs.

### **B. Plan to Protect Program Maintenance**

1. A strategy for program maintenance will be developed and reviewed at the beginning of each ministry year to ensure training, the updating of files and the physical environment are compliant with policy.

### **C. Teacher / Student Ratios**

1. Classroom settings must comply with established ratios for adults and children at all times. This includes off-site activities and trips. Established ratios are:

One ministry personnel for every 3 infants (birth – 17 months)  
One ministry personnel for every 4 – 5 toddlers or preschoolers  
One ministry personnel for every 7 – 10 elementary-age children

### **D. Classroom Staffing**

1. To comply with insurance requirements and to provide adequate supervision for children, one of the following must be in place:

A minimum of two unrelated ministry personnel are present for supervision, except in the event of an emergency, **or**, One ministry personnel is present with windows having clear lines of visibility in place, or the door open, with designated hall monitors circulating periodically from room to room.

2. Ministry personnel between the ages of 12 and 16 must be assigned to work alongside another ministry personnel over the age of 16. Ministry personnel must be 17 years of age or older to work alone in a classroom. In both situations, the door must remain open with designated hall monitors circulating periodically from room to room. It is recommended that there be at least a five year gap between ministry personnel and the children they serve.

#### **E. Occasional Observers**

1. Occasional observers who join a class will have their attendance recorded and kept on file with the classroom attendance for that day. Visitors will be clearly identified and if they have not been screened and approved, they will not be placed in a position of trust with children who are not their own.

#### **F. Ministry Personnel Identification**

1. Ministry personnel are clearly identified with a name-tag or approved clothing which identifies them to parents, children and newcomers.

#### **G. Child Registration & Compliance with the Personal Information Protection Electronic Data Act (PIPEDA)**

1. The names and addresses of children and their parents or guardians will be carefully maintained, updated annually and kept permanently in a central file.
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.

#### **Release and Permission Statement**

I/We, the parents or guardians named above, authorize the ministry staff of *Grace Bible Church* to sign a consent for medical treatment and to authorize any physician or hospital to provide medical assessment, treatment or procedures for the participant named above.

I/We, named above, undertake and agree to indemnify and hold blameless the ministry staff, *Grace Bible Church*, its pastors and Board of Elders from and against any loss, damage or injury suffered by the participant as a result of being part of the activities of the *Grace Bible Church*, as well as of any medical treatment authorized by the supervising individuals representing the church. This consent and authorization is effective only when participating in or traveling to events of the *Grace Bible Church*. (Appendix 5)

3. The inclusion of 'liability shields' on permission forms has been considered for activities that involve a level of risk. (Appendix 6)
4. A statement will be included on all registration forms which stipulates the purpose and extent for collecting personal information of children and youth.

#### **Purposes and Extent:**

*Grace Bible Church* is collecting and retaining this personal information for the purpose of enrolling your child in our programs, to assign the student to the appropriate classes, to develop and nurture ongoing relationships with you and your child, and to inform you of program updates and upcoming opportunities at our church. This information will be maintained permanently as it is a requirement of our insurance company and legal counsel. If you wish *Grace Bible Church* to limit the information collected, or to view your child's information, please contact us.

5. Registration forms will be available for all programs. 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 visiting child, the parent bringing the child will be considered the guardian for the evening and the registration form must be sent home at the conclusion of the first program. All effort must be made to keep registration forms updated and current. Registration forms are to be filed and kept permanently.

#### **H. Receiving and Releasing Children**

For Babies to Kindergarten Children:

1. Receiving and releasing children under the age of 6 is strongly monitored. A mandatory sign-in and sign-out form is to be used in all children's programming. (Appendix 7)
2. Children are not to be dropped off in a classroom without ministry personnel present.
3. Babies and preschool children will only be released into the care of the child's parent or designate utilizing a signature, security number or identification card.

4. Parents and visitors are not to enter the nursery or preschool classroom when picking up their child unless requested to do so.

For Elementary Students:

1. Younger elementary students and newcomers are to remain in the classroom until the parent or designate comes to pick them up and the student demonstrates recognition. If the parent is involved in other church activities and is unable to pick the child up, or no designate is available, the child will be taken to the parent or designate once all other children have been released.
2. Older elementary children will be released from the classroom when a parent or designate come to pick them up. Ministry personnel will keep the child with them in the classroom until the parent or designate picks up the child. If the parent is involved in other church activities and is unable to pick the child up, or no designate is available the child will be taken to the parent or designate once all other children have been released.

**I. Attendance**

1. Attendance of children is taken each time a classroom or program is in session. These attendance records are kept on file permanently.
2. A record will be kept of ministry personnel on duty in each classroom or program. This record will be maintained with the record of attendance and kept on file permanently.

**J. Washroom Guidelines**

1. Communication with parents has happened that encourages them to deal with their baby's toileting needs and to take their children to the washroom prior to each class or service.

For Nursery:

1. Diaper changing procedures are clearly posted in the nursery diaper changing area. (Appendix 8)
2. If at all possible, it is strongly encouraged that diaper changing be done by the child's parent.
3. Diaper changing is to be done only by designated adult ministry personnel and must be conducted within view of other ministry personnel.

For Preschool Children:

1. Preschool children are not to go to the washroom alone.
2. One of the following will be adhered to when accompanying preschool children to the washroom:  

Two ministry personnel will escort a group of children to the washroom, **or**,  
One ministry personnel will escort a group of children to the washroom with one hall monitor appointed to assist with washroom and security duties.
3. No ministry personnel will be ever be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and they are never to go into the cubicle with a child and shut the door.
4. When a preschool child needs assistance in the washroom, ministry personnel may enter the washroom cubicle to assist utilizing the following guidelines:  

Female ministry personnel will assist both girls and boys in the washroom,  
The outside washroom door must be propped open and the adult must stand in an open cubicle doorway,  
Ministry personnel will take into consideration the privacy of the child.

For Elementary Children:

1. Elementary boys and girls are not to be sent to the washroom alone but should be accompanied by a buddy and/or ministry personnel.
2. If possible, ministry personnel will escort the children to the washroom and prop the door open to make sure that everything is in order. Ministry personnel should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the children before escorting them back to the classroom.
3. Ministry personnel are not to be alone with children in an unsupervised washroom and are never to enter into the cubicle with a child and shut the door.
4. Male ministry personnel are not to accompany female children to the washroom.

**K. Architectural Precautions**

Doors and Windows:

1. Each classroom will have door windows and interior windows with clear sight lines into classrooms where children and youth programs are held.

2. In cases where classroom doors do not have windows, the doors will be propped open to provide clear sight lines into the rooms where children and youth programs are held.
3. In the nursery where a toilet is inside the room, washroom guidelines should be followed. When assisting toddlers with toileting, ministry personnel should not be alone in the washroom with a toddler with the door closed. The door should be propped open while still providing proper privacy for the toddler, and the ministry personnel should be in view of other ministry personnel serving in the nursery while assisting the toddler.

**Nursery Facilities:**

1. Nursery doors will be secured from the inside if possible, and if not, door handle covers will be placed over the handle making it difficult for toddlers to open.
3. All electrical outlets will be covered with outlet plug covers.

**L. Health & Safety Guidelines**

1. Individuals are encouraged to become certified and trained in first aid.
2. The names and contact information of the individuals that have been certified in first aid are posted in the children's and youth departments for easy access.
3. Children or youth having severe allergies will have the information brought to the attention of the ministry lead and noted on their registration form. The information will be posted in the children's and youth departments for easy access and ministry personnel who have the child in their care will be informed.
4. The cleaning and sanitation of toys and table surfaces is done at least monthly.

**Illness:**

1. A child who is ill and could therefore expose others to illness is not to be received into the nursery or classroom. Factors and symptoms to consider are:
  - Fever, unusual fatigue, irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat
  - Children with a known communicable disease

**Medications:**

1. Ministry personnel are not to give or apply any medications. Parents 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 their 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. Epi-pens will not be kept on site, but will be given to ministry leads by the parents of child in need of them.
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 the children's departments.
2. When a child or youth 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 children have not 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 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.

**Emergencies:**

1. Emergency evacuation procedures will be reviewed semi-annually by church leadership. These procedures are to be posted in a visible place in each classroom stating the planned route of escape to the nearest exit.
2. Church leadership, in cooperation with the ministry lead, will arrange for annual fire and evacuation drills.
3. A first aid kit will be kept in each classroom with ministry personnel being educated on the kit's contents. 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.
4. In addition to the first aid kits in each classroom, 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 kits.
5. A parent will be contacted when an injury, accident or medical emergency occurs. For further details on dealing with injuries, see Youth Protection Procedures section.

6. Incident reports are to be completed for any and all accidents. Injuries are to be reported to the ministry lead. (Appendix 9)

## **M. Special Events & Overnight Policies**

### Field Trips and Special Events:

1. All off-church activities will be pre-approved by the ministry lead with parents being notified at least one week prior to the outing.
2. Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in field trips and special events. Forms must be kept in the ministry lead's possession during trips and events with a photocopy of the completed forms filed in the church office. The originals are to be kept on file permanently. (Appendix 10)
3. All trips and outings will be supervised by a minimum of two approved, unrelated adult ministry personnel, preferably male and female.
4. When planning local special events, it is preferred that parents drop off and pick up their children at the event location. For out of town events, it is preferred that commercial carriers be employed.
5. Children and youth may not be transported one-on-one. Mentoring relationships should be conducted in teams and in public places. Parents are encouraged to drop their children or youth off and pick them up.
6. All ministry personnel drivers transporting children during church activities must be pre-approved by the ministry lead, provide a copy of their valid driver's license and current automobile insurance in accordance with the church insurance policy, and have had a minimum of five years of driving experience.
7. The number of occupants in the vehicle will not exceed the number of seat belts and each child will be in age appropriate safety restraints. Seat belts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times the vehicle is in motion.
8. Children will not be left unattended in a vehicle.

### Overnight Events:

1. All overnight activities will be pre-approved by church leadership.
2. Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child or youth participating in overnight events. Forms must be kept in the ministry lead's possession during trips and events and a photocopy filed in the church office. The originals are to be kept on file permanently.
3. All overnight activities must have a minimum ratio of two ministry personnel for every ten children or youth. Ministry personnel will be assigned a specific group of children or youth for who they are responsible. Female ministry personnel will be assigned to female children.
4. All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of two approved, unrelated adult ministry personnel.

## **N. Proper Display of Affection**

### Appropriate Touch:

1. Recognizing that children need appropriate displays of affection that reflect pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love, appropriate touch with children will be age and developmentally appropriate. We encourage ministry leaders to:
  - Hold a preschool child who is crying,
  - Speak to a child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears,
  - Hold a child's hands when speaking, listening or walking him or her to an activity,
  - Gently hold the child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour,
  - Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting or quieting is needed,
  - Pat a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.
2. All touch must be done in view of others.

### Inappropriate Touch:

1. Recognizing that the innocence of children must be protected, ministry leaders will be made aware that the following actions are deemed inappropriate and will not be permitted:
  - Do not kiss a child or coax a child to kiss you,
  - Do not engage in extended hugging and tickling,
  - Do not hold a child's face when talking to or disciplining the child,
  - Do not touch a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (strictly prohibited except in cases of diapering and assisting preschoolers as outlined in washroom policies),
  - Do not carry older children and do not allow them to sit on your lap,
  - Avoid prolonged physical contact with any child or youth.
2. Ministry personnel are not to be left alone with a child or youth.

## **O. Discipline & Classroom Management**

1. All discipline and classroom management will be conducted in a loving and caring environment. All attempts will be made to prevent discipline problems from arising and to avoid the need for remedial discipline. All attempts are to be taken to adhere to the following:

#### Preventative Discipline:

Create a loving, caring atmosphere,  
To gain respect, you must grant respect,  
Model self-discipline and structure in your own life,  
Prepare exciting and interesting classes with short transitions between activities,  
Arrange your environment for children and for learning,  
Establish and communicate realistic expectations for the children,  
Be sure the activities that you provide are meaningful and age-appropriate,  
Be fair and consistent with all children,  
Be sure your focus is on positive actions and reward positive behaviour,  
Be aware of children with special needs and bring their needs to the attention of the ministry lead.

#### Remedial Discipline:

Every effort will be made to deal with problems individually,  
Every effort will be made to explain to the child why the behaviour is unacceptable and instruct them in how to do it correctly,  
Every effort will be made to redirect the child to positive action,  
Every effort will be made to explain the consequences of unacceptable behaviour by defining the correct way to behave as well as the result of the wrong behaviour,  
Every effort will be made to offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the child.

2. Classroom rules will be established to clearly communicate the expectations required of children. Rules and consequences for not following them will be posted in classrooms for children and parents to see.

#### **Classrooms Rules:**

One voice talking at a time  
Quiet hands get answered  
Use inside voices  
Obey directions the first time  
Use good manners  
Keep your hands and feet to yourself  
Respect each other  
Be friendly  
Visit the washroom before class begins

#### **Consequences for not observing classroom rules:**

1. A warning given to the student and reminder of the classroom rules.
2. Removal/separation from others in group/classroom. If a monitor is available, send child to him/her.
3. Parents contacted and child sent to parents or called to pick up child from activity.

At no time should corporal punishment be used on a child (ie no hitting, grabbing, etc a child) If the infraction is of a physical nature (hitting another child or teacher) go directly to #3)

#### **P. Bullying among Peers**

1. Our children and youth have a right to a caring, respectful and safe church environment where they will encounter the love of God in action. An anti-bullying policy will therefore be in effect at all times and will be clearly communicated and enforced among the children and youth. All ministry personnel will take action to prevent bullying, teach against it, and assist and support children and youth who are being bullied. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.

#### **Q. Church Use**

Rental or use of the church building will be limited to like-minded groups of Grace Bible Church and must be approved by the church leadership before consent is given.

#### **Reporting and Response**

## **I. Reporting Procedures**

### **A. Hearing of an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse**

The following policies outline the recommended procedure and sequence for reporting suspected abuse cases.

1. For the protection of our children and youth, all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse against children and youth will be taken seriously.
2. Upon hearing of potential abuse or allegations of abuse to a child or youth, the ministry personnel should complete a Suspected Abuse Report Form documenting all pertinent information. (Appendix 11) The victim should not be asked leading questions nor should the accused or any other parties be contacted at the point of completing the Suspected Abuse Report Form. All forms must be kept permanently unless otherwise directed by legal counsel.
3. Any allegations of abuse to a child or youth must be reported to the proper authorities. The reporting should be done in conjunction with the senior pastor, or specific ministry lead who was made aware of the allegation.

### **B. Reporting an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse**

1. Any person including, but not limited to, ministry personnel, who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protection, is legally required to immediately report the matter to the Department of Social Services or the police. Reporting must be done orally by telephone or in person.
2. A person who knowingly fails to report in these circumstances is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offence and may be subject to discipline action in the church.
3. The senior pastor or his designate must notify the church's insurance provider and seek legal counsel upon hearing of a suspected child abuse case.
4. The church will notify and work in conjunction with denominational leadership in any and all allegations or suspicions of abuse that may have happened in the context of church ministry.
5. If the suspected abuse happened in the context of church ministries or was committed by a church member or attendee, the parents of the victim must be notified by the senior pastor or by church leadership.

### **C. Assessing and Investigating an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse**

1. No persons, including church leadership, are to assume the function of assessing, substantiating or investigating the need for intervention or interpretation of suspected child abuse.
2. The church and its individuals must avoid any undue interference when a report of child abuse has been filed with the Department of Social Services or the police. The church should ask the Department of Social Services how it could assist in helping and supporting the investigation and the hurting child or youth and their family. The church should maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with those suspected or guilty of child abuse as long as these persons exhibit a willingness to listen, change and look to Christ for help. This does not exclude the need for hurting individuals to receive professional counselling.

### **D. Protecting Confidentiality and Dignity of the Victim and the Accused**

1. During the process of reporting and response, all ministry personnel will be committed to prayer and strive to remain calm and hopeful.
2. Discretion must be observed and details of the suspected abuse must not be shared among the church community. Information should be shared on a need-to-know basis, expanding only as individuals are drawn into the response and investigation. Confidentiality for the suspected victim and the accused must be protected.

## **II. Response to Allegations**

### **A. Spiritual Response and Counsel for the Victim**

1. For the protection of our children and youth, all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and handled with the utmost care. The suspected victims will be treated with dignity and respect.
2. During the process of reporting and response, all ministry personnel will be committed to prayer and strive to remain calm and hopeful.
3. Situations of abuse must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality. Discretion must be observed and details of the suspected abuse must not be shared among the church community. Information should be shared on a need-to-know basis, expanding only as individuals are drawn into the response and investigation. Confidentiality for the victim must be protected.
4. Church leadership will seek opportunity to provide individual care and counsel both for the abuse victim and their family. Church leadership will determine the need for professional assistance and evaluate and designate resources as needed and able.

### **B. Biblical Response and Discipline for the Accused or Convicted**

1. The accused is to be treated with dignity and respect. If the accused is a paid ministry personnel, that person will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed with arrangements made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
2. It is the responsibility and right of church leadership to exercise and practice church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18 and as stipulated in denominational guidelines.
3. Church leadership will seek opportunity to provide individual care and counsel both for the accused and their family. Church leadership will determine the need for professional assistance and evaluate and designate resources as needed and able.
4. Anyone accused of abuse to children or youth will be prohibited from having access to children or youth until they are cleared of any and all charges. Clear written guidelines will be provided to the individual with restricted activities and areas of the church that are they are not permitted to use.
5. Anyone convicted of child abuse will be prohibited from having access to children or youth. Church leadership may designate an individual to be responsible to be informed whenever the convicted person attends church activities and to accompany the convicted person while on church property. Clear written guidelines will be provided to the individual listing restricted areas and access points on the church property.

### **C. Media Relations**

1. It is the responsibility of the church leadership and senior pastor to designate a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the church to media and to the public in relation to a suspected child abuse case. All inquiries should be directed to this person and comment should not be made by other individuals unless given permission to do so.
2. Public statements must be well prepared and presented under the guidance of legal counsel.

### **D. Ongoing Investigation**

1. Full cooperation must be given by all parties to civil authorities under the guidelines of legal counsel.
2. At no time should church leadership or its individuals either engage in denial, minimization or blame, or admit responsibility which could prejudice the case or cause increased liability to the church.
3. A confidential follow-up report with conclusions and action taken must be documented by the senior pastor, or his designate, following a report of abuse. This report should be placed in a confidential ministry personnel file and kept permanently. (*Appendix 12*)
4. Children and youth ministry departments will inform others of any ongoing investigation strictly on a need-to-know basis.

## **GRACE BIBLE CHURCH**

### **YOUTH PROTECTION POLICIES**

#### **I. Youth Ministry Personnel Standards**

##### **A. Lifestyle**

1. For the protection of our youth, ministry personnel are to be committed to maintaining a consistent spiritual life including prayer, Bible reading, attendance at youth events, planning meetings and worship services.
2. Ministry personnel are to be role models of integrity at all times. Ministry personnel are to refrain from activities that are illegal or could be considered morally and biblically questionable.

##### **B. Contacting Opportunities**

1. Ministry personnel are encouraged to meet with youth in small group settings and in teams.
2. The ministry lead must pre-approve the conducting of any one-on-one mentoring with the information being documented and filed.
3. 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,
  - Parental permission is granted, and,
  - When separate transportation is arranged

##### **C. Open Door Policy**

1. Ministry personnel working with youth will not have a one-on-one or a small group meeting behind closed doors. It is required that the door remain open or that the meeting take place in a room with an unobstructed window in the door.

##### **D. Physical Contact**

1. 'Physical Contact Guidelines' are to be posted in youth department.
2. Ministry personnel are aware of what constitutes appropriate touch:

one-arm hugs  
shoulder-to-shoulder hugs  
touch on the back or shoulder

3. Ministry personnel must refrain from inappropriate touch at all times:

chest-to-chest hugging  
extended hugging  
overexuberant affection  
lap-sitting  
kissing  
touching of thighs, knees or inappropriate spots of the body

4. Ministry personnel must be cognizant of conduct that could be misinterpreted:

horseplay  
tickling  
extended backrubs

## **E. Dating**

1. Ministry personnel working with youth may not pursue a dating relationship with a student.

## **II. Youth Ministry Programming**

### **A. Plan to Protect Program Maintenance**

1. A strategy for program maintenance will be developed and reviewed at the beginning of each ministry year to ensure training, the updating of files and the physical environment are compliant with policy.

### **B. Ministry Personnel Staffing Ratios**

1. Programs for youth must comply with established staffing ratios as follows:

Junior High events – One ministry personnel for every 7 students  
Senior High events – One ministry personnel for every 10 students  
Overnight/Off-Site events – One ministry personnel for every 7 students

2. To comply with insurance standards, there must be at least two unrelated ministry personnel at all events.
3. Overnight events with mixed genders must be accompanied by both male and female ministry personnel.
4. It is recommended that there be a 5 year gap between ministry personnel and the youth they serve.

### **C. Supervision of Ministry Personnel**

1. The supervision of ministry personnel will be intentional and will take place through formal and informal visits to classrooms and programs.

### **D. Youth Ministry Authorization and Consent Forms & Compliance with the Personal Information Protection Electronic Data Act (PIPEDA)**

1. At the beginning of every ministry year, all youth are to submit completed Youth Ministry Authorization and Consent Forms, (Appendix 2) signed by their parent or guardian. These forms are to be photocopied and originals maintained and filed permanently. The photocopies should be taken on all off-site trips and outings in case emergency medical assistance is required and the parent cannot be notified.
2. The Youth Ministry Authorization will not replace specific consent and authorization forms for activities that involve an elevated risk or for overnight trips.
3. The inclusion of 'liability shields' on permission forms has been considered for activities that involve a level of risk. (Appendix 6)
4. A release and permission statement will be included on all registration forms releasing the church from unforeseen and accidental damages. (Appendix 5)

I/We, the parents or guardians named above, authorize the ministry staff of *Grace Bible Church* to sign a consent for medical treatment and to authorize any physician or hospital to provide medical assessment, treatment or procedures for the participant named above.

I/We, named above, undertake and agree to indemnify and hold blameless the ministry staff, *Grace Bible Church*, its pastors and Board of Elders from and against any loss, damage or injury suffered by the participant as a result of being part of the activities of the *Grace Bible Church* as well as of any medical treatment authorized by the supervising individuals representing the church. This consent and authorization is effective only when participating in or traveling to events of the *Grace Bible Church*.

5. A statement will be included on all registration forms which stipulates the purpose and extent for collecting personal information of youth.

#### Purposes and Extent:

*Grace Bible Church* is collecting and retaining this personal information for the purpose of enrolling your child in our programs, to assign the student to the appropriate classes, to develop and nurture ongoing relationships with you and your child, and to inform you of program updates and upcoming opportunities at our church. This information will be maintained permanently as it is a requirement of our insurance company and legal counsel. If you wish *Grace Bible Church* to limit the information collected, or to view your child's information, please contact us.

### **E. Planning for Safety**

1. All ministry personnel must ensure a safe environment in their planning and evaluating of activities.
2. Safety precautions should be posted and highly visible for students.

### **F. Dealing with Injuries**

1. In case of an injury at a youth event, the following steps must be followed:

The student must not be moved, unless they can stand up and walk on their own. If they can move on their own, lead him or her out of the activity area. One or two witnesses as well as the ministry personnel must remain with the injured youth for assistance, comfort and to confirm information for the incident report.

If the injury is severe and time is of the essence:

- a. Immediately call 911 and request an ambulance;
- b. Contact the injured youth's parents and make them aware of the situation;
- c. If the decision is made to transport the student to the hospital, the ministry lead should accompany the injured youth to the hospital;
- d. When the parents arrive at the hospital, the ministry leader should:
  - i. Introduce himself/herself and his/her role in their youth's life,
  - ii. Explain the situation and the injury being careful not to admit fault on any part,
  - iii. Return to the event unless there is a good reason to stay,
  - iv. Have the parents call the youth pastor or ministry lead at the church in the morning if they have any questions or concerns.
- e. If the parents cannot be reached, follow the instructions given on the consent form.

Complete an Incident Report and advise the youth pastor or ministry lead of the incident and determine whether the church insurance company needs to be notified (Appendix 9).

### **G. Off-Site Event Planning**

1. All off-site trips must be pre-approved by the ministry lead.
2. Written communication regarding off-site trips should be available to families no less than one week prior to the event. Include the exact location of the event, emergency phone numbers and a list of adult ministry personnel attending the event. If there is travel involved or any element of risk in the activity, parents must be asked for further signed authorization.
3. Sufficient supervision by two adult ministry personnel is required to ensure protection and safety for all involved.
4. Copies of the Youth Ministry Authorization and Consent Form for each student must be kept on hand at each event. (Appendix 10)
5. Attendance of all ministry personnel and youth must be recorded on the Trip and Off-Site Travel Forms. (Appendix 13) The travel form must be maintained and filed in the church office. Forms will be kept on file permanently.

### **H. Retreats and Overnight Events**

1. All retreats and overnight events must be pre-approved by the church leadership.

2. Written communication regarding retreats and overnight events should be available to families no less than one week prior to the event. Include the exact location of the event, emergency phone numbers and a list of adult ministry personnel attending the event. If there is travel involved or any element of risk in the activity, parents must be asked for further signed authorization.
3. Youth Ministry Authorization and Consent Forms are required for each student participating in overnight events. Photocopies of the forms must be kept in the ministry lead's possession during trips and events with the originals filed in the church office. The originals are to be kept on file permanently.
4. Policies for ministry personnel staffing will be followed. Female ministry personnel will be assigned responsibility for female youth and male ministry personnel will be assigned responsibility for male youth.
5. Youth attending retreats and overnight events will not be allowed to leave the event. Any exceptions must be added to the permission form signed by the parent.
6. Female and male youth are not allowed in each other's rooms or tents for any reason during retreats and overnight events and they are not permitted to sleep in mixed company.
7. For overnight stays in hotels, the policies outlined in the "Overnight Policies" in the appendices (Appendix 14)

### **I. Billeting and Hosting**

1. For the protection of our youth, it is required that all adults residing in the home where billets are provided must complete the following screening process prior to hosting. Screening includes:

Recommendation from pastor, and,  
Police records check

2. Information guidelines distributed to host homes no less than one week in advance of the youth arriving at their home.
3. Any allergies and medications for youth should be communicated to the host home prior to arrival, with clear directions on how to manage allergies and/or medications.
4. Youth must always be billeted in teams or small groups of the same gender.
5. Youth should have distinctly separate sleeping arrangements from the other household members and should not be left alone.
6. Curfews of 11:00 p.m. should be enforced when youth are being billeted.
7. All youth staying in host homes are informed of proper etiquette and curfew guidelines. (Appendix 15)

### **J. Transportation**

1. Our first concern in transportation is the safety of our youth. Drivers must obey all the rules of the road including the speed limits. Reckless or unsafe driving will not be tolerated.
2. For church related activities, it is preferred that parents both drop off and pick up their youth at the event location. For out-of town events, priority will be given to making use of a commercial carrier.
3. All ministry personnel drivers transporting youth during church activities must complete the following prior to the youth event:

Be pre-approved by the ministry lead,  
Provide a copy of their valid driver's license,  
Provide a copy of their current automobile insurance policy, and,  
Have had a minimum of five years driving experience.

4. The number of occupants in the vehicle will not exceed the number of seat belts. Seat belts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times the vehicle is in motion.
6. 'Trips and Off-site Travel Form' (Appendix 13) will accompany the group with the original left in the church office and filed permanently consisting of:

Names and numbers of all participants  
Location of event and contact numbers  
Drivers and vehicles involved

### **III. Youth Ministry Issues**

Note: Churches and ministry personnel ministering to youth may wish to consider these particular issues and how they relate to your youth context, and determine if documented policies and plans are required for additional protection.

#### **A. Counselling Youth**

1. Awareness of and adherence to the following ethics in counselling:

Respect the person's dignity and worth as they are created in the image of God with huge potential!  
Live, act and counsel in accordance with godly values.  
Work towards their best interest, not yours.  
Don't force your help on anyone. Be sure not to manipulate or use guilt in your counselling.

Fully inform them of where you are leading them.

Never exploit trust or dependency.

Share the bounds of confidentiality at the outset.

If feelings of attraction begin in either party, terminate counselling immediately.

If the relationship is destructive to you, terminate counselling immediately.

Never counsel if the person is under the influence of alcohol, drugs or illness.

Never create false expectations of favourable results.

Keep information confidential unless the person's welfare is at stake. As a general rule, only share information if the person consents.

All counsellors are legally bound to report physical abuse or neglect of a minor to the Department of Social Services or the police.

Anyone who does not comply with this law is subject to a fine and/or a jail sentence.

Refer individuals requiring specialized physical, mental or emotional diagnosis, therapy or treatment to qualified health-care professionals.

## 2. Awareness of counselling issues that relate specifically to youth:

They need to form their own identity and self-esteem; you can help by building into their character.

They are adapting to rapid physical changes; this can add to the confusion in many situations.

They are adapting to sexual changes; weird feelings, fantasies and confusion make decision making more difficult.

They are struggling with dependence vs. independence; teens are beginning to move away from their parents and yet know that they love and need them. This struggle can make them irritable, argumentative, irrational and difficult.

Usually the conflicts arise from difference in opinion on how much freedom they can have. Don't take sides ... ever!

There is an increasing importance of peer and intimate relationships; they need approval and often overreact to rejection.

They are forming all of their life-directing values and beliefs; most of these lessons (careers, lifestyles, behaviours and even problem solving) need to be learned experimentally.

They need to develop a wider variety of social/interpersonal skills; dealing with conflict, coping, stress, temptation, study, productivity, interaction, authority or handling money all need to be understood and developed.

## 3. Recognition of how youth respond to problems:

Repression is exhibited through denial, pushing aside and trying to forget. This often results in more serious behaviours such as eating disorders, anger, apathy, poor achievement, withdrawal or substance abuse.

Suppression is not an activity of denial but an attempt to hide it from others. Behaviours may be similar to repression but could be expressed through running away, substance abuse or suicide.

The antithesis of repression and suppression is expression. It is an obvious negative outward response that may be exhibited through anger, quitting school, lying, stealing, substance abuse, defiant behaviour or rebellion. These responses are a way of 'crying out for help' and may lead to serious depression.

## 4. Recognition of coverage issues that relate to counselling.

"Unless designated as a professional counsellor, most types of counselling that occurs within youth ministry is termed 'non-professional' counselling, which can roughly be defined as general instruction, advice or guidance of a religious nature provided by individuals who have certain recognized responsibilities, but who have no specialized training or qualifications. The only legal liability posed by this counselling is based on general legal principles that infer the existence of a standard duty of care required of any person in a position of responsibility, to act as any reasonable and prudent person would act in order to avoid harm or injury to another. Examples of non-professional religious counselling include elders, lay persons, youth leaders, teachers, volunteer counsellors, peer counsellors, cell group leaders and certain employees."

## **B.Substance Abuse**

1. Prohibition of substance abuse at church related events and services.

2. Observation of substance abuse indicators:

Social Indicators:

family history of substance abuse

changes in peer group

uncharacteristic irritability or moodiness

suspicion of and aggression towards friends, teachers, parents

lying, theft, promiscuity, rebelliousness, antisocial behaviour

withdrawal

consistent failure to meet obligations

Physical Indicators:

hangovers

hand tremors

appetite/weight gain or loss

sleeping difficulties  
drawn appearance  
fatigue  
changes in hygiene, dress, grooming  
red eyes, dilated pupils  
vague, dull, confused

Behavioural Indicators:

low or deteriorating self-esteem  
loss of interest in usual activities  
grandiose feelings  
can't cope, easily frustrated  
impulsive behaviour  
depression, suicide attempts  
confusion, poor memory  
paranoid statements and feelings  
uncharacteristic irritability, moodiness  
withdrawal  
failure to meet obligations

### **C.Suicide and Crisis Intervention**

1. Awareness and detection of depression and suicidal tendencies among youth:

Direct or indirect preoccupation with death:

verbal or written suicidal statement/references  
giving away personal belongings  
writing of a will  
previous attempts

Significant lifestyle changes:

loss of significant person through death, divorce, separation  
loss of an object of affection (friend, boyfriend, girlfriend)  
loss of health  
financial difficulties  
loss of status

Observable changes in behaviour or motivation:

decreased academic performance  
more attendance problems or lateness  
poor interpersonal relationships  
decrease in social activity  
substance abuse

Observable changes in personality and emotions:

feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, discouragement  
feelings that life is too painful or too difficult  
frequent crying, tantrums  
irritability, moodiness

Physical and somatic changes:

loss or increase in appetite  
headaches, stomach aches  
change in sleep patterns  
symptoms of substance abuse  
deterioration of hygiene or tidiness

2. All threats of suicide must be responded to in the following way:

Always take suicide threats seriously and respond accordingly

- i. Don't minimize their pain.
- ii. Don't ask leading questions, rather reflect their feelings back to them.
- iii. Don't make promises that you can't keep.

iv. Hear them out, listen and encourage.

Determine the seriousness of the individual's suicidal thoughts, noting the detail of the plan, including specific dates, times, methods and any advanced preparation already completed.

Remind them that God hasn't turned His back on them (Romans 8:38-39).

Assure them that you are concerned and you would like to put them in touch with someone who can help.

Don't take on the role of a therapist.

Keep them safe. Inform ministry lead, parents, and seek professional help.

3. Awareness of necessity for crisis intervention:

Determine the need for professional assistance. If the situation is dangerous or you sense that it is beyond your ability, refer it to a professional sooner rather than later. Counselling takes time, energy and resources to deal effectively with certain situations.

Establish rapport

- i. Show warmth and interest
- ii. Listen carefully
- iii. Take them seriously

Reduce anxiety

- i. You must remain calm and reassuring.
- ii. Don't offer pat answers like ... 'God will take care of you.'
- iii. Offer valid reassuring statements such as: 'Let's see what we can do about this. I think I can help. I know somebody that can help.'

Identify and prioritize the issues. Focus on the present and determine what needs to be done immediately.

Evaluate resources

- i. Personal: They have strengths, abilities, experiences and attitudes to draw on.
- ii. Interpersonal: Decide who can you both depend on. Use other people to help.
- iii. Community: Draw on the expertise of the legal, medical, pastoral, welfare and tutoring resources available.
- iv. Spiritual: This is not necessarily a time to evangelize, but a time to remind them that God is with them.

Plan a course of action

- i. Outline a specific plan of action specific to their needs.
- ii. Encourage them to do the things that they can.
- iii. Give them help and support with the things that they can't do.

Encourage hope. Without hope, we are immobilized. Don't allow self-defeating statements such as: 'I'll never do it. Things will never change.'

Follow-up

- i. Stay in contact as the steps you have laid out take place.
- ii. If they have been referred to other support networks, be sure to maintain contact with them.