



PLAN TO PROTECT® POLICY: A Protection Plan for Youth

Board Approval on the 17th day of December 2020

IMPORTANT NOTE

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Plan to Protect® Policy For Parkwood Gospel Church

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

Parkwood Gospel Church has a mandate to minister to individuals, families, adults, youth and children. In that context, Parkwood Gospel Church stresses the sanctity of human life and the importance and worth of each individual as a child of God. We believe it is the responsibility of the Church to provide a safe environment for children who are in attendance at the Church's facilities or who participate in Church-sanctioned activities and programs wherever they may be carried out.

We know that children are important to God and so they are very important to us. Children are not only the church of the future; they are a valuable part of the church today. However, our children are also vulnerable. Sadly, because of their lacking strength, awareness, and knowledge, they are often taken advantage of and worse, victims of abuse. Therefore, it is imperative as a church that we be proactive in protecting them and in providing safe environments so that the intimacy in the relationship between child and God remains secure.

We must, as well, protect those who serve our children. Our ministry personnel need the security of knowing that they are working in a setting where processes and procedures are in place to minimize any possibility of an erroneous accusation.

Everyone who teaches helps or cares for children under the auspices of Parkwood Gospel Church is required to follow the guidelines and procedures as defined in this document. The Church Board has reviewed and adopted them as official policy.

The Spiritual and Moral Responsibility of the Church

We recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care and we take our responsibility seriously.

Micah 6:8 presents this challenge, "He has shown all you people what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (TNIV)

Micah suggests that the Lord requires three things of us:

- **To act justly** – we must work for justice, seeking to promote the truth and speak out on behalf of the vulnerable.
- **To love mercy** – compassion needs to be the bedrock of all our work.
- **To walk humbly with our God** – every area of our lives need to be marked by humility and righteousness. To act always with integrity.

The Bible outlines our spiritual responsibility to children:

"If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were drowned in the depths of the sea." (Matthew 18:6 TNIV)

The Civil and Legal Responsibility of the Church

We recognize that providing a safe place for children is also a legal requirement. We have a legal responsibility to ensure that a plan for protecting children is in place and is diligently followed.

Our legal responsibility includes being accountable for the actions of our employees and volunteers, that as a church we will be held vicariously liable for their actions.

This policy and the guidelines contained within it are to help us in fulfilling our responsibilities to provide as safe and nurturing environment as possible for children. In partnership with parents, we, as a church, seek to provide quality care and instruction to families and in this way, promote spiritual growth at every age level.

DEFINITIONS

In this Policy, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

Accused	Shall mean a person against whom a complaint of child abuse or sexual exploitation is made pursuant to the terms of this Policy
Act	Means the <i>Child and Family Services Act</i> , R.S.O.1990, c.C.11, s. 72 (the "Act")
Board	Means the Board of Deacons the highest functioning authority of the church
Child	Means a person under the age of 18 years; see also Youth
Complainant	Means a person who makes a complaint of child abuse or sexual exploitation under this Policy
Ministry Lead	Individuals who have successfully completed the recruitment and screening process and who have been given the responsibility to give direction to programs or ministries for children, youth and vulnerable adults. The term includes volunteer and all full-time, short-term or contract staff members receiving a salary.
Ministry Personnel	An individual who has successfully completed the recruitment and screening procedures of Plan to Protect® Policy and is now deemed to be a person who can be put in a position of trust with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Ministry personnel include screened volunteers, full-time, short-term or contract staff and pastoral staff whether or not they receive a salary
Ministry Personnel File	A file kept on each prospective ministry personnel which includes the ministry application form, record of police records check, record of reference checks, and other documents related to the recruiting and supervision of ministry personnel
Occasional	Individuals who visit, observe and assist Ministry Personnel with

Observer	ministry activities 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 that they will not be asked to assume responsibility for children and they will not be allowed or asked to take children to the washroom
Parent	Shall mean the natural or adoptive Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of a child under the age of 18 years of age
Position of Trust	The role wherein parents and/or guardians have entrusted their children or youth to the care of ministry personnel
Youth	Means a person aged 11 to 18 years (“student”)
Vulnerable Adult	A person who 18 years of age or older, because of his/her age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, is in a position of dependence on others or is otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person or persons in positions of authority or trust relative to him/her.

UNDERSTANDING ABUSE

Definition of Abuse

It is critical for us to have a clear understanding of abuse, to be familiar with the definitions used when referring to it.

“Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical or mental health, or a child’s welfare.” (*Faith Trust Institute, 2006*)

Abuse is categorized as being physical, sexual, or emotional, involving neglect, harassment, improper touching and improper discipline.

Abusers can be family members, friends, staff or individuals in positions of trust or authority.

Physical Abuse “is any deliberate physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child. It can include punching, slapping, beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a child. It is different than what is considered reasonable discipline.” (*The Children’s Aid Society of London and Middlesex, 2007*)

Sexual Abuse “occurs when a child is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or an older child. Coercion (physical, psychological or emotional) is intrinsic to sexual abuse. This is what distinguishes it from sexual exploration with peers.

It is against the law to touch a child for a sexual purpose; to encourage or force a child to touch another person in a sexual way; encourage or force a child to participate in any sexual activity; tell a child to touch him or herself for an adult’s or older child’s sexual purposes.

Sexual abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults can take many forms. This includes sexual intercourse, exposing private areas, indecent phone calls, fondling for sexual purposes, watching the individual undress for sexual pleasure, allowing a child to look at, or perform in pornographic pictures or videos, or engage in prostitution." (*The Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex, 2007*)

Emotional Abuse "is a pattern of behaviour that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self worth. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond his or her capacity. Emotional abuse includes constantly criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring, or isolating the child. It also includes failure by a parent or caregiver to provide their children with love, emotional support, and guidance." (*The Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex, 2007*)

Neglect "is the failure to meet a child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, sleep, medical attention, education, and protection from harm. This can occur when parents do not know about appropriate care for children, when they cannot adequately supervise their children or when they are unable to plan ahead." (*The Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex, 2007*)

Harassment is repeated subtle or overt action, particularly by a person in a position of trust which causes the recipient to feel attacked, demeaned, intimidated or manipulated.

Exposure to Domestic Violence

Children who live in homes where a parent or caretaker is experiencing abuse are commonly referred to as "child witnesses" or "children who are witnessing" domestic violence. Children's exposure to domestic violence typically falls into three primary categories: hearing a violent event; being directly involved as an eyewitness, intervening, or being used as a part of a violent event (e.g., being used as a shield against abusive actions); and or experiencing the aftermath of a violent event.

Children's exposure to domestic violence also may include being used as a spy to interrogate the adult victim, being forced to watch or participate in the abuse of the victim, and being used as a pawn by the abuser to coerce the victim into returning to the violent relationship. Some children are physically injured as a direct result of the domestic violence. Some perpetrators intentionally physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse their children in an effort to intimidate and control their partner. In addition to being exposed to the abusive behaviour, many children are further victimized by coercion to remain silent about the abuse, maintaining the "family secret." (*Not Alone: You are not alone! <http://www.enotalone.com/article/9996.html>*)

SECTION II

POLICY ON PROTECTION PROCEDURES

RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING PROCESS

Recruitment will be approved by our pastoral and ministry leadership so that all necessary precautions are taken. A Ministry Lead will oversee the screening of all Volunteers. Volunteers should meet the following criteria: possess a testimony of faith in Jesus Christ; must be members of the church or have regularly attended the church (worship services and/or participated in a Ministry program) for at least six months; and have sufficient time to dedicate to serving in ministry.

Individuals will submit and complete the following:

Ministry Volunteer Application Form

This application will be kept confidential and on file permanently in a secured location.

Ministry Covenant

This Ministry Covenant indicates support of the vision, values and constitution of the church, and that the volunteer supports, and is submissive to, the leadership of the Pastors and Board of the church. This must be read and signed if in agreement. If not in agreement, the volunteer should talk to the Ministry Lead.

Reference checks

On the Ministry Volunteer Application form, three personal references will be required. At least one reference must be from outside the church, and only one reference may be a relative of the applicant.

Interview

After completing the Ministry Volunteer Application, the volunteer will be interviewed by the appropriate Ministry Lead. The interview will allow the potential volunteer to ask any questions about children's or youth ministries and about our child protection procedures.

Police Record Check ("PRC")

Each volunteer 18 years of age and over must submit to a police record check from the ministry lead. The cost will be covered by the church. These checks must be renewed every 3 years.

Plan to Protect® Training

Abuse prevention education and training is required for all Ministry Volunteers and must be completed prior to ministry placement. Training is to include a review of the Plan to Protect® Policy and procedures. All Ministry Personnel are to affirm that they have read the policy, that they understand it and the procedures that pertain to their area of ministry. This is required yearly, for those actively involved in ministry.

YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES

The following procedures are in place for ministries including but not limited to: Grade five to Grade twelve students.

Youth Ministry Personnel / Student Ratios

Programs for youth should comply with established staffing ratios as follows:

- “Jr. High” (Gr. 6 to 8) – one Ministry Personnel for every 8 students
- “Sr. High” (Gr. 9 to 12) – one Ministry Personnel for every 10 students

For high-risk activities, ratios should be adjusted to one Ministry Personnel for every 5 students.

Classroom Staffing and Supervision Guidelines

Two Leaders

A minimum of two unrelated Ministry Personnel are present for supervision at all times. Events with mixed genders must be supervised by both male and female Ministry Personnel.

Open Doors

One Ministry Personnel is present with the classroom door open, or the classroom door is closed with windows having clear lines or visibility in place. Window doors let ministry supervisors look in without interrupting the class.

Age Expectation

It is recommended there be at least a five year age difference between Ministry Personnel and the youth they supervise.

Supervision

Supervisors will visit classrooms regularly to insure that the class is sufficiently staffed and supervised.

Contacting Opportunities

- Ministry Personnel are encouraged to meet with youth in small group settings and in teams, not alone.
- The Ministry Lead must pre-approve ministry personnel that do one-on-one mentoring.
 - One-on-one mentoring sanctioned by the church must be done in public settings, or else it is required that the door remain open, or that the meeting take place in a room with an unobstructed window in the door.
 - The Ministry Lead is informed of the time and place of the meeting prior to the meeting, and parental permission is granted

Proper Display of Affection

Verbal Interactions

APPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS

These include:

- positive reinforcement
- appropriate jokes
- encouragement and praise

INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS

These include:

- any form of name calling
- involving youth in the personal problems of leaders
- having secret elements of any relationship with youth
- compliments related to physique or body development
- cursing or sexual jokes
- shaming, belittling, derogatory remarks or harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate.

Physical Contact

APPROPRIATE TOUCH

Recognizing that children need appropriate displays of affection that reflect pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love, appropriate touch of children will be age and developmentally appropriate. All touch must be done in view of others. Ministry Personnel must be made aware of what constitutes appropriate touch. Appropriate touch includes:

- One arm hugs, side hugs, shoulder-to-shoulder hugs
- Touch on the back or shoulder
- Pat on the head, shoulder or back
- Handshakes, high fives

INAPPROPRIATE TOUCH

Recognizing that the innocence of children must be protected, Ministry Personnel will be made aware that the following actions are deemed inappropriate and will not be permitted:

- Chest-to-chest hugging,
- Extended hugging,
- Over exuberant affection
- Lap sitting
- Kissing
- Touching of thighs, knees, back rubs or inappropriate spots of the body

- Wrestling, piggyback rides, tickling, massage or any form of affection unwanted by the youth

Ministry Personnel must be cognizant of conduct that could be misinterpreted:

- Horseplay
- Tickling
- Extended backrubs

Off-Site Activities, Overnight Events, Transportation

Off-Site Activities

- All off-site activities must be pre-approved by Ministry Lead with parents being notified at least one week prior to the outing, utilizing the Letter of Informed Consent
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child/youth participating in off-site events. Forms must be kept in the Ministry Lead's possession during off-site activities. The originals are to be kept on file permanently. All off-site activities are to be supervised by a minimum of two unrelated adult Ministry Personnel. Off-site activities with mixed genders must be supervised by at least two unrelated, adult Ministry Personnel of opposite gender.

Retreats and Overnight Events

- All retreats and overnight events must be pre-approved by a Ministry Lead.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms utilizing the Letter of Informed Consent are required for each youth participating in overnight events. Forms must be kept in the Ministry Lead's possession during trips and events. The originals are to be kept on file permanently.
- All overnight activities with mixed genders must be supervised by at least two unrelated, adult Ministry Personnel of opposite gender. There must be a minimum ratio of two (2) Ministry Personnel for every ten children or youth. Ministry Personnel are to be assigned a specific group of youth for whom they are responsible to supervise. Female Ministry Personnel will be assigned responsibility for female youth and male Ministry Personnel will be assigned responsibility for male youth.
- 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.
- 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.

Transportation

- When planning off-site activities, parents are to be encouraged to drop off and pick up their youth at the event location. For out of town events, school carriers are to be used unless none are available.
- Our first concern in transportation is the safety of our students. Drivers must obey all the rules of the road including the speed limits. Reckless or unsafe driving will not be tolerated.
- 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,
- The number of occupants in vehicles transporting youth during Church sponsored activities must not exceed the number of seat belts and each student must be in age appropriate safety restraints. Seat belts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times while the vehicle is in operation.
- At least two Ministry Personnel must be in each vehicle transporting youth during Church sponsored activities. Youth must never be left alone in a vehicle.

Health & Safety Guidelines

First Aid

- Ministry Leads and Ministry Personnel are to be encouraged to be certified and trained in first aid.
- Ministry Leads must be informed of any youth having severe allergies.

Medications

- Ministry Personnel are not to give or apply any medications. Parents are to be contacted and should administer all medications.
- 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.
- 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. (Appendix 11)
- Topical medications are to be used only when instructed and provided by the parent or guardian.

Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood

- 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.
- Ministry Personnel need to ensure that no other children have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury.
- Non-latex gloves are to be used when bandaging the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.
- Extreme care will be taken in cleaning up all blood and bandages and the safe and secure removal of waste and disposal of gloves.
- Hands are to be washed carefully.

Emergencies

- Emergency evacuation procedures will be reviewed annually by Ministry Lead(s). These procedures are to be posted in a visible place in each classroom stating the planned route of escape to the nearest exit.
- A first aid kit will be kept in each classroom as well as the Nursery, Gym Kitchen, Resource Room and Front Foyer.
- A parent will be contacted when an injury, accident or medical emergency occurs. Incident Reports are to be completed for any and all accidents. Injuries are to be reported to the Ministry Lead (Appendix 8).

Computer and Internet

The following guidelines should be adhered to by all members of Parkwood Gospel Church staff and ministry team personnel in relations to minors and electronic communications. These guidelines pertain only to the situations wherein the adult is in a position of leadership/trust over a minor.

- All communication must demonstrate and model purity, integrity, transparency and accountability, including email, Facebook, texting or other online social networks, as you represent both God and Parkwood Gospel Church.
- Communication with a Youth via email, text, Facebook or other online social networks will be monitored closely and only used with written parental permission.
- Ministry Personnel may communicate with Youth (aged 11-17) via text or Social Media with written parental permission. It is preferred that Ministry Personnel use a public Social Media option (i.e. group messages), or copy another leader on the text.
- Any online meetings involving children or youth will hosted by the Children or Youth Pastor, or designated Ministry Personnel only. Parent/guardian permission will be secured prior to these online meetings. Meetings will be recorded for security and accountability purposes, and the video files will be stored in a secure server location onsite at Parkwood.

Photography and Video Taping

Parkwood Gospel Church desires to capture memorable moments through photography, videotaping and audio recording (hereafter in this portion of the manual called "Recording"). Recording will be monitored with an attempt to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Recording will be done by designated ministry personnel;
- Parents/guardians of children and youth attending related ministry activities will be notified when an upcoming event involves Recording. Parents/guardians can opt out of a Recording event by contacting the church office either before or after the event; and
- The church will not identify by name any child or youth who is the subject of a Recording nor will any child or youth be identified on or in any bulletin, publication, bulletin board, newsletter, social media or website without prior written consent from parents/guardians.

SECTION III

POLICY ON REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS AND SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Hearing of an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse

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

- For the protection of our youth all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse against youth will be taken seriously.
- Immediately upon hearing of potential abuse or allegations of abuse to a child or youth, the Ministry Personnel must complete a Suspected Abuse Report Form documenting all pertinent information (Appendix 9).
- 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.
- Ministry Personnel are requested to notify the Senior Pastor that they will be making a report to Child and Family Services (Children's Aid).

Reporting an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse

- According to the Child and Family Services Act, any person with a reasonable suspicion of child abuse has a legal responsibility to immediately report the matter to child protection authorities (Children's Aid) or the police.
- Reporting must be done by telephone or in person promptly at the point of observing signs of abuse or receiving a report of abuse.
- The reporting must be immediate, a direct report, and an on-going report. The report may be done in conjunction with pastoral staff or your immediate ministry leader.
- Parkwood Gospel Church requests that when a ministry volunteer or staff in the line of duty reports a suspicion of abuse or an allegation of abuse to authorities, that they also notify the Senior Pastor (or the Associate Pastor, Children or Youth Pastor if Senior Pastor is unavailable) that a report has been made. It is understood that the report is to be kept confidential.
- 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.
- 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.



INCIDENT REPORT FORM

The incident report should be completed as soon as possible after the incident occurs and should include as detailed a description of the situation as possible.

Student Name/s _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____

Nature of Injury/Incident _____

Incident Date _____ Incident Time _____

Incident Location _____

Event Title _____

All Leaders Present _____

What happened?

What action was taken?

Contacted Parents Yes No

Parents' Response:

Leader's Name _____ Signature _____

Witness Name _____ Signature _____



SUSPECTED ABUSE REPORT FORM

Date _____ Name of Student _____

Age of Student _____ Grade _____ Birth date _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____ Phone Number _____

Parents' Names _____

Siblings' Names _____

Name of Person Filing Report _____

Name of Pastor Receiving Report _____

Name of Social Worker _____ Phone Number _____

Name of alleged perpetrator _____ M F

Relationship between suspected victim and alleged perpetrator _____

Nature of suspected abuse physical sexual emotional neglect

Indications of suspected abuse (including facts, physical signs and course of events)

Action taken (including date and time)

If a child is reporting:
What did the child say? (Give quotes where possible.)

What was your response?

Signature _____

Printed Name _____ Date _____

The above information will serve as a guide and will be necessary if a formal report is filed with the police or appropriate government agency. All information received is to be kept STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL and not shared with anyone or influenced by anyone.

This document should be sealed and labelled and stored under lock and key.