

**Bethel Netherlands Reformed Congregation
8920 Broadway Street
Chilliwack, B.C. V2P 6H4**

Bethel Netherlands Reformed Congregation Child Abuse Policy

Updated October 2023 – changes have been highlighted.

Introduction

Sadly, it is recognized by all that child abuse is a reality in today's society. Therefore, the Bethel Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Chilliwack (herein afterwards referred to as the Church) has a moral responsibility to address this serious matter to ensure that each child within the care of the Church can develop a healthy life, within a caring and loving Christian community environment, without the unwanted intrusion of child abuse. The goals of the policies and guidelines stated in this document include:

1. Protecting all children using our facilities from all forms of abuse.
2. Protecting individuals who interact with children on behalf of our organizations, both volunteer and paid staff, from false allegations of child abuse.
3. Protecting the integrity of our Church.
4. Upholding the honour and glory of the Lord.
5. Supporting alleged cases of child abuse according to the laws of British Columbia.
6. Supporting victims of child abuse in a Christian manner.

Therefore, it is the policy of the Church to protect all children participating in our organizations from all forms of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. It is also the policy of the Church to encourage all individuals associated with them to avoid even the appearance of such conduct in order to prevent any potential misunderstandings that may give rise to false accusations against an individual interacting with other children. Any violation of this policy is explicitly outside the scope of responsibility, duties or activities of the Church.

The reference to "church" in this policy includes all organizations and activities under the church's governance e.g. Timothy Christian School, Timothy Christian Preschool, Church Nursery, Sunset Manor, Choirs, Catechism classes, Girls' Craft Club, TCS Rangers, Vacation Bible School, church youth camps, and all church appointed committees. For all overnight trips, it is mandatory to follow the Boy Scouts of Canada policy, which is available at Timothy Christian School. Due to the predominant adult-child contact taking place in school settings, a significant emphasis is given to school situations in this policy.

Statements of Principle

The following basic principles are fundamental to this policy and serve to provide guidance where the policy does not address a particular matter:

- A. The response of the Christian church/school to child abuse should be one of obedience to the Word of God and to the instituted civil authorities in a spirit of justice, mercy and compassion, healing with love.
- B. The protection of the child is paramount. If there is any doubt in the reporting or management of child abuse, the person should err on the side of protecting the child.
- C. The primary responsibility for ensuring the safety and well-being of the child lies with the child's parents or guardians.
- D. Sin corrupts the relationships between children and parents or guardians or other adults. The Christian church/school must recognize that it is not immune to the problems of child abuse.
- E. The State has the authority from God to intervene in the relationship between the children and parents, or guardians or other adults, only where the parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to ensure the safety and well-being of the child or when assistance is requested by the family. The State also has the authority from God to use the means at its disposal where necessary to protect the child from abuse.
- F. The Christian church/school is responsible to support the abused child when the parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to ensure the well-being of the child.
- G. The Christian church/school should cooperate with the instituted authorities when dealing with problems of child abuse.
- H. With respect to abuse, the first responsibility of the Christian church/school should be prevention.

Glossary of Terms

<u><i>Appointed Church Official</i></u>	A person appointed by the Church Authority to perform a duty or duties described in this policy. A Church Authority may delegate duties to one or more appointed church officials.
<u><i>Appointed School Official</i></u>	A person appointed by the School Authority to perform a duty or duties described in this policy. A School Authority may delegate duties to one or more Appointed School Officials.
<u><i>Counselor</i></u>	A person or agency appointed by the Church or School Authority to provide counseling (e.g. a trained counselor, pastor, teacher).
<u><i>Child</i></u>	The use of the word child will also refer to 'youth' (anyone greater than 16 but less than 19 years).
<u><i>Independent School or School</i></u>	An Independent School as defined in the <i>Independent School Act</i> .
<u><i>Parent(s)</i></u>	(a) the mother or father of a child. (b) the person legally entitled to custody or guardianship of the person or child; or (c) the person with whom a child resides and who stands in the place of the child's mother or father.
<u><i>Principal</i></u>	The individual responsible for administering and supervising an independent school in accordance with the definition in the <i>Independent School Act</i> .
<u><i>School Authority</i></u>	That entity as defined in the <i>Independent School Act</i> that operates an independent school.
<u><i>Church Authority</i></u>	The entity as defined in the <i>Society Act</i> that operates a church and its various organized ministries and activities.

What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

Child abuse and neglect occurs with alarming frequency. As public awareness of the subject has grown, so has the number of reported and confirmed cases. The following definitions are adapted from *The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect (1998)*.

Physical Abuse is a deliberate, non-accidental physical assault or injury by an adult or significantly older or more powerful child that results in, or is likely to result in, physical harm to a child.

Sexual Abuse is the use of a child for sexual gratification by a person in a position of trust and/or authority, or by a significantly older or more powerful child. It includes sexual touching, menacing or threatening sexual acts, obscene gestures, or deliberate exposure of the child to sexual activity or material.

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of destructive behaviours or verbal attacks by an adult or older/more powerful child on a child. Typical behaviours may include rejecting, terrorizing, ignoring, isolating, humiliating, insulting, scapegoating, exploiting or corrupting a child.

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including food, clothing, adequate shelter, supervision and medical care. Neglect is the form of abuse most frequently reported to the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Sexual Exploitation includes permitting, encouraging or requiring a child to engage in conduct of a sexual nature for stimulation, gratification or self-interest of another person; prostitution; or production of material of a pornographic nature.

Standards of Conduct

1. *Prohibited Conduct*

To achieve the goal of preventing any form of child abuse or potential of false allegations of child abuse, individuals interacting with children shall not engage in any of the following conduct:

- a. Any form of sexual abuse, including but not limited to:
 - sexual exploitation
 - harassment
 - molestation
 - disseminating, exhibiting, or displaying sexually explicit material to children, with an exception for sex education provided through the Church or the School for children of the Congregation as part of the normal education process.

- using sexually explicit language in the presence of a child
 - demonstrating any sexual or romantic interest in a child
 - removing any dress or clothing from any child, except when appropriately required under necessary circumstances and then in the presence of another adult whenever possible
 - wearing anything but modest, appropriate attire in the presence of a child
 - inappropriate touching, hugging, or kissing of a child
 - sleeping in the same bed or bedding with a child
- b. Any form of physical abuse including, but not limited to:
- hitting, kicking, slapping, or shoving a child
 - selling, giving, or furnishing any child with any tobacco substance, alcohol, or controlled drug
- c. Any form of emotional abuse including, but not limited to:
- swearing or using obscene language in the presence of a child
 - insulting or degrading a child

2. Recommended Conduct

Furthermore, to prevent the possibility of abuse or false allegations of abuse, individuals must adhere to the following guidelines whenever possible.

- a. Private Conversations
- Private conversations should only be held when absolutely necessary.
 - If possible, have someone else present during the conversation with the child.
 - Private conversations should be conducted in public and populated locations which are accessible by others.
 - If meeting in an office or other similar location, select an office that has glass partitions or windows and is situated where others are nearby.
 - Inform your supervisor and/or a colleague whom you will be speaking with and when.
 - Conversations must remain professional and appropriate at all times.
 - No private conversation should be held if any romantic interest is developing between the individuals.

- b. Guidelines for Working with Children
- Staff or volunteers should never be alone with a child, including in buildings, rooms, vehicles, or private places; remain where others can observe and accompany you.
 - Unless necessary and approved by your supervisor, do not assist a child in the restroom.
 - Staff/volunteers must take 2 or more children to the washroom at a time OR one child going to the bathroom must be accompanied by two staff/volunteers (**never one child alone with one staff/volunteer**).
 - Ensure that at least one other teacher, volunteer, or child accompanies you when you are with a child.
 - Maintain an “open door” policy, allowing parents or adults to drop in anytime.
 - Avoid “out of program” or “off-premises” contact between staff or volunteers and children.

Recognizing Possible Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

Abused and neglected children almost always show signs of their suffering. Some of the most common indicators are listed below. These are *warning signs*; they do not necessarily mean abuse and neglect are happening.

Possible Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect:

- unexplained bruises, different colored bruises, welts, cuts, burns, bite marks especially on the face, lower back, thighs or upper arms
- unexplained fractures, repeated injuries over time
- constant complaints such as sore throats or stomach aches that have no medical explanation
- lack of proper hygiene, constant hunger, clothing inappropriate for weather conditions
- torn, stained or bloody underwear
- irritation, bruising, bleeding, pain or itching near genitals or anus
- bruises on breasts, buttocks or thighs
- sudden onset of nightmares, bedwetting, and/or fear of the dark
- cuts or sores on arms or legs
- fear of going home, attempts to run away
- sudden change in attitude towards someone previously liked and trusted
- expressing bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge not typical for age, language or play
- unable to concentrate
- sexually acting out

- becoming anxious and fearful after being outgoing and friendly
- expressing sadness, crying frequently, becoming depressed
- lacking friends or not participating in activities
- appearing lethargic
- showing poor impulse control, physical aggression
- irregular or non-attendance at school

Handling a Disclosure

How a Child Tells Us About Being Abused

Sometimes children will tell an adult directly that they are being abused or neglected. Sometimes children use indirect ways to tell you - through art, drama, writing, or hints. These are all known as disclosures.

If a child discloses to you, follow the steps below:

- be supportive by staying calm, listening and being non-judgmental
- tell the child you're sorry it happened and let the child know it's not his/her fault
- reassure the child that s/he has done the right thing by telling you
- get only the essential facts; do not interview the child.
- do not promise to keep the disclosure a secret
- tell the child that you will be making a report to the proper authorities
- do not say everything will be fine now; it may take a lot of time before everything is fine again
- report the disclosure promptly to a child protection social worker
- document verbatim what the child tells you; do not include personal opinions or judgments
- maintain confidentiality of the documentation
- if a child is in danger, contact the police
- notify the Appointed Church/School Official or principal (in accordance with school policy) that a report has been made to the child protection social worker and/or police

It is Everyone's Legal Duty to Report

Everyone who has reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be physically harmed, sexually abused, or sexually exploited by a parent or other person, or needs protection in the circumstances described in section 13(1)(a) to (k) of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, is legally responsible under section 14 of that Act to report promptly to a child protection social worker. In British Columbia a child is anyone under the age of 19 (see page 7, *The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect*).

Reporting can be the beginning of a process of repentance and justice and can keep the child - and perhaps other children - from harm.

What to Report to a Child Protection Social Worker

When you report suspected child abuse and neglect, the child protection social worker will ask about:

- the child's age, name, address, and phone number
- any immediate concerns for the child's safety
- why you believe the child needs protection
- any statements or disclosures the child has made
- the child's parents and other family members
- the alleged offender's name, address
- any other children, such as siblings, who may be involved or at risk
- any previous incidents or concerns for the child
- any other relevant information such as the child's language, culture, disabilities, or special needs

The person making the report is not responsible for determining whether the abuse/neglect actually happened or is likely to happen. This is the responsibility of the child protection social worker.

How to Report to a Child Protection Social Worker

Report to a child protection social worker in the Ministry for Children and Family Development's office.

- See contact information on page 21 of this policy

Tell the child protection social worker as much as you know. S/he will listen to your concerns and may ask you some questions. Your name will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed without your consent unless authorized by law.

The persons who have been appointed as Church/School Officials for performing the roles described in this policy are listed on page 21 of this policy.

Role Responsibilities

Role of Child Protection Social Worker

- assesses the report
- ensures the safety of the child
- commences an investigation if there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child needs protection
- contacts parents
- may provide services to the child and family

Role of Police

- protects a child in immediate danger
- conducts a criminal investigation
- interviews the alleged offender

Role of Church/School Personnel

- observes the child for indicators of abuse or neglect
- handles disclosures from children
- reports promptly to a child protection social worker
- notifies the principal/activity supervisor a report has been made
- supports the child emotionally
- monitors the child for signs of stress
- refers the child for counseling when appropriate

Role of Principal/Church Activity Supervisor

- ensures ongoing support and safety of the child
- assists in securing personnel, resources, and/or making arrangements for a “child protection interview” to be held in a school/church setting
- refers inquiries about child protection and/or criminal investigations from parents to a child protection social worker, the police, and/or the Appointed Church/School Official

Role of Appointed Church/School Official

- ensures a safe school environment during investigations
- consults with the child protection social worker and/or police
- ensures that no church/school employee interferes with any investigations
- communicates with parents respecting actions taken by the Church/School Authority
- reports to the British Columbia Teacher Regulation Branch when the School Authority dismisses, suspends, or otherwise disciplines a certified teacher (*Independent School Act (section 7); Inspector’s Order 11/92, Discipline Reporting Order*)
- refers child(ren) for counseling according to church/school policies

Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect

Four Common Scenarios that are Likely to Occur in a Church/School Setting

When concerns about child abuse and neglect arise in a church/school setting, personnel respond to the following most common circumstances:

- alleged child abuse and neglect by a parent, caregiver, friend, relative, or other person
- alleged child abuse and neglect by a church/school employee, contracted service provider, or volunteer
- alleged abusive behaviour at school or other church activity by a child under age 12
- alleged abusive behaviour at school or other church activity by a child age 12 and over including a young offender under the federal *Youth Criminal Justice Act*

The four scenarios, each with procedural steps, are outlined in Appendix A of this policy.

Safety on the Internet

- the Internet opens the classroom to the exploitation of children by unscrupulous adults
- child exploiters will use apparently innocent and clever ways to entice the child via the Internet
- make use of filters mandatory on all computers used on church and school related properties
- block out chat rooms entirely
- make supervision of student use of computers in the school/and or on church property mandatory
- encourage parents to use filters at home, block out chat rooms, and regulate use of the Internet through time and place supervision at home

Internet Safety Tips for Children

- do not give out personal information like your name, school, address, phone number or put your picture on a web page
- not everyone you meet in a chat room is who they say they are; e.g. a 53-year-old may pretend to be a 12-year-old
- do not share home, school, or personal problems with anyone on the Internet
- if someone harasses you online or makes you feel uncomfortable in any way, tell your teacher or parent and/or see the counselor for help

Supporting Children Who Have Been Abused and/or Neglected

Impact of Abuse and Neglect on Children

Children who have been abused and neglected or who witness abuse and neglect of their loved ones may experience:

- a sense of loss of their childhood
- feelings of being betrayed by adults in position(s) of trust
- difficulties in forming healthy relationships
- feelings of shame and humiliation
- feelings of guilt about being responsible for the abuse
- fear of being re-victimized
- feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, anxiety or depression
- feelings of anger or rage
- hyperactivity, poor impulse control or inattentiveness

In addition, a child may engage in self-destructive behaviour; e.g. self-mutilation, eating disorders, criminal activities, suicide attempts, and/or be absent or truant from school.

Helping Children Rebuild Resiliency and Trust

In addition to prayer, a child who has suffered from the trauma of abuse needs church/school personnel to:

- focus on her/his God-given assets and strengths
- be warm and accepting
- be hopeful and believe that with God's help, the child can work through this adversity
- be an understanding and respectful listener
- set clear expectations and goals for the child
- be a positive role model
- create a welcoming classroom environment
- provide consistency and stability in the classroom
- set clear boundaries and clear rules of conduct for all children
- provide routine and structure
- monitor the child for high stress levels, anxiety, exhaustion, self-destructive behaviours
- report any new suspicions of abuse about the child
- treat him/her like all the other children
- consult with a counselor

Church/School Appointed Officials and Consultants shall work with victims of child abuse and their families to encourage and monitor appropriate counseling services.

Frequent Questions and Answers

How are children protected?

If it appears the child may need protection, a child protection social worker will start an investigation. In all child protection investigations a child protection social worker will see and interview the child, the child's parents, all other children in the household, the alleged offender, and any other witnesses. If a child needs protection, the social worker will take whatever steps are most appropriate and least disruptive to protect the child.

What do I do if my child minimizes the abuse or recants and begs me not to tell anyone about the disclosure?

You **must** report child abuse. It is your **duty** under the law. Reassure the child that s/he did the right thing in telling you. Reassure the child that the abuse is not her/his fault. Let the child know you want to help keep her/him safe. Tell the child that you are going to call someone who can help her/him right away. Tell the child that you will be there to support her/him. When you report abuse, you are taking the first and most important step in getting help for the child.

If I am unsure whether the child needs protection, with whom should I consult?

Contact the local Ministry for Children and Family Development office and ask to speak to a child protection social worker. The child protection social worker is the person who has the training and expertise to determine if you need to report. The child protection social worker will keep your call for consultation confidential. If, after the consultation, the child protection social worker determines that a report must be made, it is your responsibility to report promptly.

Why is “confidentiality” important?

The child and others who may be involved are entitled to have their privacy respected. Personal information of abuse must not be shared except with persons who have a legitimate interest in receiving the information, i.e. child protection workers or the police. The casual sharing of information with friends or colleagues may result in inappropriate disclosure of information causing distress to individuals involved, feeding the rumor mill, and prejudicing ongoing investigations. Children and others who may be involved are entitled to have their privacy respected.

If I notify the principal, Church activity director, or School Official about a child's disclosure of abuse and neglect, must I still report to a child protection social worker?

Yes, the legal duty to report is the responsibility of each individual. Any person with reason to believe that a child needs protection has a duty to report directly to a child protection social worker. Informing another person - e.g. a colleague, the principal, or the pastor - does not discharge your legal duty to report directly to a child protection social worker.

Will the child protection social worker keep my identity confidential?

Under the *Child, Family, and Community Service Act*, the identity of the person who makes a report will not be revealed without consent, unless authorized by law.

What happens to children if they need to be removed from the home?

Child protection social workers only remove children from their homes when they are in immediate danger or when no less-disruptive measures are available to protect them. Whenever children are taken from their families for their own protection, a court process starts. Family Court judges hear evidence from all sides and decide with whom the children will live. Children who cannot safely stay with family members or friends are placed in foster homes or care facilities that can meet their needs. Foster homes that are of similar cultural or religious backgrounds are sought.

How do I deal with my fears to report?

Recognize that it is natural to feel apprehensive about making a report, particularly if it involves a colleague or people you know. Remember that everyone who has reason to believe that a child needs protection has a **legal duty to report promptly** to a child protection social worker. By reporting you are helping the child.

What are the consequences if I have reason to believe a child needs protection and I do not report?

The *Child, Family and Community Services Act* imposes a duty on any person who has reason to believe that a child needs protection to report the matter promptly to a child protection social worker at a Ministry of Children and Family Development office. Failure to report in these circumstances constitutes an offense under the Act that is punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to six months' imprisonment.

Conclusion

Let us pray and work, by instructing ourselves and church/school communities in this subject, that cases of child abuse may be reduced among us. If cases do occur, this policy provides procedural guidelines to be followed when responding to child abuse. These guidelines are in accordance with the principles of Scripture and requirements of provincial legislation. May the Lord graciously grant us the wisdom, love and guidance we need to walk uprightly with our God and in love with others that God's name may be honoured and glorified.

APPENDIX A

Note: The following scenarios reflect a school/child perspective. The same steps apply to a church/child situation. For a church organization/activity, Church Appointed Official may be substituted for School Appointed Official; Church Activity Supervisor for Principal; Church for School; and Child for Child.

Scenario #1

Responding to Alleged Child Abuse and Neglect by Parent, Caregiver, Friend, Relative or Other Person Whether Current or Historic

The Report

- report allegations of child abuse and neglect promptly to a child protection social worker
- *call the police if the child is in immediate danger*

Documenting the Information

- information regarding any reported allegation should be properly documented
- follow any policy and procedures for documentation established by your School Authority
- information should be treated in the strictest confidence

Notifying the Principal

- notify the principal that a report has been made to a child protection social worker and/or the police
- protect the privacy of the child

Do Not Contact the Offender(s), His/Her Parents, Nor the Parents of the Victim(s)

- the child protection social worker and/or the police will contact the parents
- the police contact the alleged offender when a criminal investigation is taking place

The Investigations

- cooperate fully with any investigation which may be conducted by the child protection social worker and/or criminal investigation by the police
- at the discretion of the investigators, a support person may be present for the child during the interview

Sharing Information

- provide information requested by the child protection social worker and/or the police
- the child protection worker must report back to the person who made the report the results of the investigation, unless reporting would cause emotional or physical harm to anyone, or a criminal investigation is contemplated or underway.

Supporting the Child

- be available to listen
- monitor the child's well-being
- consult with the counselor where appropriate

Scenario #2

Responding to Alleged Child Abuse and Neglect by a Church/School Employee, Contracted Service Provider or Volunteer

The Report

- *Call the police if a child is in immediate danger and/or an alleged criminal offense has occurred*
- report promptly to a child protection social worker
- notify the Appointed School Official a report has been made
- **do not notify the alleged offender**; this responsibility is determined by the Appointed School Official in consultation with the child protection social worker and/or the police
- the Appointed School Official reports to the British Columbia Teacher Regulation Branch when the School Authority dismisses, suspends, or otherwise disciplines a certified teacher (*Independent School Act (section 7); Inspector's Order 11/92, Discipline Reporting Order*)
- maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of both the child and employee

Documenting the Information

- information regarding any reported allegation should be properly documented

- follow policy and procedures for documentation established by your School Authority
- information should be treated in the strictest confidence

Initial Response by the Appointed School Official, Child Protection Social Worker and/or Police

- the Appointed School Official, the child protection social worker and police collaborate to:
 - ensure the safety and well-being of the child involved and any other children who may be at risk
 - clarify their respective responsibilities during the investigations
 - determine who will contact the parents and/or interview the child
- if the welfare of the child might be threatened by the presence of an employee, the Appointed School Official recommends to the School Authority the suspension or termination of the employment of the employee
- when a child protection social worker is responding to a report of child abuse by someone other than a parent, the child protection social worker assesses whether the parent is willing and able to protect the child from harm
- after the assessment the child protection social worker determines whether or not there are grounds for proceeding with an investigation

The Investigations by the Child Protection Social Worker, Police and Appointed School Official

Persons conducting investigations need to work collaboratively, sharing information where they are legally permitted. A priority should be to limit the emotional impact on the child as much as possible by treating the child complainant sensitively, keeping the number of interviews to a minimum and providing support. At the discretion of the investigators, a support person may be present for the child during the interview.

Child Protection Social Worker

- conducts the child protection investigation
- determines if a child needs protection

Police

- determines if a criminal offense may have occurred
- interviews the alleged offender, the child involved and other potential witnesses in connection with the criminal investigation

Appointed School Official

- facilitates the investigations of the child protection social worker and/or police by ensuring that employees cooperate with the ongoing investigations.
- initiates a disciplinary investigation of the conduct of the employee
- investigates and determines what action should be taken by the School Authority if the alleged conduct involves a contracted service provider or volunteer

Sharing Information

School Personnel

- do not contact the parents of the alleged offender
- refer inquiries to the Appointed School Official, child protection social worker and/or police, as directed
- provide information requested by the child protection social worker, police, and/or Appointed School Official with their respective investigations

Child Protection Social Worker

- must report back to the person making the report the results of the investigation unless reporting would cause emotional or physical harm to anyone, or a criminal investigation is contemplated or underway

Supporting Children and School Personnel

- Appointed School Official informs parents of counseling services available through the schools and/or in the community
- Appointed School Official collaborates with professionals in the community to develop follow up plans, referrals for services and/or critical incident debriefing for children and staff, as appropriate

Responding to Alleged Abusive Behaviour at School by a Child - Scenarios #3 and #4

Abusive behaviour by a child can occur in class, on or near school property, while traveling to and from school, or while the child is at lunch. The following information will guide you in responding to abusive behaviour by a child as outlined in Scenarios #3 and #4.

The principal is responsible for ensuring a safe school environment while children are in attendance at school and/or participating in school activities. The principal must be notified about any abusive behaviour occurring at school.

If there is reason to believe that a child needs protection, report promptly to a child protection social worker.

There is no need to report:

- minor altercations or aggression between children
- any other activity that is within the bounds of normal childhood behaviour

If a child or staff member is in immediate danger call the police.

Where a child has assaulted or endangered another person, call the police and report promptly to a child protection social worker.

Children under 12 years of age are not criminally responsible for their actions, and therefore, are not charged under the *Criminal Code of Canada*. A child 12 to 18 years of age may be charged with a criminal offense under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

Scenario #3

Responding to Alleged Abusive Behaviour at School by a Child Under Age 12

The Report to the Principal

- *call the police if a child or staff member is in immediate danger and/or a criminal offense has occurred*
- when abusive behaviour between children occurs at school, school personnel should immediately notify the principal
- the principal ensures the safety of the victim and alleged offender

Assessment of Child's Abusive Behaviour by School Personnel

- whenever a person has reason to believe that a child needs protection, a report must be made promptly to a child protection social worker
- factors a person should consider when assessing whether or not s/he has reason to believe a child (victim and/or alleged offender) needs protection include:
 - the seriousness or potential seriousness of the abusive behaviour
 - the existence of a power imbalance between the children; e.g. differences in size, ages, intellectual capacity or a gang situation
 - whether the behaviour is impulsive or premeditated
 - the willingness and ability of the involved children's parents to respond appropriately
 - whether incidents of aggression or victimization are recurring

The Report to a Child Protection Social Worker

- once a person has reason to believe a child needs protection there is no discretion about whether or not to make a child protection report
- the principal and staff person (who witnessed the abusive behaviour or received the disclosure) may make a joint report to the child protection social worker (conference call)

Document the Information

- information regarding any reported allegations should be properly documented
- follow any policy and procedures for documentation established by your School Authority
- information should be treated in the strictest confidence

The Investigation

- cooperate fully with all investigations by the child protection social worker, police, and Appointed School Official
- at the discretion of the investigators, a support person may be present for the child during the interview

Sharing Information

- provide information requested by the child protection social worker, police and Appointed School Official
- the child protection social worker will report the results of the investigation to the person reporting and the children's parents, as authorized by legislation

Follow-up Response

- if the principal or Appointed School Official determines that the offending child threatens the welfare of others, s/he takes appropriate action to ensure the safety of all children
- the principal and/or the Appointed School Official may:
 - discipline the offender in accordance with school policies
 - develop a safety/support plan for the child and/or the school
 - offer support services, such as counseling, to the children involved
 - contact parents of children involved if it does not jeopardize the investigation of the child protection social worker and/or police, the teacher and/or counselor
 - support children and monitor children's well-being
 - consult with and/or refer to other specialized service providers

Scenario #4

Responding to Alleged Abusive Behaviour at School by a Child Age 12 and Over, Including a Young Offender

A child age 12 to 18 years of age can be charged with a criminal offense under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. Scenario #4 follows all the steps in Scenario #3 with the additional Step 3a outlined below.

Report to Police and Youth Probation Officer

- call the police if a child age 12 or over is alleged to have committed a criminal offense at school
- notify the police and youth probation officer of a breach of a young offender's probation order or abusive behaviour that may constitute a breach

Contact Numbers

Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) Offices

a. Chilliwack

Telephone: 604-702-2311

Address: 8978 School St. Chilliwack V2P 4L4

b. Agassiz

Telephone: 604-796-1044

Address: 7278 Pioneer Ave. Agassiz V0M 1A0

After-hours Line

For emergencies anytime of the day or night, call the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) 24-hours at: 1-800-663-9122.

Helpline for Children

When it concerns child abuse, anyone can call the Helpline for Children, anytime, day or night. Simply dial "310-1234" (no area code needed).

Kids Help Phone

1-800-668-6868

Police

604-792-4611

Appointed School Officials:

Appointed School Official (ASO):

Mr. D. Stam (School Principal)

604-794-7114 (School)

604-794-3534 (Home)

604-845-0672 (Cell)

Alternate Appointed School Official:

Mr. W. Neels (School Board President)

604-858-8834 (Home)

604-997-0967 (Cell)

Appointed Church Officials and Consultants:

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg (Consistory President):

604-792-6464 (Home)

604-792-3755 (Office)

604-316-0566 (Cell)

Mr. Neil Stam (Consistory Member):

604-792-4182 (Home)

604-316-4182 (Cell)

Mrs. Marianne Luteyn:

604-794-0050 (Home)

604-793-6497 (Cell)

More information can be found in ***'Responding to Child Welfare Concerns – Your Role in Knowing When and What to Report'*** (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/child_abuse_prevention_handbook-general_public_booklet.pdf)

Please note: For children from the United States, if the suspected abuse is happening in Canada, then contact the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD phone number listed above). If the suspected abuse is happening in the United States, US officials will need to be contacted. You can phone the Canadian MCFD and they will contact the necessary US officials or help you to do so.

BNRC Abuse Policy Recommendations for Overnight Trips

In addition to the Standards of Conduct outlined in the general BNRC Abuse Policy, the committee recommends that for all overnight trips:

- a) a chaperone must be at least 21 years of age.
- b) there be - **at minimum** - an equal number of chaperones with a successfully cleared Criminal Record Check to those who have not completed a Criminal Record Check.
- c) any chaperone who is not a parent of a participant must undergo a Criminal Record Check.
- d) no chaperone will share sleeping quarters with a participant who is not his/her son or daughter.
- e) where for discipline reasons it becomes necessary for a participant to share accommodations with a chaperone, there must be two adults present at all times.