

2.2 ABUSE PREVENTION

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to prevent abuse and harm to children, youth, and vulnerable adults participating in our church programs, and to protect our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers involved in church ministry.

3. Statement of Policy: Dryden Full Gospel Church is committed to:

- a. a safe environment by preventing harm to those in our care,
- b. protecting our children's and youth ministry workers from false allegations,
- c. and declaring zero tolerance for abuse or neglect.

4. Definitions:

"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. Abuse of Vulnerable Adults is sometimes described as misuse of power and a violation of trust. Elder/Vulnerable Adult abuse can take place in the home, in other residential settings, or in the community.

Physical Abuse "Physical abuse is the intentional use of force against a child. It can cause physical pain, injury, or injury that may last a lifetime. This type of abuse includes: pushing or shoving, hitting, slapping or kicking, strangling or choking, pinching or punching, biting, burning, throwing an object at a child, and, excessive or violent shaking" (Child Abuse is Wrong, Department of Justice Canada, 2012)

Sexual Abuse "Child sexual abuse happens when a person takes advantage of a child for sexual purposes. It does not always involve physical contact with a child. For example, it could happen when an adult makes sexual comments to a child, or secretly watches or films a child for sexual purposes. Sexual abuse of a child includes: any sexual contact between an adult and a child under 16, any sexual contact with a child between the age of 16 and 18 without consent, or any sexual contact that exploits a child under 18." (Child Abuse is Wrong, Department of Justice Canada, 2012)

Emotional Abuse "Emotional abuse happens when a person uses words or actions to control, frighten, isolate, or take away a child's self-respect and sense of worth. Emotional abuse is sometimes called psychological abuse. It can include: putting a child down or humiliating a child, constantly criticizing a child, constantly yelling



at a child, threatening to harm a child or others, keeping a child from seeing their family or friends without good reason, or threatening to move a child out of their home.” (Child Abuse is Wrong, Department of Justice Canada, 2012)

Neglect “Neglect happens when a parent or guardian fails to meet a child’s basic needs. Sometimes parents neglect their children on purpose. Sometimes parents don’t mean to neglect their children, but they have so many problems themselves that they can’t look after their children properly. Neglect can include: not giving a child proper food or warm clothing, not providing a child with a safe and warm place to live, not making sure a child washes regularly, not providing enough health care or medicine, not paying any attention to a child’s emotional needs, not preventing physical harm, and not making sure a child is supervised properly.” (Child Abuse is Wrong, Department of Justice Canada, 2012)

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

Improper discipline Staff, ministry leaders or volunteers should never:

- Use physical discipline (corporal punishment or an act of force.)
- Shame, blame, or call name
- Segregate a child indefinitely

Appropriate disciplinary actions include:

- Redirecting child to another activity
- Asking child to sit in a different location
- Reminding the child of the rules and consequences
- Removing the child from the group briefly to provide quiet time
- Contacting a parent / guardian

5. Screening Process: DFGC has mandatory screening measure for all workers including all employees, ministers, board members and volunteers serving in any position involving work with children, youth or vulnerable adults, including:

- a. Signed employee/volunteer applications (including ministry agreement, code of conduct, and release for references / criminal record checks.)
- b. Criminal record checks: new applicants checked prior to eligibility; existing workers re-checked every five [5] years, or less.
- c. Background reference checks (minimum 2) for new employees/volunteers.
- d. Personal interviews for new employees/volunteers
- e. Minimum 6-month waiting period for volunteers new to our organization prior to eligibility.

6. Operational Procedures:

- a. We will prohibit corporal punishment and inappropriate touching, affection or discipline.



- b. We will enact an unrelated 'two-adult rule' for off-premises contact with children and youth.
- c. We will address health, safety and sanitation issues to prevent child neglect.
- d. We will provide age appropriate supervision of washroom breaks.
- e. We will avoid activities that could easily lead to allegations of abuse or harassment, such as unsupervised internet access, individual photography of children and vehicle transportation by a worker alone with unrelated minors.
- f. We will obtain written parental consent for sponsored off-premises or overnight activities and field trips.
- g. We will implement a social networking policy for youth programs addressing appropriate content and confidentiality issues.
- h. We will keep confidential documentation on file indefinitely for all workers, including original Criminal Record Checks.
- i. We will conduct an annual internal audit to ensure we are upholding our policies and procedures. This audit will include a written report to the board.

7. Premises:

- a. We maintain a 'two-adult rule' and/or 'open door policy' and/or windows in all classrooms and/or designated monitors circulating periodically from room to room, for surveillance and to protect workers against false allegations.
- b. We control access and use parental sign-in for Sunday children's programs.
- c. We have adequate lighting inside and outside of buildings where children's/youth activities take place.

8. Training: We conduct training for all children's and youth ministry and other workers in positions of trust with minors or vulnerable adults to assist them in understanding the issue of abuse, abuse prevention and legal responsibility to report actual or alleged incidents, including:

- a. Initial training for all new workers.
- b. Annual refresher training for Operational Procedures, Premises and Responding protocol.

9. Responding: In cases of suspected or alleged abuse, our written protocol for responding is:

- a. We immediately complete an incident report form.
- b. We fulfill statutory reporting obligations to child protective agencies or police authorities.
- c. Without admitting legal liability or making public statements prior to obtaining legal counsel, we will assure a compassionate response to the alleged victim and their family.
- d. We will maintain confidentiality for the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator.
- e. We will immediately suspend the alleged perpetrator pending the outcome of the investigation.
- f. We will consult a lawyer and will report the incident to our insurance company.

10. Accompanying procedures and forms: Details of how we train and follow this policy are addressed in our accompanying Plan to Protect procedures manual, which is to be reviewed and updated regularly.