



**RIVER CITY CHURCH**  
church has changed since you were a kid

# **Abuse Prevention and Abuse Reporting**

## **Ministry Policies and Procedures**

### **Safety For Children – Policies and Procedures**

**Fall: 2004**

**Purpose** – To ensure the proper treatment of abuse prevention, abuse education and abuse response at River City Church

**Reporting Procedure** – The staff (volunteers) report to the Director of the appropriate Ministry Area. The Director reports to the full body of Directors which reports to the Visionary Board

**Definition of Abuse** – refers to physical, verbal, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect involving persons of all ages

- **Physical abuse** – any non-accidental injury to a person by another who is perceived by the victim as having more power. Non-accidental injuries may include beatings, shaking, burns, strangulation, or human bites with resulting bruises, welts, broken bones, scars, or internal injuries. Physical abuse is rarely a single physical incident, but rather a pattern or form of punishment that is too severe.
- **Neglect** – failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect a minor, or a pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting a minor.
- **Sexual abuse – there are 3 types**
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual act, including touching, related to a minor or adult without their consent is defined as a legal offense in provincial legislation and the Criminal Code of Canada
- **Sexual misconduct** – any sexual exploitation of a minor or adult with whom there is a fiduciary relationship (one on trust), by a professional or clergy member in a position of authority or power over the minor or adult
- **Sexual harassment** – any unwelcome sexual advances that unreasonably interfere with an individual's job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment
- **Emotional Abuse** – any chronic patterns of behavior where one is threatening, belittling, humiliating and or ridiculing another

## **Abuse Education and Prevention**

- All staff members (paid and unpaid) and Board members, or anyone in a position representing River City Church are required to report any suspected or alleged incidents of abuse to the appropriate Ministry Area Director immediately. The Director will keep a written record of the reported abuse. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person to substantiate the alleged abuse, but only to report it. When the alleged victim is a minor, both the Director and the person reporting will immediately report to Family & Children's Services (hereafter F&CS).
- All staff members (paid and unpaid) are mandated to attend an orientation seminar on recognizing inappropriate behaviours and the procedure for reporting such behaviours. This seminar will be held annually in the fall. Staff members are required to take this seminar only one time.
- Information regarding the reporting of abuse will be posted at the appropriate ministry areas during registration and in River City's Ministry Guidelines book.
- River City programs that service minors are required to implement operating procedures covered in this policy.

### **- When An Abuse Allegation Is Made**

1. If the alleged victim is a minor (16 or younger), the incident will be reported to F&CS. F&CS will conduct the investigation. If the alleged victim is an adult (17 or older), the incident will be reported to an Abuse Response Team (ART). Reports are only made to the police by the alleged victim or F&CS.
2. The Lead Pastor and Chair of the Board will be notified immediately.
3. If reasonable cause supports the allegations, the alleged offender will be informed that an investigation is underway. The alleged offender will then be suspended from participating in all roles at River City, pending the outcome of civil, legal and/or church processes. If the alleged offender is a pastor, paid staff member or Board member, immediate suspension with full pay and without prejudice is applicable pending the outcome of the investigation.
4. If the lead pastor, paid staff member or Board member is suspended, River City attenders will be notified in writing about the allegations and action taken. Crisis intervention will be provided to attenders regardless of the outcome of the investigation.

5. The identity of alleged victims (of all ages) will be protected to prevent further traumatization. River City Church will cover the cost of consulting trained professionals in how to best respond to both victims and offenders.
6. If abuse allegations are verified, the offender continues with suspension. The offender will be permanently banned from positions that will put him or her at risk to self and others. If the abuse involves minors, the permanent ban would involve all areas of children's and family ministry.
7. If the offender is a pastor, he or she will be deposed (released from ministry). The pastor will be referred to a Denominational Pastor – Church Relations office for processing. The River City Visionary Board will secure the services of trained professionals to deal with issues of grief and betrayal in institutional settings.
8. If the abuse allegations are not verified, the suspension on service will be lifted. Attenders will be notified by letter and the alleged offender will be reinstated. The Board will develop specific initiatives to promote healing.
9. While abuse investigations are being processed, the alleged victim and the alleged offender require tremendous moral support. River City will provide therapeutic intervention to these people.

### **Screening of Staff**

**Volunteers** – All volunteers (unpaid staff) at River City need to complete an application package which includes a *“Police Check”*, sign a *“Declaration of Agreement”* and a *“Volunteer Commitment Form”*. In addition, all volunteers attend mandatory Ministry Area meetings and bi-annual volunteer team training events. Police checks are conducted on-site at River City 3 times per year.

**Staff** – All staff (paid staff) are required to submit formal application and resume which is kept on file. References must be supplied and checked. All staff applicants are subject to a *“Police Check”* and must sign the *Declaration of Agreement* and the *“River City Staff Covenant.”*

\*All documentation filed in association with Abuse Prevention will be stored on-site at the River City Ministry Centre in a locked and secure file cabinet in accordance with the *River City Privacy Policy*.

## **Children's Ministries - Classroom Management at River City Church**

1. Corporal or physical management is not permitted. There will be no slapping, hitting, pushing or spanking.
2. Verbal punishment will consist only of re-direction and not consist of yelling, insulting, threatening, degrading or humiliating.
3. Teachers and assistants will always first try to re-direct children when poor behaviour is happening. If a pattern of misbehaviour is evident, parents will be asked either to join their children in the program or remove their children from the program for a duration agreed upon by the Director of Children's Ministries.
4. Concerns with children's behaviour will be reported immediately to the Director of Children's Ministries so that an appropriate response is taken.
5. If a child is removed from a program or if a parent is asked to accompany a child to a program, the situation must be documented by the Director of Children's Ministries, signed by both parents and staff and kept on file.
6. If inappropriate management is suspected or reported, River City's reporting procedure will be followed.
7. There is a fully stocked first-aid kit and a first-aid certified staff member on site each service.

### **Guidelines for Programs With Pre-teens and Teens**

1. Leaders should monitor areas where programs are in session and ensure that visibility through windows or doors is maintained.
2. Leaders do not supervise or transport a single minor without another leader present. An exception may be when a leader provides transport for minors in order to attend a program. In this situation, parents must provide written authorization allowing the leader to provide transport. One authorization per season is sufficient.
3. Any medical problems will be reported immediately to the minor's parents.
4. All meeting rooms must have open doors or have doors outfitted with windows.
5. Showing affection between leaders and minors being supervised should be limited to a brief hug, arm around the shoulder, open pat on the back. Both leaders and minors right to refuse shows of affection must be respected.

6. All minors should be treated equally. Any appropriate personal gifts, letters, personal phone calls, emails or private meetings may not be held without the knowledge of all leaders and the Director in charge.

### **Guidelines for Programs - Pathway, Pre-school and Nursery**

1. Children's Ministries staff (volunteers in all programs) must be available for duty 30 minutes before services start.
2. All staff (volunteers) will abide by the registration or check-in system which is to be strictly enforced. Only parents may drop off children who must be picked up again by them immediately after the service ends. Only assigned and identified staff are to be in the ministry areas. All other people are asked to remain behind the registration area.
3. At least 2 people will be assigned to each ministry area. No staff member will supervise a minor alone, or in a private or isolated area.
4. Minors will not leave the ministry area with the exception of medical emergencies or urgent bathroom need (where they will be accompanied by a staff member).
5. Parents will be asked to accompany their children to the bathroom before entering the Children's Ministry area. If a staff member (volunteer) needs to take a child to the bathroom, he or she will inform another staff member (volunteer) as they leave and when they return. The staff member will remain outside of the bathroom until the child has finished. Children who are not independent bathroom users will have their parents summoned for bathroom use (using our "parent-call" program during services).
6. The nursery changeable area will be in plain view of other staff members (volunteers).

### **Registration Process September 2003**

1. Each child entering the Children's Ministry, for any program, needs to be registered individually.
2. Parents or guardians will complete an "*All About Me*" card for each child which contains important contact information and medical information.
3. Each child and parent/guardian is then given numbered, matching identification tags. Children are tagged in their parents presence to ensure that the numbers on the tags match. The number is also recorded on the "*All About Me*" registration card which is then date-stamped to keep accurate record of each child's visit.

4. Parents/guardians are informed that if their child(ren) experience distress or need to use the bathroom during the service (for non-independent children), the number on the matching identification tags will be flashed up on the powerpoint screen in the bottom left corner during services. Parents are asked to go to the children's area immediately with their identification tag.
5. All parents who are new to River City Children's Ministries are given an orientation letter with information on the structure of the programs, as well as these guidelines.
6. Only parents who produce the matching River City identification tag will be able to retrieve children from the Children's area at the end of services. Until the Children's registrar receives both identification tags and ensures a match, no children will be released.