



Abuse Prevention Policies & Operational Procedures

1. Statement & Purpose of The Rock's Abuse Prevention Policy

- a. The church is a reflection of God's love to those in our care and has a spiritual, moral & legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children, youth & volunteers participating in programs under the authority of the church.
 - i. **Ephesians 5:3** - *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.*
- b. The Rock Community Church is committed to providing a safe environment for children, youth & vulnerable adults & declares zero tolerance for abuse, harassment or neglect committed by any children's or youth ministry worker, including employees, members/adherents & volunteers. Reducing the risk.
- c. The Rock seeks to prevent harm to the children, youth & vulnerable adults in its programs & to protect its staff & volunteers from false or wrongful allegations.
- d. This policy is formally approved, implemented & periodically reviewed by the Abuse Prevention Team under the direction of the Elder/Admin Teams

2. Definitions

- a. **Abuse (General)** - in relation to a child, means physical, mental, emotional or sexual mistreatment of a child
- b. **Physical Abuse (Child)** - using physical force or action that results, or could result, an injury to a child or youth. It is more than reasonable discipline. Sometimes injury is caused by over discipline. Injuring a child or youth is not acceptable regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline.
 - i. **Physical discipline** will be left to parent's discretion, and no volunteer/leader shall submit punishment inflicting physical pain.
- c. **Sexual Abuse** - occurs when a child or youth is used by somebody else for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may also be sexual abusive if older or more powerful children/youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful.
 - i. **Sexual Abuse involving touching** - fondling, oral or genital & anal penetration, intercourse, forcible rape
 - ii. **Sexual Abuse not involving touching** - pornographic videos, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, allowing children to witness sexual activity, verbal comments
- d. **Emotional Abuse** - a pattern of hurting a child's feelings to the point of damaging their self respect. It includes verbal attacks on the child, insults, humiliation or rejection. A child or youth who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self destructive or aggressive behavior.
- e. **Neglect** - the failure of those responsible for the care of the child to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs of a child to an extent that the child's health, development, well-being or safety is endangered
- f. **Harassment** - aggressive pressure or intimidation
- g. **Improper Touch** - see point 8.m. & n, *Proper Display of Affection for Children/Youth*
- h. **Improper Discipline** - see point 2.b. *Physical Abuse (Child)*, 8.i. *Discipline & Classroom Management*

- i. **Adult** - aged 18 years and over
- j. **Minor** - individual aged 0-17 years
- k. **Two-Adult Rule (*Never Alone*)**
 - i. *The Rock* will follow the basic "Two-Adult" (*Never Alone*) rule which has two adults (preferably un-related & fully-screened) present during children/youth ministries onsite/offsite to reduce the risk of molestation & false accusations.
- l. **Open Door Policy** - if there is not a window in a classroom door, the door is to remain open for clear visibility during ministry/activity times that includes minors
- m. **Ministry Personnel** - those who have completed the screening process

3. Abuse Prevention Team

- a. Comprised of individual(s) appointed by the Elder/Admin Teams
- b. Responsible for implementing the screening & training of volunteers, staff & members who serve with children, youth & vulnerable adults.
- c. Responsible for periodic review of the Abuse Prevention Policy
- d. Involved with Incident Reporting Procedures (Policy 11.b.c for more detail)

4. Screening of Volunteers & Employees

- a. Mandatory screening is conducted for all who serve with minors including all employees, pastors, board members and volunteers who are 18 years of age and older to the level that is appropriate with their interaction with minors and vulnerable adults in *The Rock Community Church's* care.
- b. Once screened, the volunteers are then referred to as **Ministry Personnel**

5. Screening Requirements of Adult Staff & Volunteers (18 yrs plus)

who are serving with minors or vulnerable adults under *The Rock Community Church's* care:

- a. **RCMP Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC)**
 - i. Submit original and/or digital copy of RCMP Vulnerable Sector Check (obtained within the last 5 years) to *The Rock's* Abuse Prevention Team
 - ii. **New Applicants** - VSC submitted prior to approval to volunteer
 - iii. **Existing Workers** - a new VSC obtained every 5 years from time of last issue
- b. **Ministry Personnel Application Form**
 - i. Includes Ministry Agreement
 - ii. Includes release for two (2) Background Reference Checks
 - iii. Includes release for Criminal Record Checks, including Vulnerable Sector
 - iv. Includes reading & agreeing to *The Rock's* Abuse Prevention Policies & Procedures
- c. **Background Reference Checks (2)**
 - i. For new staff & Ministry Personnel applicants (found in 5.b.ii.)
- d. **Training**
 - i. See Point 9. for more details
 - ii. Designed for new Ministry Personnel Applicants
 - iii. Training can be done in a group setting or during the interview process (5.e.v.)
 - iv. Reading of *The Rock's* Abuse Prevention Policy is the absolute minimum training requirement for applicants.
 - v. Confirmation & overview of policy addressed during interview. (5.e.v.)
- e. **Personal Interviews**
 - i. Designed for new staff & Ministry Personnel applicants
 - ii. Conducted by a minimum of two (2) individuals in person or by conference call made up of the following options:
 - 1. Member(s) of the Abuse Prevention Team (one member is required to be present at interview)
 - 2. Ministry Lead (Children/Youth Leads)

3. Other individuals who are appointed by Abuse Prevention Team to assist with interview process.
- iii. Opportunity to review Ministry Personnel application/references with applicant
- iv. Opportunity for Ministry Personnel Applicants to ask questions.
- v. Opportunity for training as some individuals may not be attendance at the group training sessions.

f. **Six-Month Waiting Period**

- i. All prospective Ministry Personnel will have regularly attended church at *The Rock Community Church* for the previous six months before serving with vulnerable persons, children or youth.
- ii. Exceptions can be made for volunteers in good standing from another church. It is recommended that background check(s) be made with the previous pastor or children's ministry worker the individual served under.

6. **Screening Requirements of Teen Volunteers (ages 15 to 17)** who are serving with minors or vulnerable adults *The Rock Community Church's* care.

- a. All the above items listed in Point 5. *Screening Requirements.* are required except for Point a. *RCMP VSC*

7. **Previous Accusation, Conviction or Suspicion**

- a. Individuals that have been accused, convicted or are under the suspicion of crimes against children, youth or vulnerable persons or have been convicted of violent crimes or other relevant crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programs at *The Rock Community Church* where children, youth or vulnerable persons participate.

8. **Operational Procedures** (Team Approach to Children/Youth Ministries)

a. **Two-Adult Rule (*Never Alone*)**

- i. *The Rock* will follow the basic "*Two-Adult*" (*Never Alone*) rule which has two adults (preferably un-related & fully-screened) present during children/youth ministries onsite/offsite to reduce the risk of molestation & false accusations.

b. **Open Door Policy**

- i. Classrooms, offices, hallways are to either have a window for easy viewing or the door is to remain open for easy viewing by parents or supervisors.
- ii. This scenario is for when more than one room is being used for a program such as Sunday morning Sunday School.

c. **Child/Youth Counselling**

- i. Workers are to avoid one-on-one situations with children/youth except in parental pre-approved counseling situations where the adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child. It is recommended that a second adult should be in the immediate area with the door open to the counseling room

d. **Minor Ministry Personnel**

- i. Those under the age of 18 may assist only under qualified adult supervision.
- ii. It is recommended that there be at least a five-year gap between Ministry Personnel and the children they serve.

e. **Attendance**

- i. Attendance of children and youth will be taken at their respective programs
- ii. Attendance of all Ministry Personnel will be taken at children's & youth programs.

f. **Child Registration**

- i. Registration forms to be completed & filed for each child by a parent/guardian
- ii. Permission & medical release statements included on child registration forms for all activities onsite, off-site (outings, field trips & overnight events).
- iii. A PIPEDA policy, purpose & extent statement included on registration forms

g. **Parental Consent for Youth (Gr. 7-12)**

- i. All youth under the age of 18 attending Youth events of *The Rock Community Church* must submit a completed & signed *Parental Consent Form* which includes parental medical release & permission for all activities onsite, off-site (outings, field trips & overnight events).
- ii. A PIPEDA policy, purpose & extent statement is included on registration forms

h. **Ministry Personnel Staffing Guide:**

- i. **Infants Ages 0-2:** One (1) Ministry Personnel to every three (3) infants
- ii. **Preschool Ages 3-4:** One (1) Ministry Personnel to every five (5) children
- iii. **Elementary Ages 5-11:** One (1) Ministry Personnel to every ten (10) children
- iv. **Jr. High - Gr. 7-9:** One (1) Ministry Personnel for every fifteen (15) youth
- v. **Sr. High - Gr.10-12:** One (1) Ministry Personnel for every fifteen (15) youth
- vi. **Jr. High & Elementary Overnight/Off-Site Events**
 1. One (1) Ministry Personnel for every seven (7) youth
- vii. **Sr. High Overnight/Off-Site Events**
 1. One (1) Ministry Personnel for every ten (10) youth

i. **Receiving & Releasing Children**

- i. **Nursery to Age 4** (Pre-school)
 1. Parental/Guardian/Designate (parent/guardian-approved individual) sign-in/sign-out forms used to monitor attendance for children ages 0-4.
 2. Children are not to be dropped off in a classroom without Ministry Personnel present.
 3. Babies and pre-school children will only be released into the care of the child's parent or designate utilizing a signature/initial.
- ii. **Elementary Age**
 1. Younger elementary children (Kindergarten) & newcomers are to remain in the classroom until the parent or designate comes to pick them up & the child recognizes them.
 2. For the older elementary children (Gr.1-6) Ministry Personnel are to ask whether the child knows where to find his/her parent. If the child demonstrates uncertainty, the Ministry Personnel will keep the child with them in the classroom until the parent or designate picks up the child.
 3. The policy for receiving and releasing of children has been clearly communicated to all Ministry Personnel.

j. **Washroom & Diaper Changing Guidelines**

- i. Inform & encourage parents to deal with their baby's toileting needs and to take their children to the washroom prior to each class or service.
- ii. Ministry Personnel will page parents/designate of their child's needs to use the washroom during children's programming for ages 0 to Gr. 6.
 1. This is to ensure the safety of the child and to keep the needed amount of Ministry Personnel in the classroom with the remaining children.
- iii. If Ministry Personnel must take a child to use the washroom, please use the following guidelines.
 1. **Nursery**
 - a. *The Rock Community Church* policy is to only have the parents of the child change their diaper.
 - b. Ministry Personnel have been educated on diaper changing policies.
 2. **Preschool**
 - a. Pre-school children are not to go to the washroom alone

- b. Ministry Personnel will escort children to the washroom and prop the outside door open
- c. Ministry Personnel are to never to go into the cubicle with a child and shut the door.
- d. When a pre-school child needs assistance in the washroom, Ministry Personnel may enter the washroom cubicle to assist using these guidelines:
 - i. Female Ministry Personnel assist both girls & boys in the washroom
 - ii. The outside washroom door must be propped open & the adult stands in the open cubicle doorway.
 - iii. Ministry Personnel will take into consideration the privacy of the child.

3. **Elementary Children:**

- a. Elementary boys & girls are not to be sent to the washroom alone but should be accompanied by a Ministry Personnel.
- b. Ministry Personnel will escort the children to the washroom and prop the door open to make sure that everything is in order.
- c. Ministry Personnel should then remain outside the washroom and wait for the children before escorting them back to the classroom.
- d. Ministry Personnel are not to be alone with children in a closed-door washroom and are never to enter into the cubicle and shut the door.
- e. Male Ministry Personnel are not to accompany female children to the washroom.

k. **Occasional Observers**

- i. Occasional observers are not to be placed in a position of trust with children who are not their own.

l. **Discipline & Classroom Management**

i. **Preventative Discipline**

1. Create a loving and caring atmosphere
2. Arrange your environment for children and learning.
3. To gain respect you must grant respect.
4. Establish and communicate realistic expectations for the children
5. Be sure the activities provided are meaningful and age appropriate
6. Be fair and consistent with all children
7. Focus should be on positive actions
8. Be aware of children with special needs

ii. **Remedial Discipline**

1. Try to deal with the problems individually.
2. Explain to the child why the behavior is unacceptable
3. Redirect the child to positive action.
4. Explain the consequences of unacceptable behavior
5. Define the correct way to behave
6. Offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the child

iii. **Appropriate Discipline Examples**

1. Praise positive behaviors
2. Use a firm gentle voice to address & redirect poor behavior
3. Age-appropriate time outs or withdrawal from activity
4. Confidential parental discussion when necessary

iv. **In-appropriate Discipline Examples**

1. Corporal punishment of any kind is prohibited

2. Any words/tone that would cause a child to think he/she is the problem rather than the specific poor behavior
 3. Any words that could cause feelings of condemnation/shame in the child about any aspect of their person
- m. **Proper Display of Affection for Children** (Nursery to Gr. 6)
- i. **Appropriate Touch for Children**
 1. Hold a pre-school child who is crying
 2. Speak to a child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears
 3. Hold a child's hands when speaking, listening or walking him/her to an activity
 4. Gently hold the child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behavior
 5. Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting/quieting is needed
 6. Pat a child on the head, hand, or shoulder to affirm them
 - ii. **In-appropriate Touch for Children**
 1. Do not kiss a child or coax a child to kiss you
 2. Do not engage in extended hugging or tickling
 3. Do not hold a child's face when talking to or disciplining the child
 4. Do not touch a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit
 5. With older children, do not carry them or allow them to sit on your lap
 6. Avoid prolonged physical contact with any child or youth
 7. Physical discipline will be left to parent's discretion, and no Ministry Personnel or leader shall submit any punishment inflicting physical pain.
 - iii. The Ministry Personnel have been educated and informed of "appropriate" and "inappropriate" touch policies.
- n. **Proper Display of Affection for Youth** (Gr.7-12)
- i. **Appropriate Physical Contact for Youth**
 1. One-arm hugs, shoulder-to-shoulder hugs, touch on shoulder
 - ii. **In-appropriate Physical Contact for Youth**
 1. Chest-to-chest hugging, extended hugging, overexuberant affection, lap-sitting, kissing, touching of thighs, knees or inappropriate spots of the body
 2. Ministry Personnel must be aware of conduct that could be misinterpreted
 - a. Horseplay, tickling, extended backrubs
 3. Conduct that may seem innocent to one party but may be deemed inappropriate by another party or those watching, should be closely monitored and Ministry Personnel should be encouraged to refrain from this conduct.
 4. Ministry Personnel are not to be left alone with a youth
- o. **Transportation**
- i. All those 21 years and older, with 5 years of driving experience, who wish to drive youth or children, other than their own, on a *Rock*-sponsored event must:
 1. Be approved by the Ministry Lead
 2. Complete a Ministry Personnel application & interview/training
 3. Obtain a current RCMP Vulnerable Sector Check
 4. Sign the Driver's Contract
 5. Submit a photocopy of their current & valid driver's license
 6. Submit a copy of their vehicle insurance
 7. Must have a minimum of 2 million dollars liability coverage.

- ii. All youth under the age of 18 must be transported by an approved driver during Rock-sponsored activities unless travelling with their own parents/guardians or parental/guardian permission has been granted for alternate arrangements.
 - 1. The number of occupants in vehicles transporting children & youth during Rock-sponsored activities must not exceed the number of seat belts and each child 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.
 - 2. The goal is to follow the *Three-Person Transportation Guideline*. Having at least one fully-screened adult and two other minors in the vehicle will be the minimum requirement when transporting minors.
- p. **Media, Internet, & Social Media Guidelines**
 - i. Individual photography of children will be avoided.
 - ii. Youth will not be taken to restricted, adult or age-inappropriate movies.
 - iii. Sharing inappropriate or unsupervised internet access will be avoided
 - iv. Texting between adult leaders and youth under 16 without parental permission is discouraged.
- q. **Special Events & Overnight Policies:**
 - i. **Parental Consent Forms** (electronic) will be obtained for every child or youth participating in regular onsite, offsite or overnight youth events. See 8. g.
 - ii. All electronic/digital consent forms remain filed in the church records and electronic/digital copies will remain with the ministry lead during the event.
 - iii. Policies for Ministry Personnel staffing ratios will be followed. See 8. h.
 - iv. Female Ministry Personnel will be assigned responsibility for female youth, and male Ministry Personnel will be assigned responsibility for male youth.
 - v. Youth attending retreats/overnight event will not be allowed to leave the event unless previously arranged between Ministry Lead(s) & parents/guardians.
 - vi. Female & male youth are not allowed in each other's sleeping quarters for any reason during retreats/overnight events and they are not permitted to sleep in mixed company.
- r. **Youth-Specific Policies (Gr. 7-12):**
 - i. **High-School Graduates**
 - 1. An RCMP VSC is required of youth 18 years of age attending youth activities prior to their Gr.12 graduation ONLY if requested by the Youth Leadership Team and/or the Administration Team.,
 - 2. Screening requirements as described in Point 5. are required for youth 18 years of age who are permitted to attend youth activities after their Gr.12 graduation.
 - ii. **Contact Opportunities between Youth Leaders & Youth**
 - 1. Being alone with a youth, even if nothing ever happens, opens the door to risk of an accusation. Avoid the risk by never placing yourself in a place without witnesses. (*Never Alone*)
 - 2. Ministry Personnel are encouraged to meet with youth in small group settings.
 - 3. One-on-One Mentoring should be pre-approved by the Ministry Lead and documentation made and filed.
 - 4. One-on-One Mentoring must be done in public settings and under the following conditions:
 - a. The Ministry Lead is informed of the time & place of the meeting prior to the meeting
 - b. Parental permission is granted

- c. Separate transportation is arranged for members of the opposite gender

iii. **Responsibility for Youth/Students**

1. From the set start and finish times for the scheduled youth events, the Youth Leadership Team that is present at the event is responsible for the attending youth according to the guidelines described in the *The Rock's* Abuse Prevention policies.
2. When the event has reached the set finish time, the responsibility of the attending youth then shifts from *The Rock Community Church* and its Ministry Personnel to the parents/guardians of those youth, unless a parent has given *The Rock* and its Ministry Personnel direct permission to extend that responsibility for whatever reasons, (prayer time, working through issues, giving the youth a ride home etc.).

iv. **Youth Ministry Personnel Standards - 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.
3. Ministry Personnel are to refrain from activities that are illegal or could be considered morally and biblically questionable.
4. If Ministry Personnel involve themselves in questionable or borderline behaviors, youth may silently watch and engage in these same behaviors.
5. If Ministry Personnel involve themselves in questionable or borderline behavior and keep them private, then their personal integrity is challenged.

6. **Dating:**

- a. Ministry Personnel working with youth are discouraged from pursuing a dating relationship with a youth
- b. If one previously exists due to leaders coming out of the youth group, the Ministry Lead is to be informed and there shall be no public display of affection - PDA at youth events.

s. **Special Needs**

- i. If a child or youth with mental or physical limitations intends to regularly attend a ministry of *The Rock Community Church*, it is left to the discretion of the Sr. Pastor, Children's' Ministry Director, Youth Leaders and/or the Discipleship Team (in consultation with the parents) as to whether or not the child/youth needs an accompanying aide in order to participate in activities of *The Rock*.

t. **Bullying Among Peers**

- i. Our children and youth have a right to a caring, respectful & safe church environment where they will encounter the love of God in action. All Ministry Personnel will take action to prevent bullying, teach against it, assist & support children & youth who are being bullied. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.

u. **Health & Safety Guidelines:**

i. **Sick Children**

1. A child who is ill or has a known communicable disease should not be received into the Nursery or classroom

ii. **Emergencies**

1. Parents must administer medication to their children.
2. The Ministry Personnel are not to give or apply any medication.

3. In extreme cases, arrangements should be made with written instructions and the permission of the child's parent
- iii. **First-Aid Kits**
 1. Available in the Kitchen
- iv. **Cleanliness**
 1. Regular cleaning of the surfaces, toys, tables, doors etc. is recommended
- v. **Nursery**
 1. Nursery change tables should be in full view.
 2. Electrical outlets must be covered or out of reach of children.
 3. Cribs and toys must meet safety standards
- vi. **Fire/Evacuation**
 1. Ministry Personnel have been informed on how to exit the building safely with those minors they are responsible for when evacuation is required.
- vii. **Incident Reports**
 1. Must be completed for all cases of injury or suspected abuse
 2. Have been made accessible to Ministry Personnel.
- v. **Audit & Program Maintenance**
 - i. An audit will be performed every one to two (1-2) years to monitor & assess the scope of *The Rock's* Abuse Prevention Policy in relation to its specific operations & current ministries
 - ii. Audits can be performed by an internal individual or a team appointed by the Elder and/or Administration Team
 - iii. Report to be given by auditor(s) to Elder and/or Administration Team communicating *The Rock's* level of compliance with its Abuse Prevention Policy.
 - iv. The Elder and/or Administration Team will review & ratify the auditor's report proposing an action plan if any changes are needed to achieve compliance.
 - v. The Office Administrator will strive to maintain the needed records to comply with *The Rock's* Abuse Prevention Policy.
 - vi. *The Rock's* Abuse Prevention Policy is reviewed periodically making necessary adjustments to ensure the safety of our children/youth & Ministry Personnel.
- w. **Filing Documentation**
 - i. Ministry Personnel Application documentation will be kept on file indefinitely
 - ii. RCMP Vulnerable Sector Checks will be kept on file electronically, indefinitely
 - iii. Child Registrations & Youth Consents will be kept on file electronically, indefinitely

9. Training Ministry Personnel

- a. Training covering *The Rock's* Abuse Prevention Policies will be provided & required for those teens & adults seeking to become Ministry Personnel of *The Rock* serving in positions of trust our children/youth between the ages of 0-17 years or vulnerable adults. (See Point 5.d.)
 - i. Initial training for all new Ministry Personnel will be required
 - ii. Refresher training will be offered as needed (ex. substantial changes to *The Rock's* Abuse Prevention Policies are made)
 - iii. Training can be done in a group setting or during the personal interview process (5.e.v.)
 - iv. Reading of *The Rock's* Abuse Prevention Policy is the absolute minimum training requirement for applicants.
 - v. Confirmation & overview of policy can be addressed at personal interview. (5.e.v.)

- b. The goal of the training is to promote understanding surrounding the issue of abuse, abuse prevention and the legal responsibility to report actual or alleged incidents and to provide an opportunity for Ministry Personnel to ask questions.
- c. The training of new Ministry Personnel is one of the requirements listed in Point 5.d.

10. **Architectural Precautions**

- a. Renovation suggestions for architectural precautions will be identified by the Auditor or Abuse Prevention Team and submitted to *The Rock's* leadership.
- b. Electrical outlets in the Nursery have been covered with outlet plug covers.
- c. Ensure *open-door* policy if there are no windows in classrooms for surveillance to protect Ministry Personnel from false allegations.
 - i. Monitoring open-door classrooms by a screened Ministry Personnel would further protect against false allegations.
- d. Controlled access & parental sign-in/out for Nursery facilities (Ages 0-4)

11. **Incident Reporting Procedures**

Guidelines for responding to physical injuries, concerns, complaints and allegations of abuse in an appropriate manner by those appointed to respond.

a. **Physical Injury**

- i. In the case of a physical injury (cut, broken bone), an *Incident Report Form* will be filled out and kept on file.

b. **Reporting of a Concern**

- i. **Advisements from Lawyer** before preceding
 1. Call lawyer first
 2. Confidentiality is absolutely imperative to protect *The Rock* from accusations of sharing false information.
 3. Minimize the number of people who will know about the incident
 4. Notetaking with detail is so important.
 5. The Elder Board, not the Abuse Prevention Team is ultimately responsible to make the decision to report the concern to the Director of Child Welfare or not.
 6. When making the above decision, the Elder Board can use the subjective guidelines provided by Child, Youth & Family Enhancement Act RSA 2000 c C-12. (Saved to Abuse Policies file).
- ii. Ministry Lead needs to be informed if any person has concerns regarding the safety of a child(ren).
- iii. In these matters it is important to keep the information restricted to only those who need to be advised. Suspicions of abuse should therefore only be initially reported to the designated Ministry Lead.
- iv. *Completing Suspected Abuse Report Form*
 1. The Ministry Lead will work with the informant to document the concern noting all efforts at handling the incident using the *Suspected Abuse Report Form*
 2. This report will be forwarded as soon as possible to the Abuse Prevention Team (preferably within the hour)
 3. The Ministry Leads & Abuse Prevention Team will assess the incident to determine if it requires reporting.
 - a. **NOTE** - some conduct just deserves counsel and advice from a supervisor while other conduct requires reporting.
 4. *The Suspected Abuse Follow-Up Report* will be completed. Both this and the initial report will be required if the incident is reportable. Both are to be kept on the individual's screening file.

- v. Where a pastor is involved in the suspicious behavior or allegation, the Elder Board Chairman is to be immediately advised.
- vi. It is advisable for the Ministry Lead to give report to the Elder Board concerning the outcome of the raised concern.

c. **Occurrence of Legitimate Allegation**

- i. The Abuse Prevention Team will communicate the incident immediately to those who need to be informed within the church - the Pastor and the Elder Board.
- ii. Assuring confidentiality for the benefit of both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator
- iii. In consultation with the Elder Board, the Abuse Prevention Team is responsible to contact and report the incident to the local police authority and to contact the church's lawyer for advice.
 - 1. Such an incident is not to be handled without outside professional assistance
 - 2. If a Child Protection Social Worker gets involved, note that they need to come in person and carry/show photo ID. If identification can not be confirmed, do NOT give out any information concerning the situation.
- iv. If the incident involves a church worker, either paid or volunteer, a team of made up of members of the Elder Team, Pastor, Abuse Prevention Team and the person with "reasonable grounds" shall interview the person suspected of child abuse.
- v. Immediately suspending the alleged perpetrator from children's or youth ministry duties without presuming guilt, pending outcome of police investigation.
- vi. If the allegation involves a staff member, the Elder Board will make a decision to maintain or suspend his/her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- vii. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
- viii. Do not prejudge this situation but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family, showing care and support help to prevent further hurt.
 - 1. Without admitting legal liability, express your organization's concern to the complainant and their families and assure them of your commitment in assisting the investigation
 - 2. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed.
 - 3. The care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
 - 4. A non-supportive response to the alleged victim can increase the anger and pain of the victim and the victim's family making future reconciliation will be more difficult and the possibility of damaging litigation increases.
- ix. Treat the accused with dignity and support
- x. Contact insurance agent or broker to report the incident in order to satisfy the statutory conditions of your liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing your legal defence and coverage response
- xi. Do not try to triage suspected abuse incidents. The responsibility to report suspected abuse is the law in Canada

d. **Response to the Child**

- i. When the child/parent first comes, be sure to take his/her word seriously. Do not deny the problem but stay calm and listen to the child/parent.
- ii. Give emotional support reminding the child that he/she is not at fault. Tell the child that he/she was right in disclosing the problem.

- iii. Do not promise the child that no one will be told
- iv. Ministry Personnel should never interview the child in detail or suggest to the child that they may have been abused

e. **Church Follow-Up & Discipline**

- i. If it is found that child abuse by a member of the church has taken place, the church will practice discipline according to Matthew 18:15-17
- ii. The church should protect parents as much as legally possible from undue interference by outside authorities into their family life
- iii. The church should ask the police services if it can assist in helping the hurting family
- iv. The church should maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with those suspected or guilty of child abuse as long as these persons exhibit and willingness to listen, change and look to Christ for help.
- v. This does not exclude the need for hurting individuals to receive professional counseling.

f. **Public Relations**

- i. One person needs to be designated to serve as the only spokesperson
- ii. The following statement is a suggestion; any further comments will be decided upon with legal counsel:
 - 1. *It is always tragic when children are abused or exploited. The rock Community Church is aware of the ever-growing nature of child abuse. We have taken careful precautions to protect the children entrusted to our care period we are distressed by any accusation of child abuse. We will do everything in our power to address any needs in this situation. For the welfare of those involved, all information has been directed to the appropriate agencies and authorities.*
- iii. Avoiding public statements to individuals, the media or from the pulpit without obtaining legal counsel