



EcclesiaSafe Sexual Abuse of Minors and Misconduct Policy

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This document represents the work of the **EcclesiaSafe** Program, sponsored by the *Christadelphian Tidings*. It is a suggested basis for the formulation of policies by North American ecclesias, or other organizations (e.g., Bible Schools, Christadelphian Youth Circles, Heritage School, etc.).

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1. INTRODUCTION

- **Everyone in the Ecclesia is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.** “*Children are a heritage from the LORD*” (Psa 127:3) and should be cherished and nurtured by families and the ecclesia. Therefore, as brothers and sisters in Christ, the love of God compels us to do whatever we can to protect our family in Christ against this deadly evil.
- **Sexual abuse is preventable using clear policies and procedures, coupled with a code of conduct.** If abuse does happen, having policies and procedures will also help limit the damage to the victim, the ecclesia, and the name of God.
- **This is a sample set of policies and procedures for the benefit of Christadelphian ecclesias in North America,** based on similar documents prepared in the UK and Australia. Ecclesias are expected to customize these sample documents for their own use.
- **This policy applies to all** members, non-members, baptized, unbaptized, interested friends, volunteers, contractors, hired helpers, and any other persons, whomsoever they may be, that are involved or engaged in an activity of the ecclesia.
- **This policy extends to all aspects of the ecclesia’s work** including within the ecclesial environment and online interactions
- See Appendix A for a full set of **terms** used in this policy
- See Appendix D for a full list of **Scriptural references** on the issues addressed by this policy.
- If any person believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse, **telephone 911 or local child protective services immediately.**

2. PRINCIPLES

- **The ecclesia has zero tolerance for child abuse.** The safety and well-being of children at the ecclesia’s activities is of vital importance. All children have a right to feel safe and be safe, and every child has an equal right to protection from abuse
- **Child Protection is a Shared Responsibility:** Every adult in the community bears the responsibility of understanding and taking action to prevent and report child abuse.
- **Victim ‘First’ Approach:** Managing and handling an abuse scenario should always be in the lens of the victim first. This includes believing and taking any allegations seriously and putting the interest of the victim above all else. In any case where there is a question of deference, it should go to the victim first, including things like confidentiality, access to ecclesial functions, attempts to resolve issues between the parties (and related parties) and fellowship. The ecclesia will provide support and assistance to people affected by child abuse, alleged or proven. A victim first approach is detailed more thoroughly in Appendix C.
- **Work With Local Authorities:** In the spirit of rendering to Caesar, the panel/all involved should be thoroughly familiar with their legal responsibilities and work willingly/diligently with local

authorities to ensure the safety and protection of the victim. Child abuse is not an area that should be investigated solely within the ecclesial community.

- **Diligence over Expedience:** First and foremost, report any suspected abuse to local authorities and get the victim to safety immediately. After this, recognize that the investigative process will be challenging, exhausting and long. Taking the time to follow these procedures though can ensure protection of the victim, the ecclesia and minimize bias as much as possible.
- **Focus on Prevention and Early Intervention:** There is no arguing that we all care about protecting children within our community. Rather than simply doing "as the Gentiles", our goal as believers is to go above and beyond any 'legal compliance', focusing on prevention, awareness and training to help minimize the risk to minors
- **Communication Principles:** As mentioned above, documentation, and sharing of communication should be victim guided. Where appropriate, the victim's supporter should choose. Abusers should not be protected within the community and cross ecclesial communication about abuser status should be disclosed. The ecclesia will be sensitive, compassionate, objective, confidential, fair, truthful and compliant in any matter related to child abuse, alleged or proven.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Arranging Board

- The Arranging Board has the primary responsibility for the care and safety of children at activities of the ecclesia (refer to Section 4.6 for more details). The Arranging Board must:
 - Provide leadership in child safety);
 - Communicate the requirements of this policy to people associated with the Ecclesia;
 - Ensure people involved with the care and supervision of children are suitable and supported;
 - Ensure complaints are managed appropriately;
 - Arrange regular review of this policy; and,
 - Ensure matters related to child safety are documented appropriately.

The Ecclesia may appoint a person to be the Ecclesial Representative for Child Safety to coordinate administrative requirements of this policy under their direction. If the ecclesia does not appoint a person to have this function, the Arranging Brethren also has the responsibilities in Section 5.2.

3.2 Investigative Panel

- The Investigative Panel is an equal number of brothers and sisters independent of the Arranging Board appointed by the ecclesia to take the steps needed as outlined in this policy document.
- The panel should be selected from the broader ecclesia based on their distance from the situation and their reputation for discernment. It may be worth pre-screening sisters and brothers willing to serve on such a panel. Once a complaint has been reported, the Arranging Board should reach out to potential panel members to determine their potential bias and willingness to participate.

- The panel should work closely with the Ecclesial Representative for Child Safety to ensure that all procedures are being followed.
- To reduce bias and promote victim safety, the panel should be composed of both brothers and sisters who do not have close ties with the victim or abuser. In the case of small ecclesias, it would be advised to rely on your chosen counselor's advice on how to proceed. You may also refer to the Tidings website for additional information.
- The panel should review all training resources and this policy on handling the investigation prior to initiating one.
- The panel should also review the role that unconscious bias can play in abuse investigations, paying particular attention to never participate in victim blaming. The same way that our father judges "*without respect of persons*", we as his children must endeavor to call out and remove bias wherever we see it. See additional resources in Section 5.6.
- The panel should never have discussions with the victim without the victim's chosen supporter present (see section 5.6 for more details).
- The panel should work with the victim's supporter to get feedback and ensure that the victim knows and feels they are being cared for and that the process is working for them.

3.3 Child Victim Supporter

- A Child's Victim Supporter is a trusted adult in the life of the child whose role is to Support for their best interest during an investigation.
- The Supporter should be selected by the Investigative Panel, keeping in mind the following:
 - A Supporter could be a parent or relative, however, if there is *any* risk that the abuser is family (immediate or extended), it's advisable to have an independent Supporter who will not be conflicted by familial attachments.
 - An independent Supporter is also advised if the parents are obviously neglectful or do not have the child's best interest in mind (which sadly is common for children targeted by abusers).
 - In most situations, it is strongly advised that the supporter be a sister in the ecclesia that the child is familiar with and trusts. It is important to note that 96% of child sexual abusers are male and abuse can cause trust issues with adult men, even if they are known to the child.
- The Supporter should be familiar with this policy document and their role in ensuring a 'victim first' approach.
- They should be present at all conversations held with the child by the panel, representatives or the Arranging Board, prioritizing the safety and comfort of the child.
- They should hold independent conversations with the child and their family to get feedback and ensure that the child knows and feels they are being cared for and that the process is working for them.
- In cases where a child is very young, the Supporter should consult the child, but decisions that affect the child should be made by the Supporter.

3.4 Ecclesia's Child Safety Representative

- The Ecclesia's Child Safety Representative is a person appointed by the ecclesia to coordinate administrative requirements of this policy. This may or may not work well as an additional duty of the Sunday School Superintendent.
- Note: The ecclesia's Child Safety Representative is an administrative function and does not carry sole responsibility for child safety. All Members and visitors of the ecclesia are variously responsible for child safety as defined in Sections 4 and 5 of the policy.
- The ecclesia's Child Safety Representative must:
 - Be familiar with the requirements of the applicable child safety laws (refer to Appendix G);
 - Be familiar with the requirements and processes for any required Background Checks;
 - Facilitate Background Checks on behalf of the ecclesia;
 - Maintain records of Background Checks on behalf of the ecclesia.
 - Coordinate training (refer to Section 4.6); and
 - Advise the Arranging Board if/when they become aware of changes in law or associated processes which may require a revision to this policy.
 - Be an expert on the ecclesial Child Safety Policies and advise the investigative panels on how to proceed through the processes

3.5 Anyone Coordinating an Activity (Activity Coordinator)

- An Activity Coordinator is any person appointed (either formally or informally) by the ecclesia to coordinate an activity of the ecclesia (e.g. study days, CYC outings etc.).
- For the activity they have been requested to coordinate, an Activity Coordinator must:
 - Ensure persons working with children have Background Checks (or equivalent in the State or Province in which the ecclesia is located);
 - Develop and implement activity guidelines which include arrangements for child safety (refer to Section 4.6); and
 - Report to the appropriate authorities (refer to Section 4.6 and Appendix F) if they have a reasonable belief that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused.
 - Activity Coordinators who are Youth Workers also have the responsibilities in Section 5.4.
- In developing activity guidelines (refer to Section 4.6), Activity Coordinators should consider and document what is, and is not, appropriate time with a child. For example:
 - Appropriate – a youth group host may have a private conversation with a child in a room where other people are present.
 - Inappropriate – a person is alone with a child in their room at night at a campsite with the door closed.

3.6 Youth Workers

- A Youth Worker is an adult person appointed by the ecclesia to work with children at an activity of the ecclesia.
- Note: A Youth Worker may be a member of the ecclesia, an employee, contractor or volunteer. Working with children is any role which involves contact with children, including care, supervision and teaching.
- Youth Workers must:

- Comply with the standards of behavior for interactions with children defined in the ecclesia's code of conduct; (see Appendix E)
- Maintain a current Background Check;
- Attend child safety training organized by the ecclesia;
- Follow protocols and procedures for child safety which have been established for the activity;
- Report to the appropriate authorities (refer to Section 4.6 and Appendix G) if they have a reasonable belief that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused.
- 5.4.3. Youth Workers who are Activity Coordinators also have the responsibilities in Section 5.3.

3.7 Ecclesial Members

- All Members of the Ecclesia, including those listed in Sections 5.1 to 5.4 above, must:
 - Comply with the standards of behavior for interactions with children defined in the ecclesia's code of conduct; (see Appendix E)
 - Comply with the requirements of this policy;
 - Provide a safe environment for all children;
 - Not spend time alone with a child unless necessary and appropriate; and
 - Note: Wherever possible time spent alone with a child should be in a public place. (The ecclesia should make appropriate arrangements for parents and caregivers to be able to provide care to young children.)
- Report to the appropriate authorities (refer to Section 4.6 and Appendix G) if they have a reasonable belief that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused.
- All adult Members of the ecclesia, including those listed in 5.1 to 5.4 above, must:
 - Always promote child safety;
 - Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of responsibility and eradicate/minimize any risk to the extent possible; and
 - understand their legal reporting obligations and facilitate the reporting of any concerns regarding child safety.

3.8 All Others

- All other adults not mentioned above but who have any association with the ecclesia (e.g., visitors, guests, workers of other organizations) must:
 - Comply with the standards of behavior for interactions with children defined in the ecclesia's code of conduct; (see Appendix E)
 - Comply with the requirements of this policy; and
 - Report to the appropriate authorities (refer to Section 4.6 and Appendix G) if they have a reasonable belief that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused.

4. RECOGNIZING AND PREVENTING ABUSE OR EXPLOITATION OF MINORS

4.1 Child Safety is Embedded in Institutional Leadership, Governance and Culture

- The Arranging Board, in partnership with the Child Safety Representative, must review and approve nominations for any person whose role or function at an activity sponsored by your ecclesia may involve working with children, including:
 - Secretary;
 - Sunday School Superintendent;
 - Youth Workers, including Sunday school teachers (including substitute teachers), supervisors, CYC counselors and youth leaders; and
 - Visiting speakers/study leaders (such as for camps, study weeks, special efforts or fraternal gatherings) and supervisors of outings. This may require coordination with other ecclesias;
- The Arranging Board must provide sufficient oversight of the ecclesia's activities to ensure that child safety arrangements are effective.
- The Arranging Board should retain an ecclesial counselor/therapist (See Appendix L for more information) to help navigate difficult conversations, to provide mediation and for children/parents to connect with if they feel unsafe as well as provide resources to all involved to be supported.

4.2 Children Participate in Decisions Affecting Them and Are Taken Seriously

- The Arranging Board recognizes the importance of engaging with and empowering children. Children should be engaged in age-appropriate processes designed to ensure their safety (particularly in relation to Sections 6.6 and 6.8).
- The Arranging Board will endeavor to put in place age-appropriate strategies to proactively:
 - Engage with children;
 - Seek children's views;
 - Consult with children about decisions that affect them;
 - Educate and inform children on their rights to be safe from abuse and what is and isn't appropriate behavior towards them from both peers and adults; and
 - Consult with children about what makes them feel safe and how this can be recognized and implemented by the Arranging Board
- The Arranging Board will inform children of safe and respectful relationships and where they can go if they have any concerns or would like further information and support.
- Notes: The Arranging Board should discuss with Youth Workers and other people with experience in working with children how best to convey this information.
- Information should be provided in a way which is age appropriate.
- Children should be encouraged to discuss and ask questions to confirm their understanding and be made to feel confident that their concerns about safety or wellbeing will be taken seriously and responded to immediately.

4.3 Families and Communities are Informed and Involved

- The Arranging Board must inform anyone with a responsibility under this policy:
 - About the policy;
 - About policy requirements which specifically apply to that person's role or function; and
 - Make the policy available to them.

- The Arranging Board must inform all members of the ecclesia and their families about the policy and make it available to them.
- The Arranging Board must inform a new Member of the ecclesia of this policy and its requirements.
- Any person may provide feedback about the policy for the Arranging Board to consider changes for further improving child safety.

4.4 Retain an Ecclesial Counselor/Therapist

- A counselor or therapist should be vetted and retained in advance of an issue to help navigate difficult conversations, act as mediator for children/parents, as well as for individuals of the ecclesia to reach out to. Abuse investigations are most traumatic for the victim, but this does not mean that the community and families of the victim and abuser are unaffected. It is prudent to have someone familiar with Christadelphians and the policies outlined in this document ready to go in advance.
- In Appendix L, we've included resources on finding a counselor, including what to look for and interview questions. There is also a section on finding local experts specializing in child protection, and details on the differences in their roles.
- You may also refer to the *Tidings* website that reiterates this information and where we will keep a list of available resources and sisters and brothers willing to provide advice on this topic.

4.5 Ensure People Working with Children are Suitable and Supported

- To work with children, an adult must have met the legal requirements to do so prior to commencing this work.
- A background check must be obtained (An online search for church background check services in your state will provide options for background checks). If there is no legal requirement to obtain a background check in the State or Province in which the ecclesia is located, a minimum of a police check must be obtained, or as required by insurance arrangements (see Appendix G). This practice won't guarantee that abuse will never occur, but will help discourage predatory access to potential victims
- If the person already has a background check (or equivalent) document associated with another organization, it might be easier to share it with the ecclesia.
- A person who is exempt by law from a background check (or equivalent) because of their profession or occupation may still require a background check if their involvement with children at the ecclesia's activities is unrelated to their profession or occupation.
- An adult who works with children must advise the Arranging Board:
 - If they have a complaint made against them (whether related to activities of the ecclesia or not); and/or
 - If their Background Check status changes
- An adult must not work with children:
 - If they have been a member of the ecclesia for less than three months unless otherwise approved by the Arranging Board;
 - If they are the subject of an unresolved complaint;
 - If the Arranging Board have directed their contact with children must be restricted at the ecclesia's activities; or
 - If they have been convicted of sexual offending.

- Where persons other than members of the ecclesia are to be employed to work with children, recruitment processes must emphasize the importance of child safety. Appendix F contains an interview guide with suggested questions.
- The ecclesia must maintain a register of the status of background checks associated with the ecclesia.

4.6 Ecclesial Leaders, Youth Workers, Members, Parents and Children are Equipped with the Knowledge, Skills and Awareness to Keep Children Safe through Continual Education and Training

This section is somewhat in-depth, so it is broken out into the following three areas:

- A. Learn the Facts:** Understand child sexual abuse so we can end it.
- B. Talk about It:** Help the community, parents and children eradicate stigma and define boundaries.
- C. Prevent, Recognize & Report:** Learning to identify grooming and abuse.

A: Learn the Facts - If we don't understand child sexual abuse, we can't end it. It is highly likely that you know a child who has been or is being abused, the more you know, the more you can do to stop it.

- For the Arranging Board /ecclesial leaders:
 - The Arranging Board must arrange for any new addition to the board be trained in this policy:
 - Upon appointment; and
 - At least annually thereafter during the period of their tenure.
 - Said training must provide persons with a clear understanding of policy requirements, including:
 - How to administer and execute this policy;
 - Identifying child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns;
 - That all complaints relating to child abuse must be taken seriously, regardless of the perceived severity of the behavior; and
 - How complaints must be reported and to whom, including understanding local mandatory reporting guidelines and compliance.
- For Youth Workers:
 - The Arranging Board must arrange for any person whose role or function may involve working with children to be trained in this policy:
 - Upon appointment; and
 - At least annually thereafter during the period of their tenure.
 - Said training must provide persons with a clear understanding of policy requirements, including:
 - Expected standards of behavior for interactions with children;
 - Child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns;

- Recognizing physical and behavioral indicators of child abuse (refer to Appendix B);
 - Identifying inappropriate behavior which may be a precursor to child abuse, including grooming (See Appendix H);
 - That all complaints relating to child abuse must be taken seriously, regardless of the perceived severity of the behavior; and
 - How complaints must be reported and to whom, including understanding local mandatory reporting guidelines and compliance.
 - The Arranging Board must provide ecclesial members involved in the care and supervision of children with appropriate opportunities to develop practical skills in protecting children and responding to disclosures.
 - Note: for ecclesias appointing a Child Safety Representative, these tasks may be delegated to them to complete.
- For Members:
 - The Arranging Board must arrange for all members to receive semi-annual/annual training that includes the following topics:
 - A high-level overview of this policy, including a summary of expected standards of behavior for interactions with children and responsibilities for the Child Safety Representative, etc.
 - Physical and online environment.
 - Child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns;
 - Recognizing physical and behavioral indicators of child abuse (refer to Appendix B);
 - Identifying inappropriate behavior which may be a precursor to child abuse, including grooming (See Appendix B);
 - That all complaints relating to child abuse must be taken seriously, regardless of the perceived severity of the behavior; and
 - How complaints must be reported and to whom, including understanding local mandatory reporting guidelines and compliance.
 - Statistics about child abuse and information about (and how to identify) at risk populations.
 - Unconscious bias and victim blaming.
 - Suggested additional topics include:
 - Trauma responses: hurt people hurt people and themselves; how trauma affects individuals, their families, and their communities (physically, psychologically and spiritually); generational trauma; how to support a victim etc.
- For Parents:
 - In addition to the preceding topics provided to all general members, the Arranging Board must arrange for parents to have the following resources available, whether that be through voluntary training, online courses, videos, or books. The following non-exhaustive list of topics should be included:
 - Helping children create and enforce healthy boundaries
 - Helping parents talk with their children about their bodies as they grow

- Helping parents navigate difficult conversations with their kids about safety
 - Helping parents safeguard their children in online environments
 - Information about bullying (both digital and in-person)
 - Specific guidance for children with disabilities where appropriate
- For Children:
 - The Arranging Board must arrange for all minors to receive age appropriate semi-annual/annual training during Sunday School, CYC, bible schools and any other youth serving groups or events:
 - An age-appropriate overview of our policy, including a summary of expected standards of behavior for adult interactions with children, highlighting the child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns;
 - Features of the physical and online environment setup for the children's safety
 - Discussing healthy boundaries, inappropriate behavior from adults and empowering children to set their own physical boundaries and encourage them to speak to an adult they trust.
 - Provide assurances that all complaints relating to child abuse must be taken seriously, regardless of the perceived severity of the behavior; and
 - Who the child can speak to if they have a concern, or suggestion, if they do not already have someone they trust?
 - Engage in open discourse with the children to ask about their thoughts on this topic, how they feel, and what might help improve the processes and policies.
- The Tidings website provides additional abuse prevention training resources vetted and suggested for the above areas. We will continue to build upon these resources over time, so please continue to refer to our website and join our mailing list for updates.

B: Talk About It: Talking openly breaks down barriers and reduces stigma. By talking openly about our bodies, sex, & boundaries we can encourage children to share.

- Talking about abuse is Important. Open conversation and teaching from Scripture about appropriate conduct, as well as warnings about prohibited behavior are necessary subjects to be covered in Bible classes, CYC classes, and Sunday School classes.
- On top of learning the truth about child sexual abuse, having frank, yet age-appropriate discussions and teachings can reinforce expectations of holiness, and make the ecclesia's policies on abuse not only clear to children, but to potential predators as well. Such discussions also encourage victims to come forward with concerns about emerging, current or past abuse.
- God is explicit in His Word about both sex and sin. While such topics may be uncomfortable to talk about, we should not shy away from such frankness ourselves.

This can be as simple as calling sexual abuse by its name and not minimizing or euphemizing the terminology, or empowering children to say no to hugs.

- Help parents talk about abuse: Given the family environment is where many expectations of behavior are set, parents can have a powerful role in preparing their children to confront abuse or exploitation at the first signs. In the “Resources” section of this document, we have provided a list of recommended books, articles and videos that we’d suggest is kept on hand in the ecclesial library, as well as specific training resources and guides for parents. These include topics such as how to talk to their children about their bodies & boundaries, how to safeguard against online predators and how to recognize signs of abuse.
- Research shows that one of the most effective ways to protect children from predators is to empower them to understand consent and set and enforce their own personal boundaries (and to tell someone if an adult violates these). This topic should be covered in CYC and Sunday School annually and you can refer to the “Resources” section of this document or on the Tidings website for books and training to facilitate these sessions.

C: Prevent, Recognize & Report:

- Being knowledgeable about how to recognize early warning signs and situations, including physical and online environments, that increase the risk of sexual abuse will help you keep your child and other children safe. All adult members are responsible for understanding and enforcing preventative measures and appropriate, respectful behavior for the people who care for and interact with children so they can recognize and respond when someone is not following expectations.
- Considering this, keep books, articles and videos for members on hand in the ecclesial library about sexual abuse prevention, recognizing the signs & symptoms of grooming, identifying at risk children etc.,
- Any ecclesial member or visitor is responsible for notifying the Arranging Board if they become aware that a person attending an activity of the ecclesia is the subject of a complaint or has been convicted of a sexual offence. If any adult member becomes privy to a potential abuse scenario, they should immediately contact their local authorities or child protection services.
- Creating a culture that addresses these issues head on and does not sweep things under the rug creates an environment that is difficult for predators to work in.

4.7 Minimize Opportunity: Identify and Address Physical and Online Safety Concerns

- More than 80% of sexual abuse cases occur in isolated, one-on-one situations. Minimizing those opportunities can greatly reduce the risk of abuse. Below is a basic list of ways to prevent children from being isolated. These ideas are expanded upon further in the suggested training and resources available on the Tidings website.

- Make sure interactions with children can be easily observed and interrupted. For example, be sure there is glass on Sunday school doors (or simply remove the doors).
 - No adult (or teen) should have one on one, private experiences with teens/children, whether they be outings or in classes. Two adults should be always present.
 - Similarly, older children or teens who have responsibility for younger children should be supervised.
 - For more personal conversations (such as a baptismal interview), it is strongly suggested that a sister be one of the two or more adults present if the interviewee is female.
 - Grounds and facilities used by the ecclesia should be well lit and easily supervised. Think about isolating scenarios when scheduling activities and try to avoid them.
 - Be mindful of ecclesial hosted gatherings/overnight CYC events and how teens/children are housed and transported. Children should not be left alone with adults in the car or in houses. This scenario has been a risk factor in our community and should not be taken lightly.
 - Physical contact between adults and minors should be limited to appropriate touching such as hugs and handshakes and should only occur in public spaces. Children should be asked for their permission to hug as well!
 - Children must not have uncontrolled access to the online environment through a system provided by the ecclesia, whether in the meeting hall or for an activity.
 - Understand that abusers often become friendly with potential victims and their families, enjoying family activities, earning trust, and gaining time alone with children.
 - The Child Safety Representative and/or Arranging Board Member should regularly evaluate and approve activity guidelines and physical environments to be consistent with the ecclesia's overarching Risk Management Strategy. Ideally before an activity starts.
- Members coordinating an activity (Activity Coordinators) should consider risks to children and include in the activity guidelines protocols and procedures for child safety:
 - Risk assessments should focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children.
 - Hazards in both physical and online (virtual) environments should be addressed (as relevant to the activity).
 - Regular risk assessments relating to the safety and wellbeing of children should also be conducted.
 - When developing activity guidelines, Activity Coordinators may consider:

- Engaging with children and their families about child safety arrangements to improve their effectiveness.
- Encouraging friendships and support from peers to help children feel safe and be less isolated.
- If relevant to the activity, including controls or requirements relating to access/use of the online environment (Internet, social media) by children.
- A member of the ecclesia must inform the Arranging Board if they become aware that a person attending an activity of the ecclesia is the subject of a complaint or has been convicted of sexual offending.

4.8 Reinforce Healthy Boundaries

- Helping create healthy boundaries is a community wide responsibility. Ecclesial members of all ages should be aware of how they can create a culture that promotes child safety. This should be an important feature of the semi/annual training and resources provided to the various (see section 4.6) members and positions in the ecclesia.
- From a practical standpoint, these boundaries can also be reinforced in the following ways:
 - Kids should be allowed to decide for themselves if, and when, they want to show affection. Ask for a hug, a kiss on the cheek, or even a handshake. Failing to provide them an opportunity to choose what happens to their bodies teaches them that they are not in charge. If a child chooses not to engage, do not disparage them. A great way is to offer engagement at all levels: offer the child a hug, handshake or high-five. Most of the time, they will be happy to at least choose a high five!
 - Regularly provide children a voice: ignored children do not speak up about abuse. their feedback and concerns. This does not mean they should be able to interrupt ad infinitum, so provide opportunities for them to speak. For example, when interrupting adults (or other children) tell them you'd like to hear what they have to say but ask them to please wait until your conversation is over. Then be sure to follow up - forgetting to do so can be worse. Or provide an opportunity for feedback in Sunday School etc.
 - Really listen when children tell you what is, and isn't, okay with them, and take their requests to heart whenever possible. Let children set their own limits and boundaries, ask if they would like help (e.g., by providing personal care beyond what the child needs, or acknowledging a child's need for and right to privacy). If a child says she hates being tickled, or picked up, don't say, 'Oh come on, you don't really hate it.' Instead say, 'I hear you and I won't do it again.'
 - Try to focus compliments (towards little girls especially) around behavior and character rather than on looks. Girls learn young that their value in society is based on their physical features and such compliments can reinforce the idea that they are not in control of what happens to their bodies.

- Make a list of 'Get a Grownup' scenarios and post them on Sunday/CYC/ School Rooms, for example:
 - Hitting, or pushing, or even a kid who's just playing too rough
 - A child who won't take no for an answer
 - A situation where he feels unsafe or uncomfortable. For example, if his friends want to climb a fence into someone else's yard or are playing too close to the pool
- Help kids get comfortable advocating for their boundaries early will help them do so in the future when the stakes can be much higher. In Sunday School/CYC/other interactions, go over some simple phrases children can use to advocate for themselves: "Please stop." "I don't like that." "It's my turn now."
- Demonstrate healthy adult boundaries - the ecclesia is not a place for violent voices, or harsh and disrespectful words. Demonstrating empathy and care in all interactions is a great way to show kids how it's done as they grow.

4.9 Child Safety Standards are Continuously Reviewed and Improved

- The Arranging Board (may delegate/work with the Child Safety Representative) must review this policy to ensure it remains compliant with the law and relevant to the developing needs of the ecclesia and its children:
 - At least every two years (or earlier if required due to changes in legislation); and
 - Note: State or Province legislation may require more frequent reviews.
 - After every complaint of child abuse.
 - After every complaint of child abuse or breach of this policy, the Arranging Board must act to prevent recurrence. Actions may include:
 - Seeking advice from the appropriate authorities or individuals with relevant professional expertise on child abuse and child safety;
 - Reviewing this policy;
 - Reviewing risk assessments and activity guidelines; Providing closer supervision of persons or activities;
 - Further education and training;
 - Placing restrictions on a person's contact with children at activities of the ecclesia;
 - Advising the appropriate authorities regarding a person's suitability to work with children; and/or (h) disciplinary procedures.

5. HANDLING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE ECCLESIA

5.1 Ensure the Child's Physical Safety is Immediately Secure

- By the nature of their immaturity and lack of power, children and adolescents are vulnerable to being tricked, coerced, threatened, or misled into inappropriate sexual behaviors. It is always damaging to children when it occurs: that damage can be physical

and emotional. Because of this, children must be **immediately protected from further abuse and supported by those who are trusted by that child, who love the child and can provide safety.**

- Few among us are experts in diagnosing or fully understanding child sexual abuse. The job of ecclesial elders isn't to become experts, but to be alert to the possibility of the sexual abuse of children in our Sunday schools, CYCs, families and ecclesias, and to be ready to act when we develop a reasonable suspicion.
- If an adult is made aware or becomes suspicious of a child's imminent safety (such as the abuse of an immediate family member), they are **personally responsible for that child** and **MUST** contact local authorities, Child Protection Services **IMMEDIATELY (do not even wait until the morning!)** or **call 911 in an emergency**. Proceeding through the remainder of this policy is contingent on any steps the authorities require to secure that child's safety (such as taking them to a local precinct or shelter). Once you are assured that the child's immediate safety is secure, you should proceed through the remainder of this guide (see Tidings Website for help finding your local guiding authority).

5.2 Create a Safe Reporting Environment

- As referred to in the "Principles" section (**above**), the Arranging Board and any ecclesial member should treat every allegation as if it is true. If a child or teen is alleging sexual abuse, believe them! Cases of fabrication do happen but are so rare as to be practically immaterial. The first approach should be to believe the child, treat them sensitively and respectfully, and assume that the allegation, however hard to believe, is true. Fervently avoid statements that question motives, accuse or blame. Victim blaming is particularly common towards older teenage girls (see Appendix C - Victim Protection, for more details). Assume that if the victim is a minor, the adult perpetrator bears all responsibility for what happened.
- As mentioned in section 4.6, children should already be informed about people they can report abuse to in the ecclesia. If this is not yet in place, once they are made aware, the AB should ensure that the child has a primary contact that **they know and trust** to work with (whether this be the person they first spoke with or the person who observed the behavior etc.). Concurrently, as mentioned in sections 3.2 and 3.3, an Investigative Panel and Child Supporter should be found. These steps are detailed further in section 5.3 after the concern has been reported to the AB.
- The Arranging Board must provide any additional support needed to any person or child who makes a complaint or disclosure. Without compromising the confidentiality and conflict of interest requirements of this section, support should include:
 - Assistance with the formal reporting process.
 - Help procuring appropriate legal protections, such as a restraining order.
 - Providing a safe place to live or spend time.
 - Professional counseling and local support groups.
 - The child's Supporter may be best suited to determine what support is needed for very young children.

- Ensure the safety and comfort of the victim in the ecclesia. This may involve moving the victim to a safer location or preventing the abuser from attending ecclesial functions.
- Confidentiality: Because of the sensitive nature of child sexual abuse cases, everyone should understand that all information should remain private:
 - Withhold the names of potential victims, the accused perpetrator, and the people who made the report to the authorities (particularly from the accused)
 - Decide whether to inform the ecclesia that an allegation has been made.
 - Ensure that any confidentiality policy is consistent with local legal requirements.
 - It must be reinforced to the ecclesia and the boards that strict and complete confidentiality is essential for any abuse victim
 - To be comfortable to report it
 - To be comfortable that no one else knows
 - We need to develop a system of reporting for the victim to navigate along with the person they have confided in, so the victim feels relief, support and finally cared for.

5.3 Process to Respond to Complaints of Child Abuse

- **Any person** who has a reasonable belief* that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused, or to whom a child has made a disclosure, must:
 - Report the matter to the appropriate authority as required by the State or Province within which they reside (see Appendix G) and request direction from them concerning the child's immediate welfare; and
 - If the alleged abuse relates to an ecclesial activity, also advise a member of the Arranging Board who has no conflict of interest; and
 - Take immediate action to ensure the safety and well-being of the child.
 - Fully cooperate with an appropriate authority exercising a lawful power. **Read through the Appendix on Legal Responsibilities to ensure mandatory reporting guidelines are met.**
 - *Notes: Reasonable belief includes recognizing indicators of child sexual abuse (see Appendix B).
 - Depending on local laws, failing to report your concerns to the authorities is criminal conduct. See Appendix G for information on Mandatory Reporting Guidelines.
 - If no one of the Arranging Brethren is found to be without conflict of interest, the person should seek guidance from the authorities, such as a professional investigator.
- Once the Arranging Board is advised that a complaint or disclosure has been reported (ideally to the appropriate authorities), they must:

- Ensure that members of the Arranging Board acting are not involved in any matter related to a complaint or disclosure where there may be a real or perceived conflict of interest.
- Document the advice, including:
 - The date and time the advice was made;
 - To whom it was made;
 - The advice (as near as possible the actual words); and
 - Who the child alleges was/is the perpetrator (who may or may not be a Member of the ecclesia).
 - Notes: The aim of advising the Arranging Board is to enable them to act effectively in implementing risk mitigation measures to ensure the safety and well-being of the child or to appropriately restrict a person against whom an allegation has been made, for example removal from rostered duties or attendance at youth activities.
 - Actions taken by the Arranging Board and subsequent communication must not compromise legal confidentiality requirements.
- Provide the documented advice to the appropriate authorities.
- Read through Appendix G on Legal Obligations to ensure mandatory reporting guidelines are met.
- Ensure that the parent(s) of the child have been notified if they are not involved in the abuse allegations.
- Concurrently, an Investigative Panel and Child Supporter should be contacted. It will take some time for the Panel to be created, so meanwhile, the AB should find a best suitable Supporter as defined in Section 3.3. This Supporter should proceed, but they should be reviewed/confirmed by the Investigative Panel to ensure there is no bias involved in the selection.
- If the scenario requires investigation by the ecclesia, proceed to the 'Investigative Process' (Section 5.6) and hand off the remaining actions to the Investigative Panel and/or an external investigator (see next bullet). DO NOT INTERVIEW THE CHILD.
- It is generally recommended, and certainly where required by law, that the Arranging Board engage an external investigator to ensure the independence and integrity of the investigation.
 - Notes: The appropriate authorities have professional personnel who are specialized in investigating child abuse and minimizing the possible detrimental effect detailed questioning may have on alleged victims. For the same reason, qualified external investigators are recommended where internal investigations are required.

- The Arranging Board should notify their retained counselor about the situation and inquire about best steps to help support the victim, supporter, reporter and the community (keeping names/identifying details confidential without the express consent of the reporter/victim).
- The Arranging Board should advise the ecclesia's insurer of any complaint or disclosure reported to the appropriate authorities (See Appendix G)
- Work with the ecclesia's Child Safety Representative, to conduct a risk assessment to identify, assess and minimize any risks to the child and secondary victims (See Section 4.7).
 - Note: This risk assessment should be conducted in a manner that does not interfere with any investigation by external authorities. It is an assessment of risk not an investigation of the veracity of a complaint or disclosure.

5.4 Internal Records

- No organization should investigate allegations or suspicions of child sexual abuse in lieu of reporting them to the authorities. The ecclesia should develop a system to track allegations and suspicions of child sexual abuse cases.
- Any instance of reported child sexual abuse should be documented, preferably on a standard form. These forms should be completed by **anyone** who first learns of the abuse through hearing an allegation or seeing.
- Record the resolutions of child sexual abuse cases.
- Maintain all records in a secure location, with access allowed only to those who are authorized to review these records.

5.5 Immoral but not "Illegal" Complaints:

- In cases where your local jurisdiction does not specify criminal misconduct, sexual abuse (of any nature) with a minor (under the legal age of 18) should be covered by the same policies laid out here. Perpetrators may argue that such behavior is not illegal and should not be handled in the same way, however, *any* morally inappropriate relationship with a minor OR between an adult in a position of power or with age advantage to be handled in the same manner. While these scenarios might not require 'reporting to authorities', our community still bears a responsibility to protect and care for the 'widows and orphans' (i.e., the vulnerable) and all other procedures should be followed accordingly.
- In cases where no allegations are made but predatory "red flag" behavior (see Appendix B) is observed in an adult with a position of power over or with a significant age difference between a teenager between the "age of consent." Behavior should be formally recorded, potential victims and their families should be warned about grooming, the adult should be informed that their behavior is inappropriate and further steps and potential repercussions should be discussed.

5.6 Investigative Process

- Guidelines:
 - The primary objective of the investigation is the protection of the child.
 - If the ecclesia deems it necessary, they should conduct an objective and unbiased investigation via a balanced Investigative Panel (see section 3.2) to help ensure this happens.
 - The ecclesia shall protect the legal rights of all involved parties—child, accused, witnesses, etc.
 - The ecclesia shall maintain a liaison with the child’s supporter, any retained counselor, community and support organizations which may be able to provide aid to the child and families. A list of such groups shall be maintained.
- Who is Responsible for Investigating?
 - Each member of the ecclesia, but particularly Youth Workers/those that have frequent and regular interactions with children have a special responsibility to watch out for signs of abuse in children. A deeply held compassion and desire to protect children within our community should spur us all to understand how to identify signs of abuse and determine if there is reasonable belief to report and continue further investigation. In this sense, we’re all responsible for “investigating” abuse.
 - Beyond this, the **best** resource is to rely on the experience of trained professionals to guide you through the investigative process. Upon reaching out to the local authorities, the reporter/Arranging Board will be put in contact with a social worker, a trained detective within the police force or a trauma specialist etc. Inquire about the process and outcome and what can be done to assist. If the official investigation determines the report to be credible, then proceed with certainty that this is most likely to be true and a more effective investigation than anything that can be done within the ecclesia. Should you need more advice, reach out to your retained counselor (see Appendix L) or refer to the additional resources listed on the Tidings website.
 - In some cases, the authorities' process may take an inordinate amount of time or may not be responded to as a credible risk. Bias exists and failures exist in the legal systems, so if the Investigative Panel believes further investigation is needed, the next steps can be taken.
- Talking to the Victim
 - Police or other authorities may wish to speak to a child before other interviews occur. In determining reasonable belief – and except for asking a child open questions about vague allegations – the **child should not be questioned further about the disclosure until relevant external authorities such as the police have been provided with the opportunity to speak with the child** and have confirmed that further inquiries can be made (as in some locales they are not permitted).
 - If the allegation doesn’t come from the child directly, it may be prudent to ask the child to clarify the potential abuse. The following should be kept in mind:

- A child should *never* be approached without their supporter (someone the child trusts and wants them to be there). Coercing a child to disclose information to an authority they do not trust can be further damaging as their abuser may have used a similar position against them.
 - A *sister* from the Investigative Panel should be present (see section 3.2 as to why), and optionally, other panel members, an Arranging Board member/elder and/or parent.
 - Only non-leading questions should be used so as not to taint any evidence the Police may need.
 - Take notes immediately after this discussion to preserve the exact language of the child, which can be helpful to the authorities.
 - Discussions should be scheduled in advance, with enough forewarning. Victims (as well as reporters) should not be questioned in at ecclesial activities. Be thoughtful and respect the peace that those spaces can bring. Your schedule and desire to resolve the issue quickly is secondary to a victim's need for comfort and routine.
- Following interviews with the child, the Investigative Panel should convene and discuss appropriate next steps to protect the community and communicate these to the abuser. Additional steps may be required to mediate between the abuser and the ecclesia, as well as their families.

5.7 Response to a Perpetrator

- When a *report* of abuse reaches the Arranging Board, they will do the following:
- Ensure the abuser cannot hurt anyone else:
 - Immediately refuse any requests for the abuser to transfer ecclesias
 - If the abuser is associating significantly with another ecclesia, inform that ecclesia of the situation
 - Remove the abuser from any ecclesial duties and association until any investigation is complete.
- In concert with law enforcement and other professional help, document and establish reasonable belief in the report (see Appendix K regarding Non-Credible Reports)
 - Attempt to work with the abuser to help them come to repentance,
 - Inform the brotherhood at large of the threat.
- If the abuser cannot be worked with, remove the abuser from association with the ecclesia, and inform the brotherhood at large to beware of them.
- A person who attends an activity of the ecclesia and who is the subject of a complaint, whether related to activities of the ecclesia or not, must:
 - Immediately inform the Arranging Board;
 - Cooperate with the appropriate authorities in their investigation of the complaint;

- Comply with the Arranging Board directions regarding that person's participation in the ecclesia's activities and interactions with children; and
- Keep the Arranging Board informed of the status of the investigation into the complaint and its resolution.
- Review and complete the remaining steps in Appendix I (Consequences to Fellowship and Community Communication).

5.8 Ensure Child and their Family's Ongoing Safety and Support

- Expect that after an allegation has been made, the child victim will need special support. Maintaining familiar and supportive routines, like attendance at Sunday school, CYC, and other usual events will provide the child a sense of normality, and the usual support mechanisms in his/her life.
- Child victims will need a lot of support over a long period of time as they heal. Securing professional child sexual abuse treatment will be very helpful for the child victim and their family. Sometimes families need financial support to afford this unexpected treatment cost. Often the perpetrator will be loudly challenging the victim's statement, denying any wrongdoing, or minimizing the impact of their own conduct. Ecclesial elders must be prepared to protect the child victim, and hold the alleged offender responsible to aid and support a thorough review of all sides of the situation by law enforcement personnel.
- While reconciliation between brethren is a Scriptural expectation, in cases of abuse this can take years and decades, not days and weeks. Ecclesial elders are encouraged to be prepared for a long-term support situation for the victim and their family. We must prioritize the safety of children, and truly repentant offenders should have no problem with us doing this. This will need understanding, and an informed ecclesia committed to doing their part for a considerable time to come.

5.9 Outcomes from Legal Investigations

- The Arranging Board, and all ecclesial members, must comply with the investigations of all relevant legal authorities into child safety situations, unless it requires them to clearly disobey a commandment of Christ. This also applies to all relevant laws, restraining orders, divorce arrangements, etc.
- The ecclesia has duties towards both the victim and the perpetrator that go above and beyond what the criminal justice process provides. Regardless of the status of any criminal investigation, the ecclesia must support the victim and encourage the perpetrator to come to repentance. Whether or not the criminal justice system has chosen to prosecute does not change the ecclesia's duty of care towards its members.
- The Arranging Board must take seriously the conclusions of any legal or criminal process concerning a case of child safety in the ecclesia. This also includes the recommendations of professionals.
- The legal system is not infallible, and while its conclusions must be taken seriously, they are not the final word on how the ecclesia cares for its members. The ecclesia is ultimately answerable to God in the way it conducts itself, and the conclusion of a legal

process (e.g. acquittal based on the expiry of the statute of limitations) in no way justifies the ecclesia to act inconsistently with Christ's command to "*love one another as I have loved you*".

5.10 Healing and Ongoing Advocacy for the Victim

- Child Protective Services may not take allegations as seriously as you like. This does not absolve you from responsibility for trying to pursue justice and protecting the victim.
- Supporting a victim is a long-term commitment, one that we should lovingly and willingly take on. Victims may require ongoing financial or legal support, therapy and counseling.
- The resolution will be long-term, and the Ecclesia should be prepared to continue its support during the life of the individual. As the victim develops through different phases of their life different issues may arise and may require further assistance.
- Child sexual abuse can have lasting impacts on the victim and may result in inappropriate sexual behavior which should be viewed in context of the trauma.
- Other siblings and the parents of the victim may require their own support and counseling to understand the trauma in their own context.
- Expect other Ecclesial members to have their own unique reactions based on their own personal backgrounds. They and the greater community may need professional support and might benefit from support groups etc.
- Confidentiality should be stressed at the outset. Be sure to reassess this as the situation evolves to be sure that everyone continues to treat the situation with confidentiality.

Document Change History

- EcclesiaSafe Sexual Abuse of Minors & Misconduct Policy - Version 1.0 Published Feb 1, 2022.

Resources

This section is a work in progress and will be updated as more resources are identified and vetted. Please stay tuned and refer to [Tidings.org](https://tidings.org).

Books for children on hand in the ecclesial library about sexual safety:

- Some Parts are Not for Sharing – Julie K. Federico (ages 6 months+)
- Your Body Belongs to You – Cornelia Spelman (ages 3-6)
- I Said No: A Kid-to-kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private. - Kimberly King (ages 4-9)
- The Trouble with Secrets – Karen Johnsen (ages 3-8)
- My Body Belongs to Me – Jill Starishevsky (ages 3-8)
- Body Safety – Jayneen Sanders (ages 3-12)
- The Swimsuit Lesson – Jon Holsten (ages 6-12)

Appendices

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Appendix A: Definitions

Terms used in the policy have the meaning given in Table 3.

Table 3: Definitions

Term	Definition
Activity Coordinator	A person appointed by the Arranging Board to coordinate an activity of the ecclesia
Activity of the Ecclesia (Ecclesial activity)	An event that is organized, sponsored and/or advertised by the ecclesia for its members. The event may not necessarily be at the ecclesia’s usual place of meeting. An event organized by an ecclesial Member as a private function (such as a family gathering) is not an ecclesial activity.
Adult	A person who is not a child. Generally, above the age of 18.
Appropriate authorities	Agencies authorized by law to respond to complaints of child abuse and/or have a responsibility for child safety.
Arranging Board (or similar leadership group)	A group of ecclesial Members appointed by the ecclesia to oversee and manage its affairs. This term is also designed to cover those ecclesias and other organizations which do not use the same terminology to describe the oversight structure.
Background Check(s)	All legally required process, by any jurisdiction, for obtaining prior clearance for individuals before being lawfully allowed to be involved in a child’s care or supervision of children or who may have unsupervised access to children.
Breach	An action – or inaction – by a person which does not comply with this policy.
Caregiver	See ‘parent /caregiver’
Child	A human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.
Child abuse	Is emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse and/or sexual abuse (all as defined).

Term	Definition (Source)
Code Of Conduct	A set of rules to govern behaviors of those in contact with children. This will include negative situations and actions to be avoided as well as positive situations and actions to be encouraged. (See Appendix E)
Complaint	<p>Includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of this policy or the ecclesia’s code of conduct (See Appendix E). It also includes disclosures made to the ecclesia that may be about or relate to child sexual abuse in an ecclesial context.</p> <p>The ecclesia may receive a complaint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly or through a redress scheme (should one exist); • From anyone – a child, adult survivor, parent, trusted adult, independent support person, staff member, volunteer or community member; • About an adult allegedly perpetrating child sexual abuse or about a child exhibiting harmful sexual behaviors; or • In writing, verbally or because of other observations, including behavioral indicators. <p>A complaint may become a ‘report’ to an external authority or agency.</p>
Disclosure	<p>A process by which a child conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been sexually abused, or by which an adult conveys or attempts to convey that they were sexually abused as a child.</p> <p>This may take many forms and might be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal disclosures using painting or drawing, gesticulating, or through behavioral changes, are more common among young children and children with cognitive or communication impairments. Children may also seek to disclose sexual abuse through emotional or behavioral cues, such as heightened anxiety, withdrawal, aggression or inappropriate sexual behavior.</p> <p>Disclosures can be intentional or accidental, and they might be prompted by questions from another person or triggered by a memory of the abuse. A disclosure may also become a</p>

	<p>'complaint' when made to the ecclesia or a 'report' when made to an external authority or agency.</p>
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Term	Definition (Source)
Emotional abuse	<p>Serious psychological harm can occur where the behavior of their parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self-esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional disturbance or psychological trauma.</p> <p>Although it is possible for 'one off' incidents to cause serious harm, in general it is the frequency, persistence and duration of the parental or caregiver behavior that is instrumental in defining the consequences for the child or young person.</p> <p>This can include a range of behaviors such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation or threatening behavior.</p>
Employee (employed)	<p>A person appointed or contracted by the ecclesia to perform a function, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity. They may or may not be a member of the ecclesia.</p>
Exploitation	<p>Any sexual activity or contact in which anyone uses their power (by virtue of position, gender, age or other factors) to take advantage of the vulnerability of a minor by causing or allowing the minor to engage in sexual activities or conduct.</p>

Grooming	<p>Behaviors that manipulate and control a child, their family and other support networks, or institutions with the intent of gaining access to the child, obtaining the child's compliance, maintaining the child's silence, and avoiding discovery of sexual abuse.</p> <p>Grooming can take place in person and online and is often difficult to identify and define. This is because the behaviors involved are not necessarily explicitly sexual, directly abusive or criminal in themselves, and may only be recognized in hindsight.</p> <p>Some grooming behaviors are consistent with behaviors or activities in non-abusive relationships, and can even include desirable social behaviors, with the only difference being motivation. Perpetrators can groom children, other people in children's lives, and institutions.</p>
Harm	A detrimental effect to a child's safety or well-being caused by child abuse.
Law	The law of the United States, Canada, as well as any State or Province.
Legislation	Laws and regulations of any governmental body.

Mandatory reporting	Where a legislative requirement is placed on an individual of a certain profession who forms a reasonable belief that a report needs to be made to report regarding known and/or suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the relevant authority.
Member	A person listed as an active member on the ecclesia's membership register, or if no formal register, anyone generally considered to be a member of the ecclesia.
Neglect	Is when a parent or caregiver cannot regularly give a child the basic things needed for his or her growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and

	dental care, adequate supervision, and enough parenting and care.
Offender	A person who is found by a court to have done something that is prohibited by law.
Parent/Caregiver	The child's mother, father or someone else having or exercising parental responsibility for the child.
Perpetrator	An adult who has sexually abused a child.
Physical abuse	<p>Is a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child or young person caused by a parent, caregiver or any other person. It includes but is not limited to injuries which are caused by excessive discipline, severe beatings or shakings, cigarette burns, attempted strangulation and female genital mutilation.</p> <p>Injuries include bruising, lacerations or welts, burns, fractures or dislocation of joints. Hitting a child or young person around the head or neck, or using a stick, belt or other object to discipline or punishing a child or young person (in a non-trivial way) is a crime.</p>
Psychological harm	See 'emotional abuse'
Reasonable belief	Term

Definition

Record	Information created, received, and maintained as evidence and/or as an asset by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business or for its purposes, regardless of medium, form or format.
Report	Where concerns relating to child sexual abuse are notified to an authority or agency external to the ecclesia – for example, where a person or institution notifies the police, a child protection agency, an oversight agency or a professional or registration authority.
Reportable conduct	Conduct that must be reported under legislation that obliges designated institutions to report allegations of child sexual abuse to an independent statutory body.
Reportable Conduct Scheme	A scheme established under legislation by a governmental unit to monitor, investigate and report on reportable conduct.
Risk of harm	Circumstance where there is a likelihood of harm to a child.
Secondary victim	People who are affected by the sexual abuse perpetrated against the primary victim (the child who is sexually assaulted). Secondary victims can include partners, children (including children born as a result of the abuse), parents, siblings and extended family. Trauma impacts can extend across generations and there may also be collective trauma impacts for whole communities or populations. The impacts of sexual abuse can also be felt by a wider range of people, including whistleblowers and other people (including other children) within the institution where the abuse occurred.
Secretary	The member of the ecclesia appointed by the Arranging Brethren to coordinate ecclesial administration.

Sexual abuse	Any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviors can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.
Term	Definition (Source)
Sexual offending	Sexual behaviors that fall within the definition of a sexual offence under local law, where the person could be held criminally responsible for their conduct.
Sunday school Superintendent	The member of the ecclesia appointed by the Arranging Board to coordinate the Sunday school.
Sunday School teacher	A Youth Worker (as defined)
Training	Provision for those engaged with children in activities organized or conducted under the auspices of the ecclesia to understand their responsibilities under this policy
Work(ing) with children	Is any role or function which involves contact with children, including care, supervision and teaching.
Youth (young person)	A teenager who is a child. <u>Note:</u> This term is used in recognition that a teenager may not identify as being a 'child' (notwithstanding the definition)
Youth leader	A Youth Worker leading or coordinating an activity for youth.
Youth Worker	An adult who has volunteered or been appointed to teach, lead, supervise or work with children or youth.

APPENDIX B - Recognizing Child Abuse and Inappropriate Behavior between Adults and Children

- Child abuse includes:
 - Any act committed against a child involving: a sexual offence; and/or grooming.
 - The infliction, on a child, of
 - Physical violence; or
 - Serious emotional or psychological harm.
 - Serious neglect of a child.
- People in contact with children and their families should be aware of the indicators of child sexual abuse. Recognizing indicators of child sexual abuse is part of forming a responsible suspicion that harm to a child has occurred, is occurring or that there is a risk of harm.
- Sexual offenders exploit the dependency and immaturity of children. They may use a range of tactics including force, threats, and tricks to engage children in sexual contact and to try to silence them. They may also try to gain the trust and friendship of parents or caregivers to obtain access to children. They may be family members or close family friends.
- Possible indicators of child sexual abuse, which may be present either individually or in combination, include:
 - Direct or indirect disclosures;
 - Describing sexual acts;
 - Age-inappropriate behavior and/or persistent sexual behavior;
 - Bleeding from the vagina or external genitalia or anus;
 - Injuries such as tears or bruising to the genitalia or anus;
 - Injuries to the breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen and thighs.
 - Self-destructive behavior, drug dependency, suicide attempts, self-mutilation;
 - Overtly sexual themes in artwork, play or writing;
 - Changes in eating habits, such as anorexia or overeating;
 - Going to bed fully clothed;
 - Regression in developmental achievements;
 - Unexplained accumulation of money or gifts;
 - Sexually transmitted diseases;
 - Persistent running away from home;
 - Adolescent pregnancy.
- Other symptoms of child stress, which may be indicators of child abuse, include:
 - Poor concentration at school;
 - Sleeping or bedtime problems such as nightmares or bedwetting;
 - Marked changes in behavior including tantrums, aggressiveness, withdrawal, complaints of stomach aches and headaches with no obvious physical cause;
 - Indicators in parents, caregivers, siblings, relatives, acquaintances or strangers;
 - Exposing a child to pornography or using a child for pornographic purposes;

- Intentionally exposing a child to the sexual behavior of others;
- Inappropriate nakedness of either a child or an adult in a child's presence such as inappropriate exposure of genitals;
- Having committed or being suspected of child sexual abuse;
- Forbidding a child to engage in age-appropriate activities;
- Coercing a child to engage in sexual behavior with other children;
- Verbal threats of sexual abuse;
- Denial of an adolescent's pregnancy by the family; and/or
- Domestic violence or physical child abuse.

Questionable Relationships with Children

Abusers may seem to be overly focused on or spend all their time with children. Examples include:

- Spends significant time with children or showing little interest in spending time with peers;
- Treats a child more like an adult by sharing personal or private information or allowing children or teens to get away with inappropriate behaviors;
- Has a "special" child friend, maybe a different one from year to year;
- Seems "too good to be true" (e.g., frequently babysits different children for free; takes children on special outings alone; buys children gifts or gives them money for no apparent reason).

Inappropriate Behavior

Some people engage in inappropriate behaviors around children. Be prepared to intervene when an adult:

- Manages to spend uninterrupted time alone with a child;
- Encourages silence and secrets in children;
- Makes sexually explicit comments or jokes around children, points out sexual images, or describes children using sexual words like "stud" or "sexy";
- Is overly interested in the sexuality or sexual development of a particular child or teen (e.g., talks about a child's developing body or makes fun of children's body parts).

When you are aware of behaviors to watch out for, you have an opportunity and an obligation to intervene in response to the very early signs that someone is unclear about how to behave and interact with children. When you see signs like these, you need to speak up and set a limit and keep children safe

- Cooperate with any investigation by local law enforcement officials. Law Enforcement officials don't have to operate on our time frames and have limited resources, and so it might take time for them to complete their investigation. This type of investigation might be conducted by law enforcement personnel or by a trained social worker. Provide all the information you have learned and be careful to keep the victim's information shared with you confidential. You should not share any information you have obtained with the alleged perpetrator. It is important that we not make the investigation process harder for officials. Our job is to provide information, but

we may well be left out of their investigation and decision-making process. We can and should urge the alleged perpetrator to cooperate and to be honest with the authorities.

- As ecclesial elders we must take special care to remain impartial. Brethren who have personal, family or business connections to those involved should recuse themselves from all discussions and decision-making in the role as an ecclesial leader. It is not uncommon for other ecclesial members to get involved and respond to requests of support from the victim and/or the offender. There is often an appropriate time and the necessity to remind our ecclesial members of God's expectation that we do not gossip, show partiality, or take sides. These are quite difficult situations, and everyone involved will need compassion and spiritual support.

Intruding on Personal Space

Personal space is the private area of control that defines each person as separate. Those who deliberately ignore boundaries increase the risk for sexual abuse. Examples include:

- Refusing to let a child set his own limits (e.g., by providing personal care beyond what the child needs);
- Ignoring cues about personal limits or boundaries (e.g., by not adjusting treatment or behavior based on the child's verbal or non-verbal responses);
- Ignoring a child's need for and right to privacy.

Abuse Happens In our Community

- The Crimes Against Children Research Center reports that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys is a victim of child sexual abuse. Surely, the situation can't be that bad within our community! Even if we are 10 times "better" (a debatable assumption), we would still have too many victims.
- There is no question that there have been cases of child sexual abuse in our community. But since such matters are dealt with (or not dealt with) by individual ecclesias, they are not well-known. It is therefore impossible to estimate the overall data. But even a single case is one too many. It is easy to think that "it can't happen here," but this leads to a culture of denial and lack of preparation and accountability.
- This is often not widely publicized as it is considered inappropriate to speak of these things. While confidentiality is important in dealing with individual cases, it is also important that these issues be dealt with in a systemic, effective and prompt manner. The goal of this policy is to provide brothers and sisters assistance in properly dealing with these issues when they arise.
- There is significant misunderstanding about where threats for abuse arise from. It is most commonly NOT some mysterious stranger abducting children, but usually a friendly relative, Sunday school teacher or CYC Counselor.
- It is understood that most ecclesias have never had to deal with issues like this and have no policy or procedure in place in case something was to arise. It is important to have prevention procedures in place to help reduce any possible occurrences, along with training to reinforce these procedures. If an incident does occur, having a policy in place that clearly states how to deal with the issue is invaluablely helpful in investigating the allegations and properly dealing with those involved.

Scriptural Guidance

- The second most important commandment, as stated by Jesus Christ himself, is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt 22:39). Sexual abuse is hurting our neighbor for personal sexual gratification, and hence, is completely the antithesis of how we have been commanded to act (Rom 13:10). Especially, any sort of abuse of children is particularly vile, and merits severe punishment, as per the words of our Lord himself:
 - *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* - Matthew 18:6
- For this reason, Paul many times condemns sexual immorality in his epistles as something that must be actively excluded from ecclesia life:
 - *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;* - Eph 5:3
- To help ensure that this is done "*decently and in order*" (1 Cor 14:40), having clear policies and procedures allows all brothers and sisters to know what should be done, and how. While "*evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse*" (2 Tim 3:13), in the very next verse Paul explains

that the way Timothy, and those of us like him, can escape from their clutches is by continuing *"in the things which thou hast learned"* (2 Tim 3:14). By teaching our ecclesias what is the godly and right thing to do, this ensures that when false teachers and wolves in sheep's clothing arise, their fruit can be quickly identified (Matt 7:20) and the flock protected.

- Refusing to act in cases of sexual immorality, whether due to an unwillingness to judge, or a misguided understanding of freedom in Christ, is soundly condemned by the Apostle Paul:

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. (1 Cor 5:1—2)

- By having a clear procedure for what to do in these situations, we are able to act swiftly to remove the perpetrator and defend the victim, preventing *"a little leaven"* from leavening the whole lump (1 Cor 5:6) and bringing down God's judgment on the entire ecclesia for our negligence (Rev 2:20-23). This is especially important for ecclesial leaders, who by careful shepherding of God's flock, will receive a *"crown of glory that fadeth not away"* (1 Pet 5:4), as opposed to being *"cut asunder"* (Matt 24:51) at the coming of Jesus Christ.
- In Matthew 23 our Lord is strident in condemning hypocrisy, for instance in verse 27-28:
 - *Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."*
- From this we should be under no illusion that there is any virtue in presenting an outside image of "happy families" or "happy ecclesias" when inside the unclean things like child sexual abuse are unaddressed. His words in verses 23-24 are equally as challenging:
 - *You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.*
- We need to prioritize justice, mercy and faithfulness for victims and survivors of childhood sexual abuse, often over the reputations and rehabilitation of those who caused the abuse. Justice for victims and survivors means public condemnation of the violence against them and it means supporting the authorities and Police to prosecute criminals. Mercy means relieving the oppression and ensuring that victims are not vilified. Faithfulness means not deserting victims or allowing them to feel that it is in any way their fault. The trauma is generally complex and serious. The ongoing impact is overwhelming and life-long. The effects may leave people with difficulties engaging socially and emotionally or being in group situations like our meetings. It is important we are companions of these people without judging them, finding ways to support them that are not dependent on them being part of the ecclesial scene or social settings. Finally, it means ensuring that we prioritize the victim's support before accepting their abuser back into our activities - we may need to support the abuser's spiritual needs in other ways than those that might put them in the same place as their victim.
- See Appendix D for a chart of scriptural references.

Legal Obligations and Insurance Matters

- Sexual abuse of minors is illegal in all US states and Canadian provinces. Moreover, in most US states and all Canadian provinces, it is illegal not to report any suspected sexual abuse of minors. This means that members of a Christadelphian ecclesia that have a reasonable suspicion that sexual abuse is occurring and do not report it to the police may be found guilty and must pay heavy fines for their lack of action. Ignorance of the law is no excuse.
- In Romans 13, Paul says the authorities are God-given for our good and for the punishment of evildoers. In line with Paul's teaching, it is imperative we cooperate with the Police or other authorities in bringing criminals to justice. If society has systems of identifying such situations and criminals, when we fail to report suspicion of abuse, we are acting to circumvent those systems. Cooperation with these systems is fundamental to the teaching of Christ and the apostles. Our information may be the corroboration or the "straw that breaks the camel's back" and allows the Police to bring someone to justice.
- By having a clear policy for what to do in the event of a report of sexual abuse of minors, the ecclesia can help ensure its members know what their legal obligations are and ensure they are fulfilled properly. This helps keep the ecclesia from being found in breach of the law, and hence avoid fines. It also may help ensure members of the ecclesia who are committing sexual abuse are quickly stopped, which will help them to limit their criminal liability. It can save abused people from ongoing abuse but may stop abusers moving on to other targets.
- When we prioritize the reputation of abusers - for instance, as a well-known and loved brother in the meeting, over the voice and disclosures of a child, we are showing partiality and committing sin (James 2:9).
- Most church Insurance policies in the United States and Canada provide some limited coverage for sexual misconduct or sexual molestation. Typically, these coverages are limited to a specific dollar amount less than the general liability coverage amount. These coverages specifically do not apply to any cost of legal defense or fines imposed from an actual criminal violation.
- While ecclesias may feel that their members will not sue them, it is important to remember that there are often children of non-members in Sunday schools and CYC events whose parents are not bound by the same moral codes as members.
- Arranging Boards are advised to check with their insurance provider to ensure that these coverages are in place. See Appendix G for more information and resources on legal obligations.
- Most local authorities require that religious leaders take action to protect children in their congregations. Research the specific legal requirements that apply in your geographic area. Different states have slightly different laws, but a simple call to the local police station or county Children's Protective Services will help guide your responsibilities as the recognized leaders of our church. Many jurisdictions mandate that religious leaders immediately report a "reasonable suspicion" of child sexual abuse, and this is the right thing to do. We don't take this action just because others require it of us, but we take action and report the potential criminal abuse of children because it is the godly thing to do. By way of example, in California, religious leaders, like Arranging or Serving Brethren, are required by law to report the "reasonable suspicion" of child abuse within 24 hours of becoming "reasonably suspicious." Romans 13:1-3 reads: *"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities*

resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to the bad."

Victim Protection & Bias

- Reflecting the commandments of our God, should there be abuse discovered within the ecclesia, it is important to provide the right support to both the victim and the alleged offender. Our ultimate charge is to strengthen each to their faith in God, their fellowship in the brotherhood and their healing through spiritual guidance, emotional support, due protection from further harm and rebuke where necessary. In situations where one is abusive, and another is a victim of that abuse, fellowship and restoration questions may involve a careful distinction between the two, especially where there are extreme residual feelings. Counselors advised us to take a "VICTIM FIRST" policy in matters where they affect peaceful and safe ecclesial function. We believe that all things will eventually be resolved by Christ at his coming, and that many things can be resolved by his Spirit in the present. But we are also aware that some things cannot be resolved, where long term emotional damage and its consequences are severe. In these circumstances, when any consideration is given, or judgments are made regarding outcomes, long range repentance, social involvement, or fellowship, a general VICTIM FIRST deference will be applied to the victim. These are very difficult things to work with. They take diligent application of principles and their discernment, counselors and their advice, repentance and restoration, and the special emotional makeup of those involved. Because of these factors, each case should be evaluated on its own merits by the current AB or Investigating Panel first, and if it is determined to be safe, the ecclesia. But in any case, where there is a question of deference, it should go to the victim first, including things like confidentiality, access to ecclesial functions, attempts to resolve issues between the parties (and related parties) and fellowship. Alternate arrangements for spiritual support and fellowship may need to be provided for offending brethren during brief or long periods of resolution of these challenging matters.
- In recognition of the role unconscious bias can play in the investigative process, it is recommended to follow the guidance on creating an Investigative Panel listed in this document (See Section 3.2). In addition, it is highly prudent to retain an independent professional to walk through the investigation process.
- Victim blaming is when we believe (consciously or unconsciously) that the victim is at fault (or partially at fault) for the harm that was done to them. Research has attributed the tendency to victim blame to the just-world phenomenon, which basically is the belief that the world is just, and people get what they deserve. People want to believe that the world is fair, so they tend to rationalize the situation and in turn can end up blaming the victim. However, 1 in 10 children will be a victim of sexual abuse before their 18th birthday.
- Victim blaming can also affect children who have experienced abuse. It can have a great impact on whether a child discloses and what details they share. Questioning the victim can possibly make them wonder if they should blame themselves for the abuse because of the lack of support and belief in their story. A child may have a difficult time disclosing because the situation could have involved a family member or family friend and they are scared they won't be believed, or worse blamed. It is estimated that 30 to 80% of victims do not disclose child abuse before adulthood.

- When a story is told and victim blaming occurs, it is sometimes referred to as revictimization. The abuse that they go through is the initial wound and the second can result from how people around them respond.
- While this position may seem obvious to some, teenage girls are still blamed for ‘promiscuous’ behaviors or dress having influenced their perpetrator. The term ‘boys will be boys’ or ‘men will be men’ is even thrown around in Christadelphia, but we, as responsible stewards, must recognize that adult men are responsible for their own behavior and even if a child looks like an adult, they are not. A minor is in *no way responsible for any form of sexual abuse that occurs*.
- This does not happen only in Christadelphia, and we are not immune to being influenced by the broader world’s perspectives. These types of beliefs can be subtle and pervasive and is why having a policy like this is so important. Having clear steps and guidelines can help limit bias and avoid both blaming and re-victimizing a victim.
- In this context, the following steps will help avoid victim blaming and re-victimization:
 - If a child discloses to you, it should always be taken seriously. Ensure that the child knows that you believe him/her. Remain calm and explain that it is not their fault, and they are not in trouble. Sometimes self-blame occurs and it is important to address that they didn’t put themselves in the situation. Do not investigate by asking probing questions, listen to what the child tells you and give positive feedback by saying things such as, “It takes courage to tell, and I am here for you.”
 - Understand that disclosure can be a dynamic event rather than a static one. Disclosure can be a process and one may share several things throughout a period. It does not mean that we should think they are lying or believe them less.
 - Report any child abuse or suspicion of abuse to the Department of Health Services and/or Law Enforcement.

APPENDIX D - Scriptural References

Foundation Bible Passages Which Form the Basis of This Policy

Bible Teaching	References
Children are very important to God.	Matt 19:14; Psa 127:3; Matt 10:42
All forms of abuse violate the commandments of Christ and are inconsistent with our calling.	Matt 22:39; Matt 24:48-51; Gal 5:19-24; John 14:15
Child abuse is particularly abominable and will be punished especially harshly.	Matt 18:6,10
We should “do all to the glory of God”. This provides the overarching principle and guide for planning, managing and deciding all matters within the ecclesia.	1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:23
Those who oversee the ecclesia are responsible to care for it and protect the “flock” from “wolves.”	Acts 20:28-32; 1 Cor 5:1-2,12-13; Matt 18:17-18; 2 Tim 3:13-14; Luke 12:42-46
We are to be holy and to abstain from all appearance of evil.	1 Pet 1:15-16; 1 Thess 5:22; Eph 5:3
The ecclesia can and should regulate itself to ensure that things are done "decently and in order".	1 Cor 14:40; 1 Cor 5:12-13; Matt 18:18-20
Wickedness within the ecclesia should be exposed and removed, not covered up.	Matt 23; Eph 5:11; 1 Tim 5:20

APPENDIX E - Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct is another prevention tool that helps Ecclesias clearly identify acceptable and expected behaviors of anyone in a position of responsibility for the children and youth in their care. Among items addressed in such codes are boundaries of physical, sexual and verbal behavior; guidance about being alone with children/youth; awareness of power differentials and abuse of power; bullying, harassment, and discrimination; interpersonal communication with children using electronic and social media; and compliance with the policies and procedures of the organization and the State's or province's child abuse reporting laws.

Codes of Conduct are useful in addressing interactions between adults and children/youth; among adults themselves; between other adults and parents; and – in simplified form – among the children and youth themselves. A clear set of guidelines can list the expected behaviors and emphasize that the guidelines are there to keep everyone safe and identify to whom anyone should report if the rules aren't being followed.

Since a Code of Conduct cannot possibly contain descriptions of all the situations and interactions that might be encountered, it is helpful for it to be incorporated into a larger framework, such as any policy and procedure documents, constitution or By-Laws.

In some cases, Ecclesias may want to consider anyone having certain roles in the Ecclesia to sign a document indicating they are aware of and agree to follow the Ecclesias Code of Conduct and any associated guidelines.

A sample Code of Conduct and such an agreement can be found on the following pages. We acknowledge the work of safekidsthive.org in the development of these sample documents.

APPENDIX E – Sample Code of Conduct (Cont.)

(Name of Ecclesia) Code of Conduct Involving Interactions with Children and Youth

(Name of Ecclesia) is committed to the safety and protection of children and youth. This Code of Conduct, along with the (Name of Ecclesia) child safety policies and procedures applies to everyone who represents the (Name of Ecclesia) and who interact with children or youth in both a direct and/or unsupervised capacity. It also applies to all members of (Name of Ecclesia) at all times, non-members attending any ecclesially-sponsored activity, and all visitors while on Ecclesial premises.

The public and private conduct of everyone associated with (Name of Ecclesia) in these ways can inspire and motivate those with whom they interact or can cause great harm if inappropriate. We must always be aware of the responsibilities that accompany our work.

We should be aware of our own and other persons' vulnerability, especially when working alone with children and youth, and be particularly aware that we are responsible for maintaining physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries in such interactions. We must avoid any covert or overt sexual behaviors with those for whom we have responsibility. This includes (but is not limited to) seductive speech, jokes or gestures as well as physical contact that exploits, abuses, or harasses. We are to always provide safe environments for children and youth.

We must show prudent discretion before touching another person, especially children and youth, and be aware of how physical touch will be perceived or received, and whether it would be an appropriate expression of greeting, care, concern, or celebration. (Name of Ecclesia) personnel and volunteers are prohibited at all times from physically disciplining a child, other than their own children.

Physical contact with children can be misconstrued both by the recipient and by those who observe it, and should occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and never in private. One-on-one meetings with a child or young person are best held in a public area; in a room where the interaction can be (or is being) observed; or in a room with the door left open, and others are able to observe the meeting.

We must intervene when there is evidence of, or there is reasonable cause to suspect, that children and youth are being maltreated in any way. Suspected abuse or neglect must be reported to the appropriate organizational and civil authorities as described in the (Name of Ecclesia) child safety policies and procedures.

Communication with children by staff and volunteers should be handled in an age-appropriate manner, and in accordance with (Name of Ecclesia)'s policies. For the protection of all concerned, the key safety concepts that will be applied to these interactions are Bible-based and transparent. The following steps will reduce the risk of inappropriate communication between those acting for (Name of Ecclesia) and minors:

- Communication between anyone to whom this Code applies and children/youth should be done in Christlike manner

- Where possible, email, text and other similar exchanges between a minor and a person acting on behalf of the organization are to be preserved and may need to be produced.

APPENDIX E – Sample Code of Conduct (Cont.)

The **(Name of Ecclesia)**'s contact for questions about or reports of breaches of this Code of Conduct is **(Name or Title)**. If that person is not available, or if the behavior involves that person, **(Name of designated alternate)** should be contacted.

In the event that a child or youth is in immediate danger, call **(Department of Children and Families or other similar local authority) (Day and evening/weekend phone numbers)** or the local Police Department **(number)** and notify **(Name or Title)** as soon as possible.

APPENDIX E – Sample Code of Conduct (Cont.)

Sample (Code of Conduct) Statement of Receipt and Agreement

I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Code of Conduct as a part of my service to the children and youth of **(Name of Ecclesia)**.

I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity and consideration.
- Never be alone with individual children and/or youth at organizational activities without another adult present, or able to be observed.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Maintain appropriate physical boundaries at all times, and touch children — when necessary — only in ways that are appropriate, public, non-sexual and with their permission.
- Comply with the mandatory reporting laws of the **(State or Province)** and with the **(Name of Ecclesia)** Policies and Procedures to report suspected child abuse. I understand that failure to report suspected child maltreatment to civil authorities is against the law.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

I will not:

- Touch or speak to a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Inflict any physical or emotional abuse such as striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, humiliating, ridiculing, threatening, or degrading children and/or youth, (including, while in the presence of others, my own children).
- Smoke or use tobacco products, or possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at any time while working with children and/or youth.
- Give a child who is not my own a ride home alone.
- Engage in private communications with children or youth via text messaging, email, Facebook, Twitter or other similar forms of electronic or social media, without preserving the contents of such communications.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth at any time.

I understand that as a person working with and/or providing services to children and youth under the auspices of **(Name of Ecclesia)**, I am subject to a criminal history background check. My signature confirms that I have read this Code of Conduct and agree to follow the standards it contains.

Name (Print): _____

Signature/Date: _____

APPENDIX F - Interview Guide

The following questions may help in assessing the suitability of a candidate to work with children:

1. Why have you applied for this position?
2. Why do you feel you are suitable for the role?
3. Please describe positive experiences you have had with children or young people.
4. Have you ever been in a situation where you have disciplined a child or young person and, if so, how did you handle the situation?
5. Have you ever been investigated for a complaint involving a child and, if so, what were the circumstances?
6. Have you ever been investigated for an alleged violent or sexually related offence and, if so, what were the circumstances?
7. Is there any other information relating to your suitability for this position, which we should be aware of?
8. Have you read the Child Safety Policy of our ecclesia and understood your responsibilities?
9. Do you have any further questions regarding the child safety policy or the associated procedures of our ecclesia?

Appendix G: Legal Obligations

Legal

- Most, if not all, governments (national, state, provincial, municipal) have laws specifically related to child abuse (sexual, physical, emotional and other forms).
- In the United States, with few exceptions, the laws governing child sexual abuse are State, rather than Federal, Laws.
- In Canada anyone who thinks there is abuse must report it. The age considered a child varies from 19 and younger depending on the province. The laws are federal but developed by Province as well.
- In addition to laws defining and proscribing abuse, of particular interest to ecclesias are laws concerning mandatory reporting requirements imposed on certain people, including “clergy,” and volunteers. Generally, these laws impose a duty to report actual or suspected instances of child abuse to the appropriate authorities. It is impossible to be specific in a document such as this, as these laws vary by jurisdiction and are constantly evolving and updating. Fortunately, resources exist which monitor this area and provide updated information by location. A list of some of these resources can be found below.
- **BE AWARE THAT THESE LAWS PROVIDE FOR SIGNIFICANT PENALTIES TO BOTH ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS FOR FAILURES TO REPORT ALLEGATIONS AND/OR INSTANCES OF ABUSE.**
- Each organization should maintain and update specific guidance on the local requirements imposed on all persons associated with the organization.

Helpful Links for the United States and Canada:

- [RAINN \(Rape Abuse Incest National Network\) State Law Database](#)
- [How to Report Child Abuse](#)
- [Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- [Child Maltreatment in Canada](#)
- [Carters Spring 2020 Charity & NFP Webinar Series \(Handout\)](#)
- [Canadian Center for Child Protection](#)

Insurance

- Most church Insurance policies in the United States and Canada provide some limited coverage for Sexual Misconduct or Sexual Molestation. Typically, these coverages are limited to a specific dollar amount less than the General Liability coverage amount. These coverages specifically do not apply to any cost of legal defense or fines imposed from an actual criminal violation.
- While Ecclesias may feel that their members will not sue them, it is important to remember that there are often children of non-members in Sunday Schools and CYC events whose parents are not bound by the same moral codes as members.
- Arranging Boards are advised to check with their insurance provider to ensure that these coverages are in place.

Appendix H: Suggested Things to Do and Avoid

What to DO When Abuse is Suspected:

- **Do** stay calm and remain non-judgmental. Put your own feelings aside and try not to communicate shock, disgust, embarrassment, or disbelief.
- **Do** be supportive. Stay close to the alleged victim immediately after the disclosure to provide some sense of physical security.
- **Do** assure the individual that he/she did the right thing by telling you about the allegations. Never tell the alleged victim that you do not believe her/him.
- **Do** ensure the individual's safety. Ensure the alleged abuser(s) does not have access to the alleged victim.
- **Do** explain the requirement to immediately report to the appropriate authorities.
- **Do** assure the alleged victim that someone will stand by her/him in the process of getting help.
- **Do** seek privacy, if possible, so the individual is protected from disclosing in public.
- **Do** listen closely if the victim wants to talk, but do not ask questions beyond what is necessary to protect the victim and preserve evidence.
- **Do** gather essential information, by asking:
 - **What happened?** Only enough to establish that abuse or a crime has occurred.
 - **Where did it happen?** Important to know for notifying the authorities, securing the scene and protecting evidence.
 - **When did it happen?** If within 120 hours of sexual assault, go to an emergency room for a sexual assault exam, preferably a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) designated hospital.
 - **Who is the alleged abuser?** If appropriate, ask obvious questions of the alleged abuser about what happened such as why he/she is two hours late arriving back from an appointment with the individual.
- **Do** gather and document basic information on the alleged victim and alleged abuser, as reported.
- **Do** prevent loss or destruction of known evidence.
- **Do** contain & control the situation.
- **Do** ensure allegations are not repeated to others.
- **Do** control contact with the alleged abuser/suspect. Contact should be limited to one representative of the program.
- **Do call 911 in an emergency.**

What Not to DO When Abuse is Suspected:

- **Do not** agree to keep the information secret.
- **Do not** investigate. Remember that it is not up to you to investigate or elaborate on the alleged victim's story. Your job is to keep the victim safe and to report the allegations.
- **Do not** bathe the victim of an alleged sexual assault or rape.
- **Do not** change the clothes of an alleged victim of a sexual assault or rape.
- **Do not** wash the bed linens or clothing of an alleged victim of a sexual assault or rape.
- **Do not** clean the location of an alleged sexual assault or rape.
- **Do not** re-interview the individual.
- **Do not** interpret or edit the information.
- **Do not** interrogate the alleged abuser/suspect.

- **Do not** involve other persons.
- **Do not** interview other individuals.
- **Do not** go looking for evidence.
- **Do not** touch physical evidence.

Appendix I: Consequences to Fellowship and Community Communication

- Upon a report of abuse, during any sort of investigation, the perpetrator is to be removed from all ecclesial duties, especially those involving leadership. Some examples of these are the following:
 - Being part of the Arranging Board
 - Giving exhortations
 - Presiding
 - Preparing members for baptism
 - Performing weddings
 - Participating on inter-ecclesial arranging committees
 - Leading CYC
 - Missionary work
 - Any ecclesial supported activity or space that the victim might be present at .
- When the accusation has been determined to be credible, the ecclesia is to be informed of the situation. Clear communication helps prevent abuse from continuing and false rumors from propagating. The Arranging Board of other ecclesias that are in contact with the brother or sister must also be informed.
- When communicating about the brother or sister, it is important to both be specific as to the issue while not compromising the privacy of the victim. To prevent accidental verbal revelations, it is recommended that a written statement be made for warning others of the abusive behavior. If others know an investigation is being undertaken and that the abuser is being held accountable it may encourage them to come forward.
- The consequences to fellowship for an abuser are to be made on a case-by-case basis, depending on the danger to the ecclesia and the perpetrator's stage in the restoration process. Physical attendance at the meeting hall, Bible Schools, inter-ecclesial events, etc. is not considered essential to salvation, and may be restricted to protect the victim or other potential victims.
- The role of the Arranging Board is not to determine who will enter the Kingdom of God, or who is worthy of God's mercy. Similarly, being considered a Christadelphian brother or sister in Christ does not ensure salvation, nor does not being a Christadelphian restrict access to the Kingdom. The role of the Arranging Board in this situation is to protect and care for the flock as best they can, not to determine who God will save to eternal life.
- It will sometimes take a long time to prove allegations of abuse, if they are ever done. While the accusation remains credible, it is the responsibility of the ecclesia to first protect the victim, and second to support the spiritual development of the alleged abuser.

Appendix J: Supporting the Abuser & Practical Restoration

The goal of Scriptural restoration is dependent upon genuine repentance. Repentance means “a change of heart.” In the context of abuse and exploitation, evidentiary change of behavioral patterns is the only basis for determining whether there is a true change of heart. Esau never found a “*place of repentance, though he sought it with tears,*” and so God says of him, “*Esau have I hated.*” For him to have truly had a change of heart, there would have been evidence. To provide a basis of evidence, and to place the work of repentance on the person who needs it, the following Five Steps for Repentance should be sufficient as an objective basis for defining what repentance really is:

FIVE STEPS FOR REPENTANCE:

1. What was wrong with what I did?
2. Why was it bad for me?
3. Why was it bad for the person (s) I hurt?
4. What I will do to ensure it will never happen again.
5. What I will do to make restitution to the person I hurt.

Any brother and sister in Christ who has truly repented should be able to easily answer the above questions without prompting, and to show that their words are genuine through their actions. It must be apparent to all who know the abuser well that the abuser has truly become a new person, and that the old ways are not to be feared.

Professional therapy is often very helpful for bringing about repentance. In the spirit of love and a desire for our brother to be restored, the ecclesia will both encourage professional help for the abuser and offer to help finance it.

While attempting to restore the abuser to fellowship and a right relationship with God is an admirable goal, it should never be done at the expense of the safety and comfort of the victim. In particular, the victim should never be forced to contact their abuser without consent. The victim's judgment is also often an excellent guide to use when assessing the progress of the abuser towards repentance.

Understanding the complex effects of trauma that can affect memory and mental health and may mean that the victim survivor does not want to visit places where the trauma occurred, meet people involved, or is reticent or unwilling to recount the details of what happened. Professional interviewing techniques and skills are needed, and often a lot of time.

Dealing with the offender is the most challenging part, as it is common for offenders to be quite skilled at defensive behavior, personal attacks, and alliance building within the Ecclesia. Be prepared for them to act in an un-Christlike manner and to try to manipulate and divide the Ecclesia.

Remember that the Ecclesia should support the victim and the victim should not be made to feel uncomfortable attending their own Ecclesia.

Providing alternate spiritual support for the offender would be ideal. For instance, the Ecclesia could provide at-home Memorial Service and visits for them. Remember that the offender is the one that made the breach with the Ecclesia and the victim, and therefore has lost their unbridled access to the Ecclesia.

The Arranging Board should not share personal information about the victim's healing to the offender. The first step to restoration includes a full and complete acknowledgement of all inappropriate behavior (not just that which was discovered).

Restoration is at the direction of the victim. The victim should be encouraged to follow God's teaching regarding the offender, but the pace of the restoration should not be directed by the Ecclesia.

Appendix K: Procedure to Follow when Abuse Allegation is Not Found to be Credible

- As mentioned in previously, most of the time, child-initiated claims are truthful and should be unilaterally acted upon as if true. In the few cases where children falsify claims, they are either being emotionally manipulated / coached by another adult or are acting out from abuse received in other ways. These children need help, regardless, and should always be considered the victim.
- There are instances where another party may observe or make claims against another and while false accusations by adults are also rare, they can occur.
- To help mitigate bias and neutralize any harmful intent towards an accuser, decisions about what steps the ecclesia should take when an adult accuses another should be led by the Investigative Panel (which again, should be entirely neutral in their relation(s) to all involved) and informed primarily by the victim, their neutral, non-parent supporter and the advice of experts.
 - Note: It is still the responsibility of the accuser (and any who become privy to it) to report / ensure reporting of the abuse is made to the appropriate authorities.
- If, and only if, the victim, their supporter & the Investigative Panel are in agreement, restoration of the accused may be discussed, and steps should be as follows:
 - The Investigative Panel *must* employ the input of an independent professional / expert (See Appendix L) to weigh in on whether the accusations made do not seem credible. It is crucial that the ecclesia not rely on their own limited expertise to make such decisions. While it may be onerous to the accused, it is in the best interest of potential victims that restoration only be pursued when supported by an investigating authority.
 - It is understood that untruthful accusations can be very hurtful and harmful to the accused. If the Investigative Panel determines claims to be non-credible, the entire ecclesia (or those who are aware of the situation) need to acknowledge and accept this clearance, while ensuring that *all* members adhere to the Code of Conduct and safety procedures to avoid any future risk.
 - It would be wise for the accused & the entire ecclesia to seek additional guidance and professional counseling on how to move forward as a community after such an accusation is made, particularly knowing that biases after such accusations are difficult to overcome.
 - The Investigative Panel should also seek counsel from experts on steps to take to inquire into the motives of the accusing adult and provide them with professional support.
 - See Appendix J for any additional applicable restoration steps.

Appendix L: Why is Counseling / Treatment Necessary for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse?

- When children are coerced or forced into sexual behavior to satisfy the needs of an offender, it is always traumatic. Most molestations happen at the hands of a family member or family acquaintance, so the issues of trust and personal safety are intertwined with the many feelings and reactions to the physical and sexual violations themselves. Some children can work through minor traumas with brief support, and others can be seriously scarred for life. Most victim/survivors will carry the memories and impacts of this abuse throughout their lives in fact. It will affect their future relationships, their ability to trust others close to them, their mental wellness, their risk of drug and alcohol abuse, their sense of safety in our spiritual community, their relationship to our Heavenly Father, as well as their future personal sexual experiences. For all these reasons and more, it is critical that as shepherds of the young amongst us, that we support access to trained counselors. The child's support system, their family, their emotional maturity and of course the duration and severity of the abuse will all play a part in the extent and approach of treatment and healing. Victims of child sexual abuse need support and caring from their family and spiritual community as well as professional counseling.
- Adults who were victimized as children suffer the shame, anxiety, depression and other challenges to their relationships and healthy sexuality because of childhood abuse. Rarely do people just "grow out of it," but they need professional, family and ecclesial support to help them resolve these traumas. Children and adolescents should be offered professional treatment as well at the time the abuse is discovered, as well as at other junctures where their emerging sexuality will be challenged by this abuse history. Abused children go through puberty, with all its regular challenges for adolescents. This can cause children to relive their earlier abuse experiences. Young adults who are dating or getting married will also have unique needs to sort through the effects of child sexual abuse on their current relationships and roles as married men and women.
- Of course, offenders need treatment too. The sexual exploitation of children is not normal behavior, and treatment will be essential to help the offender fully understand the nature of their behavior, if there is any certainty of them not offending again. The most extreme pedophiles will have hundreds of child victims. Now not all child sexual abuse is committed by those diagnosed with this severe form of pedophilia, but all will need to engage in treatment to determine whether they can safely interact in society again.
- For both victims and offenders, the willing cooperation to engage in treatment will be very important. As elders, we should be very comfortable to recommend counseling, to destigmatize it, offer to help pay for it, and encourage both victims and offenders to start counseling right away, and at times in the future as needed. Counseling can take many different forms and will be conducted using proven methods that are geared to the age and maturity level of the victim from toddlers to teens to adults. For uncooperative offenders, therapy can still have limited positive effects, but often only when it is paired with other punitive measures, like court ordered treatment under law enforcement supervision or with a threat of incarceration for non-compliance.
- Ecclesias are encouraged to address their policies and any internal concerns about counseling in advance of an abuse situation arising. Several ecclesias have interviewed a number of local therapists and have recommended them to their members should the need arise. Sexual abuse

and sexual offending are unique specialties requiring specialized professional training. There are brothers and sisters who are trained as therapists, social workers, etc., but the needs for counseling will most likely be more intensive and specialized than can be handled by the few brothers and sisters with this kind of specific training.

- For those who are unsure about whether a professional counselor is appropriate for believers in cases of abuse, it may be helpful to remind them that we all use various professionals in our lives: tax accountants, doctors, lawyers, etc. Seeking professional mental health counseling is very similar. We don't relinquish our beliefs when we're doing tax planning, or with a real estate transaction, nor would we when we engage with a counselor. Counseling ethics forbids therapists from disregarding the religious beliefs of their clients, and in fact, many counselors are people of faith themselves. A thoughtful interview with a few therapists in your area in advance can help sort out these concerns that are important to us as a body of believers.