

# A Plan to Protect

Children • Youth • Leaders



*Living in the Love of God*

## **Burlington Christian Fellowship**

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## The Profile of a Child Molester

Who is the typical child molester? Some church leaders assume that molesters are “strangers wearing trench coats” or “dirty old men.” These stereotypes not only are inaccurate, but they dangerously contribute to a false sense of security. Researchers in the field of child sexual abuse currently indicate that no one profile fits the various perpetrators of abuse. Church leaders can become preoccupied screening stereotypes, while not suspecting the real molester could be an active adult or teen in the church.

Consider the following

If abuse occurs in our church, a respected member will most likely be the molester. Emphasis upon “stranger danger” will leave our church ill prepared. While it’s uncomfortable even to consider this, the most likely assailants include teachers, religious educators, nursery or preschool workers, teachers in a church operated school, camp counselors, scout leaders, “concerned” adults who volunteer to transport children to church, and clergy. Trusted adults - male or female - can easily mislead children and most incidents of child sexual abuse take place in the context of an ongoing relationship between the abuser and the child.

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*Mr. D sat dejectedly before the church board. His broad shoulders slumped as he tearfully retold his story. Mr. D has been sexually molesting his thirteen year old daughter for the last two years. This activity may have gone undetected except that Mr. D tried to abuse his daughter’s girlfriend while chaperoning a church activity. The young girl reported the incident to her parents and Mr. D was apprehended. The church leaders hearing this confession sat in disbelief. How could Mr. D, a successful businessman, husband, father of three children, and respected church worker commit such actions? Over eighty percent of the time, the abuser is someone known to the victim.*

## Youth Ministry Personnel Standards

### A. Lifestyle

1. For the protection of our youth, ministry personnel are to be committed to maintaining a consistent spiritual life including prayer, Bible reading, attendance at youth events, planning meetings and worship services.
2. Ministry personnel are to be role models of integrity at all times. Ministry personnel are to refrain from activities that are illegal or could be considered morally and biblically questionable.

### B. Contacting Opportunities

1. Ministry personnel are encouraged to meet with youth in small group settings and in teams.
2. The ministry lead must pre-approve the conducting of any one-on-one mentoring with the information being documented and filed.
3. One-on-one mentoring must be done in public settings and only under the following conditions:
4. The ministry lead is informed of the time and place of the meeting prior to the meeting, and, Parental permission is granted, and, when separate transportation is arranged

### C. Open Door Policy

1. Ministry personnel working with youth will not have a one-on-one or a small group meeting behind closed doors. It is required that the door remains open or that the meeting take place in a room with an unobstructed window in the door.

### D. Physical Contact

1. 'Physical Contact Guidelines' are to be posted in youth department.

Ministry personnel are aware of what constitutes appropriate touch:

- one-arm hugs
- shoulder-to-shoulder hugs
- touch on the back or shoulder

Ministry personnel must refrain from inappropriate touch at all times:

- chest-to-chest hugging
- extended hugging
- over exuberant affection
- lap-sitting

(see more in manual Appendix 2)

## INTRODUCTION

*Burlington Christian Fellowship* has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children participating in church programs that are under the auspices and authority of the church. Child abuse is a criminal act as well as a violation of human conscience and dignity. It is a violation of God's moral law within the trusted context of relationship. It is criminal behavior that causes emotional, physical and spiritual trauma to victims, and has destructive consequences for abusers. The devastating effects on the credibility of the church ministry and the name of Christ make it essential that the church take all appropriate steps to prevent abusive incidences from occurring.

### The Spiritual and Moral Responsibility of the Church

The gospel of Mark records that when people brought little children to Jesus, He took them in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them. As a church, it is also our desire to bless children.

In the church, we recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care and we take our responsibility to them seriously. In our ministry to children we must follow carefully what the scriptures teach:

1. Avoid every kind of evil. (1Thessalonians 5:12)
2. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. (Ephesians 5:3)

Matthew 18:6 \* Matthew 18:15-17

*Everyone who teaches, helps or cares for children and/or youth under the auspices of Burlington Christian Fellowship is required to follow the guidelines and procedures as defined in this booklet.*

*This plan is designed to assist church leaders in their recruiting of volunteers and, to the greatest extent possible, provide for the safety of the children served by these volunteers.*

*These guidelines are therefore set forth to provide a safe and nurturing environment.*

*All of our guidelines are designed to protect and promote growth in God for each child and adult involved.*

## Understanding Child Abuse

### Definitions

"Child abuse" is defined as follows:

- It can be physical, emotional or sexual.
- All child abuse involves the misuse of power.
- Misuse of power takes place when people take advantage of the authority or power they have over vulnerable people.
- Vulnerable people include adults with physical or mental disabilities and children.

**Physical Abuse** is using physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child or youth. It is more than reasonable discipline. Sometimes injury is caused by over-discipline. Injuring a child or youth is not acceptable, regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline. Note: *Within the context of this church, it is never permissible to strike a child.*

**Emotional Abuse** is a pattern of hurting a child's feelings to the point of damaging their self-respect. It includes verbal attacks on the child, insults, humiliation or rejection. A child or youth who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behavior.

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when a child or youth is used by somebody else for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may also be sexual abuse if older or more powerful children or youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful.

**The Law Reform Committee of Canada** defines child sexual abuse as "Exposure of the child to sexual stimulation inappropriate for his age and role—the sexual exploitation of a child who is not developed mentally, capable of understanding or resisting the contact; or a child or adolescent who may be psychologically or socially dependent upon the perpetrator."

*Burlington Christian Fellowship will not engage in denial, minimization, or blame.*

Often when confronted with an allegation of abuse, a church may respond in one or more of the following ways:

- Deny that the incident occurred, despite clear evidence to the contrary.
- Acknowledge that the incident occurred, but minimize it. For example, a church leader may say, "It only happened once," or "It wasn't that serious".
- Blame the victim or the victim's family.

***These responses are all inappropriate and are to be avoided.***

### Don't be Accusatory

Avoid spelling out the details of an accusation in a public interview.

### Use a Lawyer

Always have the church's lawyer present while answering any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies. The accused should follow the same procedure with their lawyer.

- All allegations are to be taken seriously
- Situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality
- Full co-operation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of our church lawyer
- Adequate care must be shown for the well-being of victims
- The victim should not be held responsible in any way

## Records

Always have adequate records of workers' applications, references and screening forms. They should be up-to-date and accessible. Records should be kept at least ten years.

## Spokesperson

A member of the Senior Pastoral Team will act as the spokesperson for the church. They will speak to the media and the congregation regarding the matter in a discreet, informed, truthful and diplomatic way. (Often, the media interviews several church leaders who have never given any consideration to responding to such inquiries. In such cases, conflicting and contradictory statements can abound, and the public will develop a negative impression of the church. This is avoided when only one person is designated to speak for the church in such cases).

## Position Statement

In an allegation of abuse, the statement below is to be used for a public response until all of the facts are uncovered and the case reviewed:

This is a clear position statement of Burlington Christian Fellowship regarding child sexual abuse. The policies and established safeguards are included. Having a carefully prepared statement is far superior to making no comment. This is an opportunity to influence public opinion positively by emphasizing an awareness of the problem of child abuse, a concern for victims, and the extensive steps Burlington Christian Fellowship has taken to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for children. It lets the media know that Burlington Christian Fellowship takes the risk of child abuse seriously, and that we have acted responsibly. This is not the time for silence or "no comment."

Child sexual abuse includes behavior that involves touching and non-touching aspects.

### Types of abuse that involve touching include:

- Fondling
- Oral, genital and anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible rape

### Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include:

- Verbal comments
- Pornographic videos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

## Symptoms of Abuse and Molestation

Church workers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioural and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit. A one-time event would not necessarily constitute a potential abuse case; sudden unexplained changes, however, would warrant investigation. Some of the more common signs are summarized below:

### Physical signs may include:

- lacerations and bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease

### Behavioral signs may include:

- anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- Nervous or hostile behaviour toward adults
- Sexual self-consciousness
- "acting out" sexual behaviour

- Withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don't like (names a particular person)
- (Particular person) does things to me when we're alone
- I don't like to be alone with (particular person)
- (Particular person) fooled around with me

### **Proper Display of Affection**

#### Appropriate Touch

Recognizing that children need appropriate displays of affection that reflect pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love, appropriate touch with children will be age and developmentally appropriate. We encourage ministry leaders to:

- Hold a preschool child who is crying.
- Speak to a child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
- Hold a child's hand when speaking, listening or walking him or her to an activity.
- Gently hold the child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour.
- Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting or quieting is needed.
- Pat a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.
- All touch must be done in view of others.

#### Inappropriate Touch

Recognizing that the innocence of children must be protected, ministry leaders will be made aware that the following actions are deemed inappropriate and will not be permitted:

- Do not kiss a child or coax a child to kiss you.
- Do not engage in extended hugging and tickling.
- Do not hold a child's face when talking to or disciplining the child.
- Do not touch a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (strictly prohibited except in cases of diapering and assisting preschoolers as outlined in washroom policies)
- Do not carry older children and do not allow them to sit on your lap.
- Avoid prolonged physical contact with any child or youth.
- Ministry personnel are not to be left alone with a child or youth.
- Any touching used to express power or control over a child.
- Seductiveness or suggestive contact.

### **Protection from Liability**

Church personnel are required to immediately report the matter to the Department of Social Services or the police, any suspected case of child abuse. Reporting must be done orally by telephone or in person.

It is not a breach of confidence between church personnel and the child involved. No person is personally liable for anything done or omitted in good faith in the exercise of this responsibility. As church leaders, we are accountable to God to protect His little ones. Although it is our desire to protect the parents as much as legally possible from undue interference by outside authorities into their family, the protection of children from abuse is even more important. We want to follow the principles of submitting to governing authorities (Romans 13:1) while at the same time helping parents to exercise child discipline that is consistent with the scriptures, and in the best interest of children.

As part of a child protection investigation, social workers are required under the Child, Family and Community Services Act to assess:

- the child's current state of health;
- Their sense of safety and their views of abuse
- Previous abuse, neglect or harm; and
- The ability of the parent(s) to care for and protect the child.

The social worker will talk to people who have contact with the child and family. They may request records or other types of information. They are entitled to whatever information is needed to complete an investigation. If denied access to a record, they can seek a court order.

### **Response to Allegations of Abuse**

Realistically, no practical prevention strategy is 100 percent effective. An accusation of child sexual abuse may occur in any church. Burlington Christian Fellowship has a premeditated plan or strategy to respond to sexual abuse allegations. The church should not try to navigate a crisis situation without a compass to guide it. Wrong actions can multiply the pain and liability inherent in an abuse case.

An effective response strategy recognizes the following underlying principles:

## **Criminal Record Check**

A Criminal Record Check (CRC) will be made for any approved volunteers who accept a ministry position. All paid staff will also submit to a Criminal Record Check for their own protection and for the protection of the church. All records will be placed in the Personnel File set up for that purpose in the Administration Department and will be considered confidential, accessible only by the pastoral staff. Any individual who will not submit to this procedure will be ineligible to be involved with children on behalf of the church. The cost of any CRC's requested by Burlington Christian Fellowship will be borne by the church. Minors under 16 years of age are exempt from the CRC.

### **When an Allegation Occurs**

- Document all your efforts at handling the incident
- Report the incident immediately to the Pastoral Team Leader or his/her designate who may in turn draw in the church's lawyer if required. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance. The accused should also consider legal counsel.

### **Confidentiality**

In these matters it is important to keep the information restricted to those who need to be advised, therefore, all suspicions of abuse should be directed only to the pastor of that department or a member of the Senior Pastoral Team. It is the responsibility of the pastoral staff to contact the local office of the Ministry for Children and Families.

The only claim of confidentiality which overrides the legal duty to report is solicitor-client privilege. Thus physicians, clergymen and others who consider their professional relationships confidential for certain purposes are not exempt from the duty to report child abuse or neglect.

### **Responding to the Child**

When the child first comes to you, be sure to take his or her word seriously. Don't deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to the child. Give emotional support, reminding the child that he or she is not at fault. Tell the child that he or she was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child you will not tell anyone.

## **Discipline and Classroom Management**

God's definition of discipline is outlined in Hebrews 12:7-11. "Discipline is not something you do to a child. It is something you do for a child. The word discipline does not mean punishment. It comes from the root word disciple, which means training that molds character, behavior and values. Rather than seeking to merely maintain control or keep children quiet, our goal in managing children's behavior should be to shape their character in such a way that they will become disciples."

### **Child Protection Procedures**

Burlington Christian Fellowship is committed to the following:

1. We will screen all paid employees, including ministerial staff, and volunteers who work with preschoolers, children or youth.
2. We will check references and do criminal record checks on all our workers, for any position involving work with preschoolers, children or youth. Anyone with criminal abuse violations will not be allowed to work with children or youth.
3. We will train all of our staff who work with preschoolers, children or youth, both paid and volunteer, to understand the nature of child sexual abuse, how to carry out our policies to prevent sexual abuse including our clearly defined reporting procedures for suspected incidents.
4. We take seriously, our policies to prevent sexual abuse and will see that they are enforced.
5. We have adopted a basic "Two-Adult" rule. Such a rule says that two adults should be present during any children's activity. This rule reduces the risk of child molestation, and also reduces the risk of false accusations of molestation by individuals seeking a quick legal settlement.
6. We will follow the "Six Month" rule. Volunteers will be permitted to work with preschoolers, children or youth only after they have been adherents/members of Burlington Christian Fellowship for a period of six months. Such a policy gives the church an additional opportunity to evaluate applicants and volunteers, and will help to repel persons seeking immediate access to children. This provision may be waived where the person is transferring in from another church and has a letter of recommendation signed by the pastor of that church.

*These safeguards are not only to protect our children, but also our workers.*

## Child Security

1. All ministry leaders working with the children must wear a nametag or approved clothing, which identifies them accordingly.
2. The names and addresses of parents and children must be carefully maintained.
3. The parent must provide in writing, any special needs of their child.
4. Programs for preschool aged children must provide a sign-in sheet. An accurate sign-in procedure would include each child's name, parent's name and parent's location during that period of time. Space will be provided for parents to list any special needs. Preschool children should not be received into the classroom until properly signed in. Security precautions are to be taken for all children admitted to pre-school/nursery programs. A child will be released to a parent or representative only on the basis of a signature, security number, identification card.
5. Children are never to be dropped off in the nursery of classroom without a teacher/caregiver present. If only one teacher/caregiver is present, the door must be left open. Doors are to be supervised so that children are not able to exit alone and/or a parent cannot take them from the room without a worker's assistance.
6. Parents are not to enter the nursery or classroom when picking up their child unless requested to do so. This better enables the child-care staff to maintain order and provide the level of security that parents would expect.

## Washroom Guidelines

Parents are to be encouraged to take their children to visit the washroom prior to each class or service. This recommendation is to be communicated to parents at the beginning of each new school year, and throughout the year to newcomers.

### 1. Nursery Children

As a general rule, staff in the nursery will not be expected to change diapers. However, in the event that this becomes necessary the following rules will apply:

- Diaper changing must always take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child that is being changed, as well as the other children and workers in the room.
- Children must be 12 years of age or older and have the appropriate

Each department must keep its own inventory list of its Ministry Leaders and the status of the application process.

## Reference Check

Three personal references are requested on the Ministry Application Form. References that are acceptable are limited to the following:

- Former pastor
- Parents (for minors) - qualifies as one reference
- Teacher (for minors)
- Other volunteer member (who has sufficient strength of relationship to comment on the individual's personal habits and character)
- Employer

At least two of these references will be contacted and asked to affirm the appointment of the volunteer. The person making the contacts, the date, and a summary of the reference's comments will all be recorded; this will become part of the Volunteer's Placement File. (See Form 3C) Use the suggested "script" for Telephone Follow-up when screening applications. (Form 3D)

## Interview

An interview provides the ministry leaders with the opportunity to review the important items from the Ministry Volunteer Application Form in a personal setting. This allows the ministry leaders to ask follow-up questions and to enhance their knowledge of the applicant. The information given in the interview will be available only to the pastoral staff and so has limited confidentiality. The interview will also allow the potential volunteer the opportunity of asking questions about various children's ministries and the reason behind our child protection procedures. **The interview will be conducted by a minimum of two ministry leaders.**

At the same time, each applicant is to be provided with the application for a Criminal Record Check along with the instruction sheet describing how and where this form is to be processed.

...every 10 children/youth. (Minimum of two leaders at all times.)

### **Electronic Media Communication**

- Using electronic media (such as texting, facebook, twitter, email, etc) to communicate directly with those under 16 years old is not acceptable, except when formal, written consent of parents has been granted. In those cases content will be limited to information and announcements promoting events and requires only a "yes" "no" response.
- Photographic images on the public website will only be used with the consent of the subject, or in situations where the individual faces are unrecognizable.
- Staff and volunteers are to refrain from blogging in a style that is too revealing, casual, controversial, inflammatory, personal or borders on libel or slander.
- The wireless network is password protected. The password is only given out to adult volunteers for the purposes of programming.

### **Recruitment of Paid Staff and Volunteers**

The Ministry Volunteer Application Form and/or Employee Application Form must be completed for all positions involving ministry with children and youth. To protect the church from legal liability and for the protection of all workers, every prospective ministry leader including established members of Burlington Christian Fellowship, must complete the application form.

### **Ministry Volunteer Application Form**

In cases where children are to be supervised by volunteers, the Ministry Volunteer Application Form should be submitted by the volunteer before interim approval is considered. The Ministry Volunteer Application Form is critical in protecting the church from legal action if a case of child abuse occurs in which a church volunteer is involved.

To protect our children and to be protected from liability, the church must take reasonable action in screening and supervising the volunteers involved in any children's work. (A court can find the church legally liable if it is less than systematic and therefore negligent in screening volunteers.) By having everyone fill out these forms and keeping them on file, the church greatly reduces the potential for child abuse and the resultant liability.

training, before being permitted to change infant's diapers.

### **2. Preschool Children**

- For preschool children, two adults will escort a group of children to the washroom. Where we do not have two adults available to take children to the washroom, hallway or safety monitors (preferably female) will be appointed to assist with washroom and security duties.
- If just one child must go to the bathroom, the adult volunteer should escort the child to the washroom and prop the outside door open. The volunteer should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom. The volunteer should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.
- Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.
- When preschool children need assistance in the washroom, an adult may enter the washroom cubicle to assist only when a second adult is within visual contact. If this is not possible, inform another adult when taking a child to the washroom and when returning.
- In light of the fact that most abusers are male, and for the protection of our male volunteers, it would be wise for men to avoid assisting boys or girls of any age in the washrooms. We suggest that only women assist children in the washrooms.

### **3. Grades 1-6 and Youth**

- A child seven years of age and younger should not be sent to the washroom alone, but should be accompanied by an adult volunteer worker.
- For children seven years of age and under, the adult volunteer should escort the child to the washroom, and prop the door open to make sure that everything is in order. The volunteer should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to the classroom.
- The volunteer should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.
- Never go into a washroom cubicle with a child/youth and shut the door

## Health and Safety Guidelines

### A. Sick Children

A child who is ill and could therefore expose other children and workers to illness, should not be received into the nursery. Some signs of illness are unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat. Any child with a known communicable disease should not be received into the nursery or a classroom.

### B. Emergencies

Burlington Christian Fellowship workers are not to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medicating, the parent must give it. No medication will be left in the classroom or with a worker or child. In extreme cases (i.e. peanut allergies, ventilators, etc.) arrangements should be made with written instructions and the permission of the child's parent.

### C. Procedures for Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood

- Separate the injured child from the other children. Isolate the area where any blood may have dropped on carpet, toys, etc. Apply first aid measures and send someone to locate the parents.
- If other children have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury, their parents should be informed.
- Put on latex gloves (available in the first-aid kit) and bandage the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.
- Carefully wipe up all blood and bloody bandages and remove to a secure, inaccessible waste removal receptacle.
- Any blood on the floor or toys must be washed away using a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water.
- Remove and properly dispose of latex gloves. Wash carefully with sterilizing soap (available in first-aid kit).

### D. Cleanliness

- Sanitize the child care areas weekly. Regularly clean all surfaces, toys, tables, trays, bedding, bibs and doors. Place used toys in a bin marked for washing and clean them each week. Clean carpets every month.

## Classroom Staffing and Supervision Guidelines

Workers should always conduct themselves in a Godly manner, being an example of obedience, respect and honesty to those in their care.

### Personnel

Programs that involve children and youth must always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should also be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

## Special Events and Overnight Policies

When teachers and youth workers have special class activities in their home, take students on field trips or service projects the following precautions need to be taken:

### A. Field Trips and Special Events

- All children and youth activities shall be publicly announced.
- Parental consent and permission for these activities whether on or off church premises shall be assumed when the parent brings the child to the activity and/or provides transportation of their children/youth to said activity.
- All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of two adult leaders.
- When the transporting of children is involved in an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance carrying appropriate liability coverage. The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts.

### B. Overnight Events

Church sponsored overnight activities may be permitted as long as the following guidelines are met:

- Proper written consent is required for each child participating in overnight events.
- All overnight activities should have a minimum ratio of one leader for