

Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church Safe Church Manual

Protection and Care for everyone

Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church 2/10/2021





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A. Introduction

Living with abuse and neglect is a reality for many people, young and old. Studies and statistics today indicate incidences of abuse within the church are equal to that of the general population.

"It has become fairly well accepted that approximately one in four girls and one in five boys have experienced some type of sexual abuse before their eighteenth birthday" (Safe Place Handbook Guidelines with Focus on Safety and Abuse).

"People with disabilities report sexual and emotional abuse at rates double, even triple those of persons without disabilities" (Report 28, Synod, 1992 CRC Committee).

Sadly, in our society, people with disabilities are not given enough credibility when/if they do disclose. The Church's desire must be to educate others and ourselves around the issue of abuse so as to recognize the signs, respond appropriately, support the survivor, and remain accountable to one another for our actions.

Above all, we must be seriously concerned with the need of protection for the victim of abuse. Many cases of abuse may also lead to criminal charges in order that the victim may be protected and that the perpetrator be brought to justice.

B. Purpose

The Church has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure, safe environment for all adults and children participating in the Church's ministries. This policy is intended to assist the Church's staff and volunteers in:

- protecting the vulnerable person from abuse
- protecting the workers from false accusations, litigation, loss of ministry or career
- protecting the church from litigation and loss of testimony

It is hoped that this policy will help the Church be a place of "sanctuary" and of ministry. Any and every kind of abuse of any person must be condemned and needs to be eradicated from the Church's organization.



Signs and symptoms of abuse and reports of abuse by a minor needs to be taken seriously. When required, an investigation of said symptoms and reports must only be conducted by Ministry for Children & Families Development (MCFD) personnel, who are trained to investigate child abuse complaints, and/or by local police.

When signs and symptoms of abuse or reports of abuse arise from a minor served in a church ministry, volunteers/staff in that ministry may be the ones to notice the signs or symptoms, or to whom the child reports complaints of abuse. A volunteer/staff person will not conduct an investigation of the matter. Instead, volunteers/staff will follow the established reporting procedure.

As per Section 14.1 of the Child, Family and Community Services Act of British Columbia, any individual aware of or suspecting child abuse is legally required to report it.

The Church assumes responsibility for responding to abuse that occurs in council approved ministries only and to ensure a safe place for all. In any case, the Church will ensure sufficient training for safe ministries and support for volunteers/staff for reporting abuse in any circumstance.

Long term facility rentals of our building must ensure they have policies in place to ensure a safe place for all.

D. Responding to Signs, Symptoms, and Reports of Abuse

Volunteers/staff who work in child/youth programs may become aware of suspected child abuse in a number of ways. A volunteer/staff person may actually witness an abusive incident, or an alleged incident may be reported to him/her by the victim or by another child. Some children will not report an abusive incident, either because they fear the abuser or because they believe they deserved the abuse. Other children are threatened by the abuser not to tell anyone of their experience, but volunteers/staff may observe signs and symptoms that may lead them to suspect abuse.

The reporting procedures outlined below will assist volunteers/staff in responding to reported incidents of abuse or to observable signs and symptoms of abuse.

Reporting Procedures

Each person who has reason to believe that a child (under the age of 19) is or may be in need of protection will immediately report the belief and the information upon which it is based to the local MCF, in compliance with the Child, Family and Community Services



Act. In addition, that person shall also report the occurrence to their direct report Pastor, the chairperson of council, and the church's Safe Ministry team and if needed, the Classis Abuse Prevention Team. It may be wise for that person to consult with the above church related parties before reporting the matter to the MCF, but he/she is not to be coerced into either making a report or not.

A person who has a reason to believe that a child may be in need of protection from abuse but is unsure as to whether or not abuse has actually occurred, should discuss their concerns and the information on which it is based with their direct report Pastor and the chairperson of council or Safe Ministry Team.

Prior to reporting the occurrence, if necessary, and pursuant to the Child, Family and Community Services Act, no volunteers/staff shall, apart from complying with paragraphs 1 and 2 above, conduct any investigation or question any individual(s). Any information obtained and any report pursuant to paragraphs 1 and 2 above shall be considered and treated as **CONFIDENTIAL** information by the church.

No investigation or inquiry shall be conducted where a report has been made to the MCFD until their or police investigation has been completed unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate civil authorities.

E. Definitions of Abuse

Physical Abuse is any non-accidental human act that results in physical pain or injury to a person whether or not it leaves a cut, wound, mark or bruise. Physically abusive behavior ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking and biting to more severe forms such as choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing and shooting. In other words, physical abuse is any intentional means of inflicting pain or injury to another person. It is sometimes a single event but can also be a chronic pattern of behavior.

Physical Neglect is not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care. Neglect interferes with or prevents a person's normal development.

Sexual Abuse is the exploitation of a child or any sexual intimacy forced on a person for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a person who is not capable of understanding sexual acts or resisting coercion such as threats or offers of gifts. Sexual abuse may or may not involve physical contact. Examples of non-physical sexual abuse include people exposing themselves, displaying pornographic material, photographing a person for pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, "peeping Toms", and requests to



engage in sexual activity (where no physical contact occurs). Examples of sexual abuse involving physical contact includes fondling of body parts such as breasts, crotch, buttocks or sexual organs; intercourse; oral and anal sex.

Emotional Abuse is attempting to control a person's life through words, threats and fear, destroying a person's self-worth through harassment, threats and deprivation. Emotional abuse weakens a person's mental and physical ability to resist, cuts off his/her contacts with others, and causes a gradual loss of self-esteem - all of which reinforce a sense of helplessness and of dependence on the abuser.

Adult Abuse Definitions:

Misconduct is a behavior that is offensive to the person upon whom it is inflicted or actionable in a church setting and may not reach the legal standard for the definition of abuse.

Physical misconduct means: threatened harm or non-accidental injury inflicted on a minor or legally protected adult or offensive or harmful contact to any adult where "offensive" means behavior that is clearly socially unacceptable in the broader church community. Physical misconduct is sometimes a single event, but more often a chronic pattern of interacting with a minor or an adult.

Sexual misconduct includes: exploiting or grooming (preparing) a person whether minor or an adult— regardless of consent or circumstances—for the purpose of sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy with the result of either sexual gratification or power and control over the minor or adult; unwelcome/inappropriate touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between co- workers, co-volunteers where "unwelcome" means behavior or sexual suggestion, sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between a supervisor and a subordinate who serve together in a church program or church ministry.

Sexual Misconduct – (as defined by Church order) the sexual exploitation of a Parishioner, minor or adult, regardless of age or consent, for the purposes of sexual gratification and maintaining control over the person.

General Definitions:

Children, Youth or Minors are individuals under the age of 19.

Volunteers are non-paid individuals who serve in a child, youth or adult program and/or who have direct contact with minors or vulnerable adults in their care or supervision; a volunteer must either be a member of the church, have been declared to be an adherent (regular attender) by the pastoral elders team or a member in good standing at another church and have met all our safe church requirements.



Adherents: A person in good standing with Gateway CRC and given special permission by the Ministering Elders to volunteer in a ministry program. Adherents must meet ALL safe ministry requirements prior to volunteering.

Staff are individuals paid by the church who serve in any capacity, function or role at the church including those who work in a child, youth or adult program and/or who have direct contact with minors in their care or supervision.

Child, Family and Community Services Act is the legislated law of BC that speaks to Child Protection (part 3).

F. Ministry Personnel

All staff and volunteers who wish to work with children and youth are required to fill out and submit (all available online):

- a volunteer information card, including the names of two references, who may be contacted by the Safe Church team
- a criminal record and vulnerable sector check
- a completed Safe Church test with a passing grade of 80% or higher

All staff and volunteers will be subject to a personal interview with such persons as designated by Council - on an as needed basis.

Volunteers must be members, adherents of the church or a member in good standing at another church who have agreed to be subject to the authority of the church as set out in the Church's policy.

All volunteers and staff, must participate in abuse prevention training, must agree to comply with the church's abuse prevention policy prior to becoming a leader and, if non-compliant, the individual will be required to relinquish his/her responsibility in the child or youth program.

The Church will reduce the risks of one-to-one contact by:

- Ensuring the two persons rule during a private session for any child, youth and vulnerable adult programs; at least two volunteers (unrelated) or staff must be present with minors.
- Obtaining permission will be required from a parent before a planned one-on- one meeting with a minor (which will always be in a public place.)



- Meeting the requirements of Appendix A: Transportation Policy when transporting children or youth in a church vehicle and/or in a volunteer/staff vehicle
- Establishing hall monitors to observe volunteer/staff activities in a child or youth program and to monitor the facility for suspicious behavior.
- Adult leaders will never drive alone with a minor unless the requirements of Appendix
 A (Transportation Policy) are met. If in the <u>rare occasion</u> an exception is necessary, the
 adult leader must have written permission (via text or email), from their direct report
 Pastor, in addition to keeping a log of pick-up and drop-off times.
- Requiring a volunteer/staff person, while in the church facility, to observe one-to- one
 contacts between a volunteer/staff person and a minor; outside of the church facility,
 requiring that one-to-one contact occurs in a public place or requiring a volunteer/staff
 person to observe one-to-one contacts

G. Education

All new staff and volunteers involved in ministries with minors and vulnerable adults shall participate in Gateway Community CRC's training process. This session will be directed at issues of abuse and for identification and reporting obligations.

All staff and volunteers shall read resource material as prescribed by Council directed at issues of abuse.

H. Handling Discipline

Children and youth sometimes engage in behaviors that adults find unacceptable and contrary to their wishes. These behaviors occur in church sponsored ministries as well as in the family home. When these behaviors occur in church sponsored ministries however, it is often a church volunteer/staff person who must intervene, especially when the child/youth is under his/her supervision. An adult can interrupt or stop an unacceptable behavior by teaching the child/youth which behaviors are acceptable and which behaviors are not. By example and over time, the adult teaches the child/youth how to behave in a socially acceptable way and in a manner that is Christ-like.

An adult can also interrupt or stop an unacceptable behavior by intervening and redirecting to appropriate behaviors and safety. Discipline can become abuse when pain, injury or humiliation results from discipline or it is used excessively in a short span of time.



Some examples of excessive or abusive discipline are listed below:

- Abusive Physical Discipline (corporal punishment)
- Slapping, kicking, punching, hitting, choking, pushing, shoving, hair pulling, twisting, pinching
- Action that leaves a bruise, mark, wound or cut.
- The use of any device or object (such as a paddle, spoon, stick or book)
- Abusive Verbal language
- Shouting or yelling, threatening, hurling insults or obscenities.
- Action that is intended to humiliate a child/youth
- Refusing to speak to a child
- Any action that involves bribery, coercion or threats
- Any conversation followed by a request/threat to the child not to tell anyone what happened nor to report the discipline

I. Discipline Policy

Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, pushing) is not permitted

Abusive verbal punishment (yelling, insults, threatening) is not permitted Parent(s) are to be informed and involved whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehavior increases.

Concerns about a child's behavior or the appropriate response to a child's behavior will be reported to the program supervisor.

An aide or parent should be involved weekly in classrooms where misbehavior is an ongoing problem.

Expectations of children/youth's behavior must reflect their age and level of comprehension. Similarly, discipline must reflect the same.

Children are to be reminded of the kind of behavior that is acceptable for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.

Appropriate forms of guidance and redirection will be reviewed with volunteers/staff before church sponsored programs begin a new season. Then periodic reminders are to be given as needed.



Whenever possible, leaders will try to avoid having to discipline a child/youth by choosing one or more of the following options:

- Distract the child/youth with another activity
- Help the child/youth focus on another more acceptable behavior
- Giving a child space from others as needed and providing assistance from another volunteer or staff.

When nothing seems to be working, staff/volunteers/leaders will seek support from another ministry leader or staff.

J. Policies for Specific Child/Youth Programs/Nursery programs

Minors, age 11 and older, may volunteer for service provided that an adult is present. All minors who wish to volunteer must participate in the training specifically provided for them. Minors may not care for the child(ren) without adult supervision.

One adult attendant must be in the infant nursery with no more than four infants before an additional attendant is required. One adult attendant must be in the toddler nursery for every five children before an additional attendant is required. At least two unrelated attendants must serve in the nursery whenever it is scheduled.

Attendants may take children from the nursery only for good reason, such as to use the bathroom or in case of illness. Any significant medical problem will be reported immediately to the child's parent(s). For children who do not require assistance in the bathroom, the adult attendant must remain outside the bathroom. For children who require assistance, the adult must assist the child with the door ajar. If an infant or toddler requires diapering, the attendants shall notify the parent(s) to come and diaper their child.

A couple (husband and wife) or 2 adult family members may serve in the nursery at the same time provided a third non-related adult person is also present.

An adult or minor who is not scheduled as a nursery attendant for that particular service may not spend time in the nursery room(s) during or after the service.

The Discipline Policy applies to nursery programs.



Children's Church School (Kids Church)

Adult leaders should view children with the eyes of Christ. Females are sisters and males are brothers in Christ. The leader is directly responsible to Christ for the way he/she treats Christ's family.

A couple (husband and wife) or 2 adult family members may serve at the same time provided a third non-related adult person is also present.

Whenever Kids Church is in session, one volunteer will be present, as well as a hall monitor. If no hall monitor is present, two volunteers, including one adult will be present in the teaching room.

Only Kids Church leaders may assist children with bathroom needs. Bathroom assistance is conducted as in the nursery policy. Children will be encouraged to use the facilities before and after class.

Children will not leave the worship center or classroom except for illness, bathroom assistance until picked up by parent or guardian.

Whenever Kids Church is in session, the worship center or classroom door should allow for an unobstructed view of the room.

Only those listed as teachers, approved substitute or helpers may be in the room.

The Discipline Policy applies to children's church school programs.

Coffee Break, Story Hour and other ministries involving children.

Adult leaders should view children with the eyes of Christ. Females are sisters and males are brothers in Christ. The leader is directly responsible to Christ for the way he/she treats Christ's family.

All classes and activities will be conducted with one volunteer/staff member, if there is a hall monitor also present. If no hall monitor is present, two volunteers, including one adult will be present in the teaching room. Volunteers/staff will not meet alone with a child without another adult or leader nearby to observe.

Volunteers/staff will not physically restrain a child in their care. Leaders will ask for assistance if a child behaves in a manner that seems to require restraint. If the leader determines for safety reasons that restraint is needed, the child's parent will be notified immediately and the child may be removed from the class until the parent arrives.



Children will not leave their classrooms except for illness and to use the bathroom until picked up by parent or guardian.

Classrooms held in off-site facilities such as a person's home, activity building or school must adhere to the same safety considerations as classrooms in the church building. If a child is required to separate from others the same guidelines apply under the Disciplinary Policy.

Church volunteers or staff transporting a child or children in a church or personal vehicle must have written parental permission to do so.

In the event that church members use their home/yards for a neighbourhood club, a child's parent must give written consent for the child to meet in the home/yard. Two unrelated volunteers (at least one adult) must conduct in-home programs. Children attending in-home programs must be able to use bathroom facilities without assistance. If transportation is needed to bring or drop off children, it will be provided according Appendix A: Transportation Policy.

The Discipline Policy applies to the above programs.

GEMS and Cadets

Adult leaders should view the youth with the eyes of Christ. Females are sisters and males are brothers in Christ. The leader is directly responsible to Christ for the way he/she treats Christ's family.

GEMS and Cadets leaders will be trained to identify abusive behavior among minors in their ministries and have a policy of zero tolerance to these behaviors and redirect behaviors as necessary.

Leaders will provide adequate supervision of the youth. Each GEMS and Cadet function will be supervised by at least two unrelated persons (an adult leader, and another volunteer at least four years older than the oldest GEM or Cadet).

If a child requires significant medical attention, the parent will be notified immediately.

GEMS or Cadets ministry drop off time must begin no longer than ten minutes before the start of the class, nor should they stay longer than ten minutes after the class.



GEMS and Cadet activities planned away from the church facility, out of town, or overnight will be conducted in compliance with all policies.

While the appropriate display of affection between leaders and the youth is often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another, such displays can be confusing and misunderstood. For that reason, displays of affection will be limited to such actions as a brief side hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open pat on the back, a handclasp, or a light touch to the forearm. Each leader, GEMS or Cadet must be given the opportunity to refuse or grant permission for any displays of affection. Refusal of such affection will be respected.

There will be an adult volunteer at the entrance door to welcome each child. The door is to be locked at all times with only GEMS or Cadet leaders letting children out at the close of each meeting. After the ministry is done children need to be picked up in the church by a parental approved adult.

The Discipline Policy applies to all GEMS and Cadet programs.

Junior High & Senior High Youth Group

Adult leaders should view the youth with the eyes of Christ. Females are sisters and males are brothers in Christ. The leader is directly responsible to Christ for the way he/she treats Christ's family.

Each year youth group leaders will attend a training session about prevention and awareness for the members of the youth group. Topic for this class might include date violence, biblical guidelines for dating relationships, awareness of the signs of abuse, a teenager's response to a teenage victim or abuser, or prevention of abuse. This training session will be conducted by Gateway staff or an outside source.

Youth group leaders may meet one-on-one with a youth group member only with written permission of a parent for each meeting conducted. Any such meeting will occur in public. All meetings shall be documented and records maintained in their direct report Pastor's office for review.

Regardless of the relative ages, it is never appropriate for a youth group leader and a youth group member to date each other.

Youth group functions must always have a minimum of 2 non-related adults in attendance.



In the context of group activities, youth group leaders will provide supervision of the youth in their care. Youth group functions will be led by two unrelated volunteers/staff.

These guidelines also apply to activities away from the church site.

While the appropriate display of affection between leaders and the youth is often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another, such displays can be confusing and misunderstood. For that reason, displays of affection will be limited to such actions as a brief side hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open pat on the back, a handclasp, or a light touch to the forearm. Restrict these displays to public areas only. Each leader, and youth must be given the opportunity to refuse or grant permission for any displays of affection. Refusal of such affection will be respected.

Adult leaders are responsible to avoid sexual and unprofessional behaviour such as sitting too close, giving seductive looks, telling sexual jokes or stories, kidding in a sexual manner, or focusing/commenting on another's physical appearance.

No gifts, phone calls, letters, e-mails, texts or other forms of communication that are non-ministry in nature will be directed to a youth group member by a youth group leader.

A request from a minor that may require counseling will be referred to a professional councilor. The staff and volunteers of Gateway Community Church are not professional councilors.

Caution must be exerted prior to the use or posting of pictures of minors. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to inform Gateway Community Churc if pictures may not be posted of their child(ren).

Written parental permission is required for students to participate in events or activities sponsored by Gateway youth ministries. This permission will be obtained either at the beginning of each church season in September, or when a student enrolls in the ministry, and kept on file with the youth ministry direct report Pastor. It is understood by the nature of youth ministry that students will drop in for events and ministries. While we will not refuse student drop-in participation in on-site activities, transporting students for off-site events without parental permission is not allowed (see attached addendum Appendix A Transportation).

The Discipline Policy applies to all youth programs.

K. College Age

All requirements contained in sections A-G above and for supervision of youth functions as defined in Junior and Senior High programs apply except that parental permission is



not required for students participating in functions, activities or private meetings, with the exception of any person under the age of 19. Private meeting will take place in a public or observed environment.

L. New Programs

Any new Gateway ministries that are developed to benefit minors and vulnerable persons will be subject to this policy.

M. All Ministries/Activities

All ministries and activities at Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church that involve minors or vulnerable adults must adhere to this policy, whether they are listed in the policy or not.

N. SPECIAL NOTE

If a person is convicted of a sexual offence, then he/she will never be able to volunteer with any of the child or youth programs in the Church.

If a person is suspected of child abuse, then he/she will be requested to step down from their role (see Section J) until an investigation has been completed. If, after an investigation has been concluded, it is determined that the person has been involved in abuse of a child, the person will be immediately dismissed from his/her current role.

Determination of abuse or sexual misconduct will be at the discretion by the governing body. Risk to ministry, boundary concerns and other matters of consideration, the church council has the responsibility to remove or restrict any person when there are known risks and boundary concerns.

If a volunteer or employee is removed or dismissed from their position or office he/she should not be considered for re-entry or reinstatement without a full review consistent with the same criteria found in CRCNA Church Order Article 84.

References

- Child Abuse Prevention Program, Beth Swagman, CRC Publications
- "How to Avoid Claims for Sexual Abuse and Harassment", David G Thwaites
- Chief, Family and Community Services Act Ministry of Children & Families
- Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company
- Appendix A Gateway Transportation Policy



Appendix A

Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church TRANSPORTATION

This procedure applies to adults who may transport non-related children or youth in the course of Church-sponsored programs.

There will be **no one-to-one** driving of children, youth and vulnerable adults.

In the <u>rare occasion</u> that one-on-one driving must occur, all of the following procedures must be in place:

- a) Children and/or youth are seated in the back seats of vehicles. All road safety regulations must apply.
- b) Drivers shall call ahead, via cell phone, advising parents of their arrival time.
- c) Drivers log in each pick-up and drop off; logs are turned into the Program Supervisor.
- 2. Adults must have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance before transporting children or youth; drivers who routinely transport children and youth must provide a copy of their driver's abstract and proof of 3rd person liability. Their drivers' record will be reviewed by the Safe Ministry Team. Drivers need to abide by provincial requirements for car seat use, seatbelt use and air bag safety.
 - a) Except for school busses, children and youth must wear seatbelts whenever the vehicle is in motion. Drivers of private vehicles may not transport more children and youth than seatbelts installed in the vehicle.
 - b) Car seats must be available for younger children who require them by law.
 - c) Children and youth under 12 years of age may not sit in the front seat where there is a passenger-side airbag installed.
- 4. Adults or minors who transport related children and youth to church-sponsored events do so without the implied approval of the Church and at their own initiative and risk. By taking such a voluntary initiative, they hold the church harmless from all liability.
- 5. Parents or guardians who permit minors to transport non-related minors to church related events do so at their own risk and without the implied approval of the Church. They agree to hold the church harmless from any and all liability.



Appendix B

Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church DIGITAL MINISTRY

Gateway Community Church will adhere to the following:

- 1. Remote gatherings with youth will be advertised in advance, and will take place at particular times (e.g. 7:00pm on Sunday nights; Tuesday evening Bible study, etc.).
- 2. Two adults (not related to one another) will be present during all virtual gatherings with youth. If two adults cannot be present, the virtual host will drop in to the various rooms at various times.
- 3. All adults interacting with youth virtually will still be background-checked and trained, in accordance with Gateway's church safety policy.
- 4. Every adult interacting with youth virtually will be well-versed in mandated reporter policies as per our Safe Church policy.
- 5. Attention will be given to camera placement, and to the background visible, when gathering virtually.
- 6. Appropriate attire should be worn at all times when gathering virtually with youth.
- 7. All scheduled virtual gatherings will be password-protected.
- 8. When using a platform where this is an option (e.g. Zoom, Facebook), the meeting should be recorded, with recordings saved for the same amount of time as permission forms and other such documents are saved (per the congregation's church safety policy).
- 9. When interactions with youth occur outside of scheduled meetings, a "rule of three" should be initiated whenever possible. (A "rule of three" includes at least one other adult in the communications.) When this is not possible, every communication should be saved for documentation, and a copy of those documents should be given to the minister, or another trusted adult leader in the church community.
- 10. Unless an emergency, interactions with youth will take place at normal times of day (e.g. casually chatting with youth in the middle of the night is rarely appropriate).



11. Any incidences in misconduct, inappropriate behavior, or other safety concerns should be reported immediately to the youth leader and/or church minister/and or church council.

(Article: Best Practices When Working with Youth During a Pandemic

In this season, where COVID-19 compels congregations to gather virtually, many adults are wondering what that looks $\frac{1}{2}$

like for youth ministry. What boundaries are appropriate?

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