

PLAN TO PROTECT POLICY

Policy Statement

The people of Arrowsmith Baptist Church believe it is in the best interest of the church and the children and youth (persons 18 or younger) to protect the physical, mental and emotional well being of the children and youth who participate in church-sponsored activities at Arrowsmith.

The purpose for determining and implementing policies and procedures for adults who work with children and youth in the church is to protect the children and youth from abuse and the adults from being unfairly accused of any form of child abuse.

Churches may be liable for incidents and injuries that result from "negligent supervision"; that is, the failure to exercise reasonable care in the supervision of the church workers and church activities. Adhering to certain policies can reduce the risk of negligent supervision. These policies and procedures also apply to the staff, recognizing special situations involving confidentiality in performing their duties. The following policies and procedures will be in effect at Arrowsmith Baptist Church.

Arrowsmith Baptist Commitments

Arrowsmith Baptist Church is committed to the following:

1. Having a safe environment by preventing harm to those in our care.
2. Protecting our children and youth ministry workers from false allegations.
3. We will screen all paid employees and volunteers who work with children or youth. We will check references and do criminal record checks on all our staff/volunteers every 3 years, for any position involving work with children/youth.
4. We will train all of our staff who work with youth, both paid and volunteer, to understand the nature of teen sexual abuse, how to carry out our policies to prevent sexual abuse including our clearly defined reporting procedures for suspected incidents.
5. We take seriously, our policies to prevent sexual abuse and will see that they are enforced.
6. We are committed to having an attitude of zero tolerance for abuse, harassment or neglect.

Terms and Definitions

"The term "*child abuse*" refers to the violence, mistreatment or neglect that a child or adolescent may experience while in the care of someone they either trust or depend on, such as a parent, sibling, other relative, caregiver or guardian. Abuse may take place anywhere and may occur, for example, within the child's home or that of someone known to the child. There are many different forms of abuse and a child may be subjected to more than one form:

Physical abuse may consist of just one incident or it may happen repeatedly. It involves deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at risk of being injured. Physical abuse includes beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking or assaulting a child with a weapon. It also includes holding a child under water, or any other dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint. Female genital mutilation is another form of physical abuse.

Sexual abuse and exploitation involves using a child for sexual purposes. Examples of child sexual abuse include fondling, inviting a child to touch or be touched sexually, intercourse, rape, incest, sodomy, exhibitionism, or involving a child in prostitution or pornography.

Neglect is often chronic, and it usually involves repeated incidents. It involves failing to provide what a child needs for his or her physical, psychological or emotional development and well being. For example, neglect includes failing to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care or protection from harm. Emotional neglect includes failing to provide a child with love, safety, and a sense of worth.

Emotional abuse involves harming a child's sense of self. It includes acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk of, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional or mental health problems. For example, emotional abuse may include verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation, exploitation, or routinely making unreasonable demands. It also includes terrorizing a child, or exposing them to family violence.

An abuser may use a number of different tactics to gain access to a child, exert power and control over them, and prevent them from telling anyone about the abuse or seeking support. A child who is being abused is usually in a position of dependence on the person who is abusing them. Abuse is a misuse of power and a violation of trust. The abuse may happen once or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over a period of months or years. The abuse may change form over time."ⁱ

Harassment can be defined as the act of systematic and/or continued unwanted and annoying actions of one party or group, including threats and demands.

Improper Discipline can be defined as the act of disciplining a child more than required.

Proper Display of Affection

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. Physical contact with teens should be age and developmentally appropriate. The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love:

Appropriate Touch

Love and caring can be expressed in the following appropriate ways, by:

Putting an arm around the shoulder of a teen that needs comforting.

Patting a teen on the head, hand, and shoulder or back to affirm him or her.

Inappropriate Touch

You must avoid:

Kissing a teen, coaxing a teen to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling.

Touching a teen in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit

Having teens sit on your lap.

Being alone with a teen.

Giving a teen a back rub or massage.

When to Suspect Abuse

"Abused and neglected children almost always show signs of their suffering. Some of the most common signs are listed below.

Remember, these are warning signs. They don't necessarily mean abuse is happening. But the more you see, the more concerned you should be.

Warning signs:

- unexplained bruises especially on the face, lower back, thighs or upper arms
- unexplained bruises on an infant
- different coloured bruises, indicating they're at different stages of healing
- unexplained fractures
- constant complaints such as sore throats or stomach aches that have no medical explanation
- lack of proper hygiene
- clothing inappropriate to weather conditions
- torn, stained or bloody underwear
- irritation, bruising, bleeding, pain or itching near genitals or anus
- bruises on breasts, buttocks or thighs
- sudden onset of nightmares, bed wetting, and/or fear of the dark
- sudden change in attitude towards someone
- expressing sexual knowledge not usual for their age in their language, behaviour or play
- becoming anxious and fearful after being outgoing and friendly

Remember: these are warning signs. They don't necessarily mean abuse is happening. But, especially where one or more sign is noticed in the same child, there's cause for concern."ⁱⁱ

When a Child Comes to You

"Sometimes, a child who is being abused will tell an adult. If this happens to you:

- stay calm
 - listen to them
 - let them know you believe them
 - reassure them
 - tell them you're sorry it happened and let them know it's not their fault
 - don't promise to keep it a secret
 - don't say everything will be fine now. It may take a lot of time before everything is fine again"ⁱⁱⁱ
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Procedures

1. *Prior-Record Rule*
 - a. Adults who have been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse should not volunteer service in any church-sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
 2. *Six-Months Rule*
 - a. All volunteers working with youth or children must have participated in Arrowsmith Baptist Church activities for a minimum of six months or have suitable references from other churches in which they have participated.
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3. *Volunteer Application*
 - a. All volunteers working with youth or children must complete the Arrowsmith Baptist Church volunteer application form and all requirements therein:
 - i. Criminal Record Check
 - ii. Agreement of Arrowsmith Baptist's Plan to Protect Policy.
 - iii. Driver Questioner (if working with youth group ministry)
 4. *Two-Adult Rule*
 - a. For the purpose of this policy, "adult" is defined as a person age 19 or older. It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom will remain open and there will be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher.
 - b. When a child requires assistance/supervision when using the restroom the two-adult room applies or open door.
 5. *Parental Permission*
 - a. Adults, paid staff or volunteers who have legitimate reasons to meet alone with a child or youth should obtain the consent of the child's parent or guardian before spending time with the child or youth in an unsupervised situation. This procedure could be used, for example, with a leader meets with youth for relational building (contact work), counseling or providing transportation.
 - b. If getting parental permission is a problem, for example, if a youth is having problems in parental relationships and desires a visit with an adult in the church about those problems, the person doing the counseling could ask the youth for permission to involve a second adult or youth.
 - c. If the youth needs last minute transportation, such as a ride home after a church youth group event, the supervising adult will contact parents and receive permission before driving the youth home and have completed Driver Questioner.
 - d. Parents/Guardians will sign their children in or out of church programs with adolescents under grade 1.
 6. *Adequate Personnel*
 - a. It is our goal that programs and activities that involve children and youth should always include adequate supervisor personnel. (Adequate supervision would be a ratio of one adult to every ten youth.) Supervision will be maintained before and after the event.
 7. *Teen Assistants*
 - a. We encourage mature teens to participate as teaching assistants under the direct supervision of an adult leader.
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8. *Church Nursery*
 - a. Two or more supervisors will be in the church nursery any time children are left in their care.
 - b. Children will only be released to their parent or someone the parent has authorized.
 9. *Overnight Rule*
 - a. Two or more adults must always be involved in any church-sponsored overnight youth activity. All adult chaperones and supervisors will be cleared in advance by the appropriate church leaders/staff.
 10. *Reporting Suspicious Behavior*
 - a. Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker and a child or youth will be reported by submitting a Incident Report Form and investigated immediately by Staff and Elders with the proper authorities being notified.
 - b. Without admitting legal liability or making public statements prior to obtaining legal counsel, we will assure a compassionate response to the alleged victim and their family.
 - c. We will maintain confidentiality for the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator.
 - d. We will immediately suspend the alleged perpetrator pending outcome of investigation.
 - e. We will consult with a lawyer and will report the incident to our insurance company.
 11. *Training in Plan to Protect*
 - a. Through printed materials and training sessions, adults who work with children and youth will be informed of the policies and procedures under which the church operates. Supervisors will be made aware of the legal penalties of misconduct, especially sexual relationships with minors. They will be made aware of the extent and limitations of the coverage provided by the church insurance policy.
 - b. The parents of children in Arrowsmith Baptist programming will also be informed of the child safety policies and procedures under which the church operates with the emphasis on the safety and well-being of their children and youth.
 - c. These policies and procedures, when applicable, should apply to any group using Arrowsmith Baptist facilities. Groups requesting use of Arrowsmith Baptist facilities will receive the Plan to Protect.
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ⁱ Department of Justice Canada, Family Violence Initiative, 9 June 2011,
<<http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/fv-vf/facts-info/child-enf.html>>.

ⁱⁱ Ministry of Children and Family Services, Keeping Kids Safe, 1 January 2010, 9 June 2011
<http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/keeping_kids_safe.htm>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ministry of Children and Family Services, Keeping Kids Safe, 1 January 2010, 9 June 2011
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