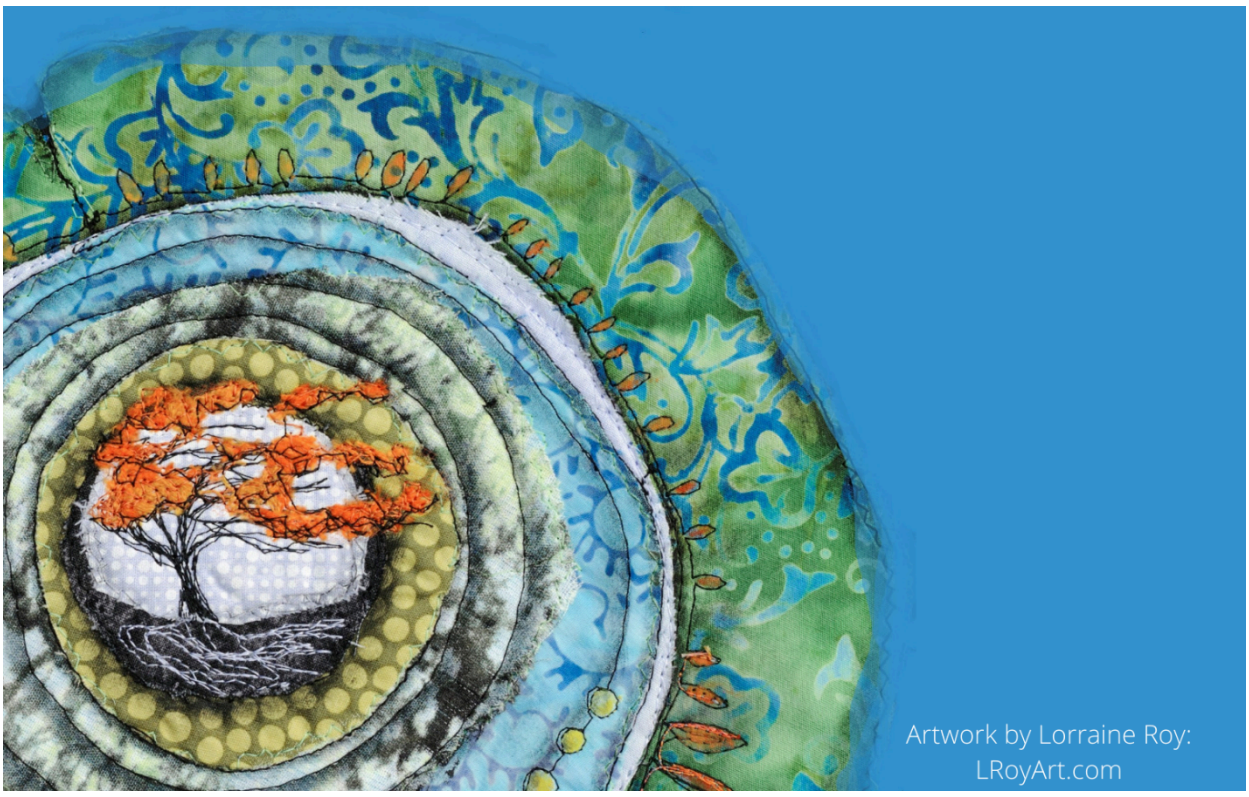
YOUR CHURCH NAME

Christian Reformed Church

Your Location

Safe Church Policy

Current month/year



References:
This policy integrates elements from sample CRC Church Policies, CRCNA Synodical Reports, and Doves Nest Model Policies.

Disclaimer:
Churches are free to use the various parts of this policy to make their own policy but it is critical that each church contextualize the policy so it fits the realities of their church and reflects the best practices and laws of their region. We strongly encourage churches to consult legal counsel or their insurance company regarding their policy. Safe Church Ministry is not responsible for possible litigation against a church who uses this policy.

This policy reflects the mission of our **Safe Church Ministry.**

To build communities where

- *the value of each person is honored;*
- *where people are able to worship and grow free from abuse; and*
- *when abuse has occurred, the response is compassion and justice that fosters healing.*

Source: *https://www.crcna.org/SafeChurch/abuse-prevention/safe-church-policy*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Definitions	3
General Guidelines and Expectations of Ministry Leaders	5
Guidelines - Safe Supervision of Children, Youth & Vulnerable Adults	6
Guidelines for Pastoral Visitation	10
Responding to Abuse	11
Council Responsibilities:	12
How to Report Abuse	13
Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse – School Age	16
Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse from a Child	17
Confidentiality	18
CRC Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders	19
Children & Youth Worker Application Form	21
Criminal Background And Vulnerable Sector Screening	24
Participation & Release Form	27
Accident Reporting Form	29
Incident Reporting Form	30

Introduction

A. Vision

As a community of Christ-followers, we at Your Church Name CRC, seek to be a place where each person can experience the love, compassion, healing, and forgiveness that God pours out on us in Jesus Christ.

This means being a congregation where all can worship and grow in their faith, free from abuse and where those who have been victimized by abuse can receive support in their journey toward healing. In instituting this policy, we commit to protecting and supporting the value and dignity of each person, especially the most vulnerable among us, and to being a community that makes every effort to prevent abuse in our midst.

B. Scope

This policy is intended to create awareness of all forms of abuse and the misuse of power and strive to prevent this within our congregation and ministries.

Your Church Name CRC desires to create a community that reflects the goodness of God's creation and new life in Christ. We strive to achieve an environment that nurtures the dignity and safety of each person.

We recognize, however, that we live in a broken world and that abuse also occurs within the church family. Abuse of any kind inside or outside of the church is not to be tolerated. Appropriate steps will be taken to prevent abuse, and if it occurs, appropriate action will be taken.

C. Purpose of this Policy

- To educate staff, leaders, and volunteers about abuse, the dynamics of power, and especially the responsibility required by people in positions of power.
- To ensure that pastor(s), elders, deacons, staff members, and volunteers are following appropriate boundaries and have notable structures of accountability and support.
- To reflect the high value that Jesus places on those who are vulnerable. As Christ's church, we reflect Christ by ensuring that honour and dignity are shown to every person created in God's image.
- To provide a safe place for any person to come forward with a disclosure of abuse and receive help.
- To equip the church leadership and congregation with clear guidelines for how to respond effectively with justice and compassion to situations of abuse.
- To create opportunities to talk about abuse and increase awareness. Abuse thrives in silence and secrecy, and we must not let it thrive in our communities (Eph. 5).
- To practice the diligence required as the church and also to abide by the laws of our province, and country.
- To satisfy requirements from insurance companies and to limit the risk of abuse or harm.

Definitions

The following definitions are taken from the guidelines approved by CRCNA's Synod 2010 and the Council of Delegates (COD) 2022.

A. Misconduct

As a church, we are committed to holding our leaders and volunteers to the highest standard of behaviour. Therefore, the following definitions of abuse go beyond legal definitions to include any form of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, misuse of spiritual authority, sexually inappropriate behaviour, neglect, and abuse of office.

These are behaviours that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers, and they taint the office held by the offender.

1. **Physical Misconduct**
    a. Threatened harm or non-accidental injury inflicted on a minor or vulnerable adult, or
    b. Offensive or harmful contact with an adult.
    c. Physical misconduct is sometimes a single event, but more often a chronic pattern of interacting with a minor or an adult.
2. **Sexual Misconduct**
    a. Exploiting or grooming (preparing) a 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 and/or adult.
    b. Unwelcome touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between co-workers, co-volunteers, or
    c. Sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between a supervisor and a subordinate who serve together in a church program or church ministry.
    d. The development of or the attempt of a ministry leader to develop a sexual or emotional relationship with a participant in the ministries of the church.
3. **Emotional Misconduct**

    A pattern of behaviour in which a person insults, humiliates, and manipulates an individual or group in order to establish or maintain control over them. Emotional misconduct includes:

    - Threatening a person's safety, property, or loved ones.
    - Isolating a person from family, friends, and acquaintances.
    - Demeaning, bullying, belittling, shaming, or humiliating a person.
    - Delivering constant criticism; or
    - Emotionally blackmailing or harassing a person.
4. **Spiritual Misconduct**

    A form of emotional and psychological abuse, characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual misconduct may include:

    - manipulation and exploitation by appeal to religious convictions and beliefs,
    - censorship of decision making,
    - requirements for secrecy and silence,
    - coercion to conform [inability to ask questions]
    - requirement of obedience to the abuser
    - the suggestion that the abuser holds a 'divine' position
    - isolation as a means of punishment.

Definitions

B. Concepts of Abuse of Power

Power:

Power is the ability to influence or affect an outcome. We all have power as human beings; some of us are given more power as a result of our role or our status within a community. When power is stewarded well, it brings flourishing to all people as an expression of the shalom of the kingdom of God.

Abuse of power:

Abuse of power is misusing power to harm another person or using power and influence for personal gain at the expense of another person.

Power can be used to harm another person intentionally or through ignorance, subtly or overtly, to advance one's own desires without regard for the needs or desires of others in ways that disturb the flourishing of others.

At the core of all types of abuse are behaviours related to acquiring, maintaining, and misusing power and control. The same power dynamics show up in all types of abuse, whether it be sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, or spiritual abuse.

C. Position Titles

Safe Church Team: The Safe Church Team, shall have at least 2 people, with one person being an ordained elder of the church, and all individuals having experience or training reflecting competency in one or more of the following:

> Abuse of Power, Trauma-informed Ministry, Healthy Boundaries, Circle of Grace program, Domestic Abuse/Intimate Partner Violence, and/or Restorative Practices.[1]

Ministry Leader: Any person, paid or volunteer, ordained or un-ordained, in a position of leadership over an area or aspect of ministry in Your Church Name CRC. (This could include pastors, directors, elders, deacons, Gems and Cadet leaders, youth leaders, etc.)

Ministry Staff Leader/Pastor: Any paid staff, pastor, or director of youth who has a position of spiritual authority over other volunteers or members of the church.

Staff: any person holding a paid position within the church

Adult Volunteer: Any volunteer over the age of 18, who leads or assists ministry programming.

Hall Monitor: A volunteer specifically tasked with monitoring each group of children or youth that does not have two adults present. Checks on each group must be done at least every 15 minutes.

Helper: A youth who assists a volunteer in a program.

Child: Children 0 - 10 years of age.

Youth: Children from 11 to 18 years of age.

Vulnerable Adult: A person over the age of 18, who is unable to protect himself or herself from abuse, neglect, or exploitation because of a mental or physical impairment or advanced age.

[1] Training is available through the CRCNA's Safe Church Ministry.

General Guidelines and Expectations of Ministry Leaders

All who serve in the life of the church are called to use their position and power, not in ways that seek to control others, but in ways that are patterned after Christ himself. According to Philippians 2, Christ did not consider equality with God as something to be used to his own advantage but used his power for the thriving of others.

These guidelines are designed to help ministry leaders steward their position and power well and cultivate cultures that resist abuse.

A. Each ministry leader shall sign and commit to conducting themselves according to the Code of Conduct. The church office will keep a signed copy of the Code of Conduct for each ministry leader on file.

B. All ministry staff leaders/pastors and adult volunteers will agree to a criminal background check and vulnerable sector check at the beginning of their time of service. Background checks will be refreshed every 5 years.

C. All ministry staff leaders/pastors shall commit to participating in **Abuse of Power** training within 12 months of being hired, as well as a refresher course, every 3 years (see Safe Church Ministry for abuse of power training opportunities).

D. All ministry leaders, adult volunteers, and helpers must attend a yearly training session on the Safe Church Policy. Training sessions will be held at the beginning of each church program year (e.g., September) and thereafter as needed.

E. Topics related to abuse prevention, healthy boundaries, and support for survivors will be addressed at least annually in Sunday school classes, sermons, newsletters, prayers, and other areas of church life.

F. In addition to a background check, new prospective volunteers must attend or be associated with **Your Church Name CRC** for at least six months before supervising children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

G. If a criminal reference check is received with indications of criminal convictions, **Your Church Name CRC** Administrator will notify the Safe Church Team. The Safe Church Team, in consultation with the Executive of Council will review how to proceed.

H. All ministry leaders and volunteer leaders are required to report any suspected abuse of a minor (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect) to the civil authorities. For more guidance, see "Incident Reporting Form for Injury or Suspected Abuse".

I. All ministry leaders and volunteer leaders are required to use their access to the church internet and technology belonging to the church (computers, laptops, cell phones, etc.) in ways that are legal, reflect godly conduct, and conform to network etiquette, laws, and courtesies.

J. The church has funds available to provide financial support for counseling for those who have been victimized by abuse. For more information, connect with the Pastor or Church Administrator regarding the Church Assistance Program (CAP).

K. Information about domestic violence and other community services about where to get help will be posted in all bathrooms.

L. The name and contact information (church email) for reporting abuse or suspected abuse will be posted in public and visible places. This may include in the bulletin, on the church website, and/or in the church office.

Guidelines - Safe Supervision of Children, Youth & Vulnerable Adults

These guidelines are designed to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults from harm while attending and participating in church-sponsored events.

A. Two-Adult Rule & The Rule of Three:

At all church-sponsored functions involving the supervision of children, youth, or vulnerable adults, either the Two Adult Rule or the Rule of Three will be practiced. No staff or volunteers should be alone with a single child, youth, or vulnerable adult in locations where they cannot be clearly observed by others.

1. **The Two-Adult Rule:** At least two, unrelated, screened adults must be present at every function/event and in each classroom, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
2. **The Rule of Three:**
   a. When there is not a capacity to abide by the Two-Adult Rule, it may be acceptable to use The Rule of Three: At least three individuals must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. One of the three must be a screened adult. If the child is under 6 years of age, the second individual must be at least 13 years of age.
   b. When the Rule of Three is used there must be another unrelated screened adult volunteer nearby or in proximity monitoring the group. Additionally, there should be a clear and unobstructed view into the room/space where the supervision is taking place.

Adult to Child Ratios for Church Activities

Preschool Age 0 - 3	Elementary Age 4 - 12	High School 13 - 18	OFFSITE Excursions
# of Adults for every __ Children	# of Adults for every __ Children	# of Adults for every __ Children	# of Adults for every __ Children
2 : 12	**2 : 20**	**2 : 16-20**	**2 : 10**

B. One-to-One Meetings:

In children and youth ministry, there are times when a ministry leader or volunteer leader seeks to meet one-to-one with a youth or child. Because the imbalance of power is particularly pronounced when a child or youth is alone with an adult, it is crucial that ministry leaders and volunteer leaders follow safe protocols.

1. When possible, the meeting should only take place between a student and ministry leader/volunteer of the same gender.
2. The meeting should take place in a public place (i.e., restaurant, coffee shop, bookstore, etc.) with the permission and knowledge of the parents.
3. The ministry leader or volunteer should notify the director of the ministry or another designated church leader that meeting is being held.

C. Discipline:

When children or youth or vulnerable adult act out during church events, ministry leaders and volunteers will take care to address the misbehaviour in ways that are consistent with the following guidelines:

1. Corporal punishment is not permitted (e.g., spanking, pinching, hitting, etc.).
2. Parents/Guardians are to be informed whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehaviour develops.
3. An aide or parent should be involved in classrooms where misbehaviour is an ongoing problem.
4. Whenever possible, leaders should address disruptive behaviour by:
    - redirecting the child/youth/vulnerable adult to another activity
    - helping the child/youth/ vulnerable adult focus on a more acceptable behaviour
    - taking the child/youth/ vulnerable adult aside if another adult volunteer/staff person is available to assist

D. Transportation:

Any person who transports a child, youth or vulnerable adult for any church sponsored event must:

a. be 25 or older
b. have a current signed Children & Youth Workers Form
c. have a copy of current/valid insurance and driver's license on file
d. be conviction free (meaning no DUI, at-fault collisions, minimum 2 traffic violations within 3 years)

2. To transport children or youth, there must be an adequate safety belt for each passenger and they will be worn any time the car is moving.
3. Transportation by one adult leader of one minor should be avoided. In the event that it is unavoidable, the following provisions must take place:
    a. A clear consent is received from the parents/guardians of the child, youth;
    b. A clear communication with the youth director or designated volunteer leader when the adult leader **leaves** with the child, youth;
    c. A clear communication notifying the staff that the child/youth **arrived safely** and is no longer under their care or supervision.

E. Using Electronic Communication (Social Media, Email, or Texting):

Electronic communication (email and texts) and use of social media has become the preferred means for communication for many people, especially youth. While seeking to use technology to encourage good connections between ministry leaders/volunteers and youth, it is also important to provide guidelines that safeguard youth from potential abuse. To that end, all ministry staff leaders and volunteers will abide by the following **Electronic Communication and Social Media Usage policy** in their interactions with youth and children.

1. Communication should not take place with young people between the hours of 9:00 pm and 7:00 am or on staff members' days off, unless in an emergency.
2. Once permission is given via the annual media release/consent form, staff and volunteers (small group leaders, mentors, coaches, and children's group leaders) can hold email addresses for young people in their care.
3. Emails, messages, texts, or phone calls should be short and should usually be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event.
4. Ongoing conversations or lengthy personal communications should not be done through email or text.
5. If a digital communication raises any child protection concerns, the staff or volunteer will inform their Ministry leader.
6. When a volunteer leaves a ministry involving youth due to misconduct of any kind, staff should request that this volunteer not contact any youth - and that all youth contact information must be removed from that adult volunteer's devices.

F. Social Media Groups:

Each ministry group/class may have a Social Media (Facebook/Instagram) group provided they follow the guidelines below:

1. The group must be "closed" or "private", so that it is not public information. Privacy settings on photographs should be set to ensure that only members of the group have access to them.
2. Ministry staff/volunteers may not use any image of a child or youth without written consent of the parents and only in ways that protect the value and dignity of those pictured.
3. The group must be monitored by at least two staff/volunteers who have admin rights.
4. Young people, staff, & volunteers may become a member of this group given they are 13 or over.
5. While direct 1:1 messages should be avoided between youth and volunteer leaders, communication can occur openly through comments and posts on the group media site.
6. Church events can be posted on the group media site.
7. Church volunteers are forbidden to post or distribute personal identifiable information of any child under the age of eighteen. Personal identifiable information includes but is not limited to full name, home address, email address, telephone number or any information that would allow someone to identify or contact a child or that would jeopardize their safety or well-being in any way.
8. As an exception to this policy, a child whose parent or other legally responsible adult has signed a media release/consent form may be identified by name only in photographs or videos posted to an official group social media site.

G. Senior Elementary, High School and Vulnerable Adult Programs (e.g. Friendship Group)

1. Parents/guardians must return the Participation/Release Form to the director of youth programming at the beginning of each church program year. Program leaders will inform parents of relevant policies either via email, letter, or release form.
2. For scheduled classes and events:
    a. At programs and functions involving the supervision of youth/vulnerable adults, at least three individuals must be present in each separate classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area. In each such case, at least one of the three individuals must be a screened adult.
    b. A premises monitor will randomly observe classrooms or enclosed areas where the "Rule of Three" is practiced.
    c. During scheduled classes or events, group leaders should know where the youth/vulnerable adults are at all times.
    d. If a young person/vulnerable adult leaves an event without permission, the parents/guardian will be called immediately.
    e. Cadets, G.E.M.S., or Vulnerable Adult participants should not arrive more than ten minutes before the start of the class. No counselor shall keep a Cadet or G.E.M.S. or vulnerable adult alone for more than ten minutes after the end of the program.
    f. Any Cadet or G.E.M.S. or vulnerable adult activities away from the church facility, out of town, or overnight should be conducted in compliance with the policies stated above and in accordance with the Transportation Policy. Counselors or designated volunteers transporting a participant must have parental permission to do so, via a signed consent form. (The number of passengers in any vehicle will not exceed the number of safety belts in use.)
    g. **BOUNDARIES:** Appropriate displays of affection between counselors and/or volunteers for youth or vulnerable adult programs and any participant are often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another. Such displays of affection should be limited to actions like a brief hug (lasting no more than 1 – 2 seconds), an arm around the shoulder, an open-handed pat on the back, a handshake or fist pump. All parties have the right to refuse and must be respected.

Guidelines for Pastoral Visitation

Spiritual Guidance Policy

- **Your Church Name CRC** only provides Spiritual guidance, shepherding and pastoral care.
- **Your Church Name CRC** does not provide professional counseling or employ professional counselors.
- Should professional counseling be required, recommended, or requested, "Congregational Assistance Plan" information will be provided.

Formal pastoral care is carried out by church representatives - ministers, elders, deacons, or a pastoral care team, on behalf of the church community. Such care is an important ministry of the church, reflecting the love, compassion, and presence of Christ to those who participate in the ministries of the church.

Some forms of pastoral care involve one-on-one visitation, such as with those who are experiencing a time of suffering or grief, with those who are housebound, or with those in the hospital. In these cases, pastoral visits are made to offer spiritual friendship, help, support, and contact with the community of faith. These visits may include practical help, giving information, and/or supporting people as they make difficult decisions. Listening well is fundamental to all good pastoral care.

The following guidelines are provided to ensure safe and healthy practices of pastoral visitation:

1. All pastoral care visitors must have taken the annual Safe Church Policy Training and have signed the Code of Conduct.
2. Pastoral care visits should be conducted in the morning, afternoon, or early evening.
3. Pastoral care visits may be done 1:1 if both parties agree to meet in private location. If not comfortable meeting in private, the visit must be done in public setting.
4. If a pastoral care visitor meets alone (1:1) with a congregant, the visit must be reported/recorded at the following Elder or Deacon meeting.
5. In the interest of confidentiality, all records of pastoral care visits should be kept securely on the church premises. Records should be minimal, including the name of the person visited, the date, and a brief indication of the reason for the visit.
6. When a pastoral care visitor believes the person being visited may have a 'dementia-like' condition, a "visitors book" (with the name of the visitor(s), address of church, and contact info) may be left at the residence.
7. All pastoral care visitors will honour the limits of their role in giving care, referring congregants as the situation requires to the services of counselors, spiritual directors, and others who are better trained and resourced to meet a congregant's needs.
8. The Pastoral Care Team, and Council Executive is responsible for overseeing that risk is being assessed and these pastoral care guidelines are properly adhered to. In situations of concerns, the Safe Church team can be consulted.

Responding to Abuse

A. Reporting/Responding to Disclosures & Allegations of Abuse of Minors or Vulnerable Adults

1. All suspicions/allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and be handled confidentially.
2. There are two legal duties to report under the Child and Family Services Act of Ontario

Mandated Reporting for Children

The **Child and Family Services Act** (C.F.S.A.) (2017) is the legislation that, among other goals, seeks to protect children from abuse and neglect. Specific clauses within it require the reporting of child abuse and neglect by the general public and, in a more rigorous way, by the professional public. This mandate to report child abuse relates to the church in 2 ways:

Your Church Namely, any member of a church community falls under the general "duty to report" which states, "Secondly, there are special responsibilities imposed on professionals and officials by Section 68.3 which states:

> Professionals in the church context would include clergy and others employed to work with children and youth.
>
> Section 81 of the C.F.S.A. goes on to say that a professional who fails to act and report abuse is guilty of an offense and on conviction is liable to a fine of up to $1000.00.

"Every person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be in need of protection must report promptly the belief and the information upon which it is based to a children's aid society." (Child and Family Services Act {C.F.S.A} Section 68.2)

"A professional who in the course of his/her duties with respect to a complainant has reasonable grounds to suspect that a complainant is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse shall report forthwith the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a children's aid society."

Abuse, for the purposes of reporting, includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, failure to protect a person from abuse, and failure to obtain medical treatment.

There are several comments that pertain to the church's role in Mandated Reporting.

Your Church Name, as a church worker you are protected from liability if you report child abuse. The professionals' duty to report overrides the provisions of any other provincial statute, specifically those provisions that would otherwise prohibit disclosure by the professional or official. The only privilege not subject to the reporting law is that between a solicitor and his client.

Second, on close examination, the Act says if you have reasonable grounds to suspect abuse you must report. Reasonable grounds are not defined in the Child and Family Services Act and require your professional judgment. Reporting child abuse is a serious matter, and it is understandable that one would seek the greatest possible clarity prior to making a report. However, what is clearly required in the report is a suspicion of child abuse, not proof. You do not need to conduct an investigation. You do not need to find proof or even be sure about child abuse before calling Children's Aid Society (CAS) is mandated to investigate all allegations of child abuse. It is up to the child welfare investigator to determine whether child abuse actually occurred, is occurring, or may occur.

Responding to Abuse

Third, the phrase "shall forthwith report the suspicion" means that the report must be made immediately. The church must ensure an effective communication system so that reports are never delayed. Church workers must know how to access the Children's Aid Society in their local areas.

Fourth, under the regulations, only the CAS or the police may question the alleged victim or offender so that the investigation may proceed unhindered. Pastoral support is appropriate. Cooperation with the CAS worker is an ideal to be sought.

In case of uncertainty about a duty to report, church representatives can consult with the Children's Aid Society by phone, on a confidential basis if necessary.

Complete an incident reporting form for suspected abuse referring to the guidelines in responding to abuse.

The program leader and one member of council executive shall be notified of any allegation or reasonable suspicion of abuse. If the accused is the program leader, then report directly to the council executive.

Council Responsibilities:

a. Satisfy statutory legal obligations by reporting all cases of suspected abuse to police authorities and/or child protective agencies.

b. Consult a lawyer for advice.

c. Without admitting legal liability express **Your Church Name CRC's** concern to the complainant and their families and assure them of our commitment in assisting the investigation.

d. Assure confidentiality for the benefit of both the alleged victim and the accused person.

e. Immediately suspend the accused person from ministry duties without presuming guilt, pending the outcome of a police investigation.

f. Avoid public statements to individuals, the media or from the pulpit, without first obtaining legal counsel.

g. The appointed Media Relations (Executive Council) person must make all statements.

h. Contact **Your Church Name CRC's** insurance agent or broker to report the incident in order to satisfy the statutory conditions of the liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage response.

Resource Available: Classis Abuse Response Team

How to Report Abuse

1. If a minor or vulnerable adult is in immediate physical danger (either on church property or off the property) then the police (911) should be notified immediately.
2. Neither the ministry leader/volunteer nor the Safe Church Team leader will try to investigate the abuse concerns. Additionally, they will not seek to notify the alleged offender of the allegations against him or her. These tasks should be left to the police and/or CAS.
3. The Safe Church Team leader should inform the pastor and chair of council of the concerns or allegations of abuse. Note that confidentiality is important in all cases of abuse but especially when a minor is involved.
4. If the abuse happened during a church/ministry-sponsored activity or by a ministry leader/volunteer, in addition to ensuring that the police and/or CAS have been contacted, the Safe Church Team leader shall notify the church's insurance agent and legal counsel.
5. Together with the pastor and the Executive council, the Safe Church Team leader will develop a plan for responding to the abuse in ways that provide care for the one who has been victimized by abuse and respects the dignity of all involved. The plan will include:
    a. Putting the ministry leader on administrative leave with or without pay (or suspending a volunteer) for up to 90 days or until the conclusion of the investigation, whichever is sooner.
    b. Providing support and care for the minor and their family. This should be done in a way that puts the needs of the minor and his/her family first.
    c. Determining who will be the primary contact with the police and/or CPS/CAS.
    d. Determining how to deal with media inquiries.
    e. Contacting the classical Safe Church Coordinator and/or the denominational Safe Church Ministry (safechurchministry@crcna.org) for further counsel.
6. After the accused has been contacted by the authorities and the investigation is underway, the Council will not contact the accused until such time the investigation has concluded.
7. If the accused is found guilty or admits guilt, the Executive Council may
    (1) subject a determined abuser (hereafter abuser) to further suspension, deposition, or termination of employment, or
    (2) take such other action against the abuser, as the circumstances may dictate.
8. Should the determined abuser be an office bearer, the elders will follow the specifications for ***Admonition and Discipline*** as noted in the Church Order [Supplements] 2020, **Articles** 82-84 *(p 98-101)*.
9. Subject to the best interest of the person victimized by abuse, the governing body should notify the congregation, in writing, if they conclude that a church leader has perpetrated abuse. This notice should protect the identity and confidentiality of any innocent parties, including the person who was victimized by abuse. This written communication should be pastoral, succinct, and objectively factual. Referencing public police reports, charges, or court verdicts may be used.
10. If law enforcement decides not to investigate or charge an adult leader of the congregation who has been accused of abusing a child or vulnerable adult, an independent investigation should be considered in consultation with legal counsel and Safe Church Ministry.

B. Responding to Allegations of Abuse of Adults:

If an adult (the claimant) reports abuse to a member of a Safe Church Team, the pastor, or a member of the council, the Safe Church team leader, the pastor, and the Executive council will do the following:

1. Assign the claimant an assigned advocate who can walk alongside, support, and represent the claimant throughout the reporting and investigation process.
2. Meet with the claimant and/or the advocate to hear the complaint, the impact it has had on the complainant and what the claimant feels needs to happen for them to feel safe at **First CRC** again. The claimant may present their testimony orally but should also submit their statement in writing or alternatively, an incident report can be filled out at the meeting and signed by the claimant. The written statement or incident report will be kept in a confidential, locked location in the church office.
3. Suspend the accused from their duties without prejudice until the allegations have been investigated.
4. Based on the information gathered,
   a. If a criminal act, report directly to Police. Police will advise next steps.
   b. If not a criminal act, develop a plan for assessing the veracity of the allegations. Ordinarily, the plan will involve at least one of the following processes:
      - an informal response led by a designated investigation team who meets with the accused to follow up on the allegations. The conversation shall include:
        i. a report of the event as the claimant experienced it
        ii. an account of how the claimant was impacted by the accused's actions
        iii. an opportunity for the accused to respond to the allegations
        iv. a request that the accused not contact the claimant directly until further notice.
        v. a report of the conversation, detailing the accused's response that is filed with the incident report.
      - An advisory panel process exploring the gravity and probability of the allegations of abuse (the classical Safe Church Coordinator or the denominational Safe Church Ministry office is available to help assemble the panel)
      - An independent investigation into the allegations of abuse (the denominational Safe Church Ministry office will keep a list of reputable investigators). It is strongly recommended that councils make use of a third-party investigator when:
        i. The accused is a prominent leader in the community or region such that impartiality is especially elusive.
        ii. The accusations consist of multiple victims or multiple jurisdictions.
        iii. Real or perceived conflicts of interest make impartiality especially elusive.
      - If the accused is an office bearer, the elders/council will follow the Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader and include the church visitors in their initial deliberations about the best way forward.

5. Based on the information gathered (and the recommendations of the informal investigation team, the advisory panel or the third-party investigators), the Safe Church Team leader, claimant's advocate, pastor, and Executive council will determine a plan of action for responding to abuse. If the allegations are found credible, the plan will include:
    a. A determination of appropriate measures of discipline and opportunities for restoration. This could include suspension of church leadership for a period of time, counseling, abuse of power training, mentoring, oversight and accountability, a written apology to the claimant, or if an office bearer is involved, deposition.
    b. A plan for providing ongoing care and accountability for the accused.
    c. A plan for providing ongoing care and support for the claimant.
    d. Provisions for counseling for the claimant.
    e. If the claimant desires, an opportunity to participate in a restorative conversation with members of the council, members of the church, and/or, the accused (Information on Restorative Circle Processes may be found at crcna.org/safechurch/restorative).
6. Throughout the process, every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality and dignity of the claimant and the accused.
7. The classical Safe Church Coordinator and the denomination Safe Church Ministry office are available for support, counsel, and resources throughout the process.

Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse – School Age

Note: Children rarely exhibit just one sign indicating that they are the victims of abuse. Some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes, or the after-effect of other kinds of trauma in their lives. Conversely, it is possible for abuse to be taking place without the appearance of any symptoms because of the child's ability to mask or deny what is very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, several symptoms appearing at once may be an indication of abuse.

- Complaints of pain, irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom; smearing feces on walls or objects
- Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck; failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort; hiding bruises
- Unusual fears: a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences
- Poor concentration in classroom; inability to focus
- Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviours, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing
- Engaging in self-injury, engaging in excessive masturbation or masturbation in a public setting
- Acting enraged and out of control; expressing anger through destruction
- Shyness or fear about physical touch
- Exhibiting sexual behaviour beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in a sexual manner with other children or adults
- Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations; bullying others
- Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions
- Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting
- Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events because of being punished
- Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism
- Hyper-vigilance, excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled
- Preoccupation with fire and setting fires
- Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight

Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse from a Child

For informational purposes, the following set of guidelines pertains to information that a child may wish to disclose to an adult.

1. If a child asks to talk with you at church, provide a room (with a window) in which to speak privately.
2. Listen carefully to what the child tells you and respond in a supportive, non-judgmental manner. Disclosing abuse is a scary thing for children, and they need to know they are supported.
3. Do not appear frightened or disgusted by the child's story, since this may cause the child to stop talking or to believe you are upset with him or her.
4. Avoid asking leading questions. Examples of what you could say: "Can you tell me more?" "Is there anything you need to add?" Do not try to convince the child that the story isn't true or that it didn't happen the way he or she reports it did.
5. Do not attempt to assess the truthfulness of the child's disclosure—that will be for trained professionals to decide. Assure the child you believe him/her and that you care about him/her.
6. Tell the child that whatever happened was not his or her fault and reassure the child that he/she does not deserve to be hurt by anyone.
7. Do not tell or suggest to the child that he or she has been abused.
8. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.
9. Do not promise to keep this to yourself. Tell the child that you need to find help so the incident can be prevented from happening again.
10. Do not frighten the child by talking about police involvement or medical examinations to verify the complaint. Instead, share with the child that other people need to know what happened and that they may want to talk to the child later.
11. Do not ask the child to show you any bruises that are beneath the child's underwear or clothing; observe only those bruises that are accessible.
12. If you feel comfortable doing so, speak to the child and offer support in the following weeks and months.

Confidentiality

In order to protect the dignity and well-being of any person who has been victimized by abuse, it is important that their identity is kept confidential. The following measures are implemented to protect the privacy of all parties and to ensure that information about any alleged act is limited to essential persons:

A. Need-to-Know: Those positions in the "need-to-know" category include the following:
    - Chair of council
    - Pastor
    - Pastoral Care Elders for the claimant and accused
    - Safe Church Team/Abuse Prevention and Response Team.

B. Situations of abuse involving minors or vulnerable adults require sensitive care and full transparency with law enforcement investigations. In situations of abuse involving minors or vulnerable adults, there shall be a designated Safe Church Team member, pastor, or elder who consults the CRCNA Safe Church Ministry or a Classis Safe Church Coordinator [Coordinator Email: cq-sc-coordinator@outlook.com].

C. The names and information in any abuse allegations shall be limited to the positions listed in paragraph (A) above. Any request to release names of any involved party must be first cleared by the congregation's legal counsel.

D. Discussion by Council or Committees of Council shall be conducted without the actual names of involved persons being used. Instead, descriptions such as "reporter", "alleged offender", and "claimant" shall be used.

E. A liaison between the legal authorities or Child Protective Services/Children's Aid Society and the church staff/council will be appointed.

F. After law enforcement has officially charged someone of a crime or after a legal decision has been made, there will be a communication outlining ways that the church and community may be able to move forward with respect and responsible ways to process the harm within the congregation and community.

CRC Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders

"Ministry leaders" are all office-bearers (ordained ministers, commissioned pastors, elders, and deacons), CRCNA staff members, and members of the Council of Delegates. Local church councils are also encouraged to regard all church staff (whether or not they are ordained) and volunteers who are providing leadership in the church as ministry leaders.

Ministry leaders have been empowered by God and the church to serve the body of Christ for good. They are called to resist all temptations to abuse their power through the misuse of position, authority, or influence.

Abuse of power is often defined as misusing power to harm another person or using power and influence to take unjust advantage of another person. All abuse by ministry leaders within the church is also spiritual abuse and has spiritual impacts that often heighten the harm caused to individuals and to the family of God. For more on the use and misuse of power, see the report of the Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee (Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 587-615).

As a ministry leader, I will, to the best of my ability, commit to the following:

RELATIONSHIPS

1. I will speak and act, in all my personal and professional relations, in ways that follow the pattern of Christ, who used his power to serve (1 Pet. 5; Mark 10; Phil. 2; 2 Tim. 4:2).
2. I will respect, love, and treat with integrity and truthfulness people of every position, status, race, ethnicity, gender, age, or ability.
3. I will maintain appropriate emotional, physical, and sexual boundaries in all relationships.
4. I will keep all my relationships free from inappropriate, unwanted physical contact, emotional or sexual intimacy, sexual comments, gestures, or jokes.

SAFETY

1. I will actively promote a welcoming and respectful environment where all persons are treated with dignity and value, and where any form of abuse, bullying, or harassment is neither tolerated nor allowed to take place.
2. I will report known or suspected cases of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect of minors or vulnerable adults to the proper authorities.
3. I will support those who disclose physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in a way that empowers the person who has been victimized to seek out justice and healing.

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

1. I will promote truthfulness, transparency, and honesty in all of my work.
2. I will use my power, authority, and position to build up the community of believers and seek first the kingdom of God.
3. I will work within my trained competence, especially in counseling situations, and I will refer individuals to other professionals as appropriate.
4. I will preach, teach, admonish, or discipline in ways that are biblical and Christlike, promoting the shalom and flourishing of those to whom I am ministering (2 Tim. 3:16).
5. I will refrain in my pastoral care and counseling from using references to Scripture or God to manipulate, coerce, or threaten another person.
6. I will disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest.

CRC Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders

CONFIDENTIALITY

1. I will maintain and uphold confidentiality appropriately, which means I will hold in confidence whatever information is not mine to share.
2. I will not use information shared with me in confidence in order to elevate my position or to depreciate that of others.

FINANCES

1. I will ensure that funds, for which I am responsible or under my control, are used for their intended ministry purposes.
2. I will act with scrupulous honesty, transparency, and appropriate accountability in all financial matters, including the acceptance of gifts.
3. I will appropriately use and encourage accepted accounting practices and regular reviews and/or audits of ministry funds.

In the event that I misuse my power, either intentionally or unintentionally, in my dealings with others, in word or deed—if I fail "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly" (Mic. 6:8) as outlined in the Scriptures and our confessions—I will acknowledge the harm that has been caused and the trust that has been broken, and I will actively seek restoration with justice, compassion, truth, and grace. I will humbly submit to the insight and accountability of the body that implements this ***Code of Conduct*** to ensure that I use any power entrusted to me fully in service to Christ.

In the beautiful hope of Christ's transforming work, in all I do, I will seek to use my position, power, and authority prudently and humbly to support and encourage all the members of his body in my care.

Name (printed)	Signature	Role within Church	Date
		Choose a Role.	
		Choose a Role.	
		Choose a Role.	
		Choose a Role.	
		Choose a Role.	
		Choose a Role.	
		Choose a Role.	
		Choose a Role.	
		Choose a Role.	
		Choose a Role.	
		Choose a Role.	

Children & Youth Worker Application Form

This application is to be completed by all adults in positions of power and/or who could have access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults. An interview may also be conducted.

Please CHECK ☑ the program(s) you are willing to serve, or will be serving with:

☐ Nursery ☐ Children's Message ☐ Sunday School

☐ GEMS/Cadet Groups ☐ Youth Group ☐ Other (VBS, etc.)

General Information:

FULL Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Street Address: _____ Town/City: _____

Postal Code: _____ ONTARIO _____

Email Address: _____

Do you regularly attend our worship services? Please check ☑ the appropriate box:

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, when did you start attending? (Approx. date) _____

Ministry Information:

Please share why you have chosen to work/volunteer in the ministries indicated above.
Briefly describe what it means to you to be a follower of Jesus Christ.
Briefly describe what it means to you to be Christ-like in your ministry responsibilities.

References:

List 2 references whom you have known for at least 2 years, persons who are not related to you but who have specific knowledge of your character and ability to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Reference #1 Name: _____

Email/Phone: _____

Nature of Association: _____

Length of Time Known: _____

Reference #2 Name: _____

Email/Phone: _____

Nature of Association: _____

Length of Time Known: _____

Personal Disclosure Information: Please check ☑ the appropriate response.

Have you ever been arrested, convicted, or plead guilty to a crime?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain: _____

Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the last 12 months?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is there any fact, circumstance, or pattern involving your background that would make it inappropriate for you to serve with minors or would compromise the integrity of the church?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain: _____

Have you ever participated in, or been accused, convicted, or pleaded guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain: _____

Church History and Prior Ministry Involvement:

List **previous church work/volunteer service** involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults (list church name, city, province, and type of work performed) if any:

List **previous non-church** work involving children, youth, or vulnerable (list each organization name, city, province, and type of work performed) if any:

Verification and Release:

I recognize that **Your Church Name CRC** is relying on the accuracy of the information I provide on the Volunteer/Worker Renewal Application form. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that the information I have provided is true and correct.

I voluntarily release the organization and any such person or entity listed on this form from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications.

I further authorize the organization will receive a criminal background and vulnerable sector screening, if such information is deemed necessary.

I agree to abide by all policies and procedures of **Your Church Name CRC,** and to protect the health and safety of the children, youth or vulnerable adults assigned to my care or supervision at all times.

Printed Name _____

Signature _____

Date Completed Click or tap to enter a date.

Criminal Background And Vulnerable Sector Screening

Important: A criminal background and vulnerable sector screening must be completed on persons who receive pay or stipend from **Your Church Name CRC** and on every volunteer who could have access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

I authorize the release of any information which pertains to any record of convictions contained in law enforcement files or in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, provincial, or federal.

Printed Name _____

Maiden Name (if applicable) _____

Signature _____

Date of Birth (M/D/Y) _____

NOTE:

When a criminal background and vulnerable sector screening is received, the original will be kept in a locked file indefinitely and a copy (if requested) will be given to the applicant.

A criminal background and vulnerable sector screening that reveals an arrest or conviction will be kept in strict confidentiality.

Children & Youth Worker Renewal Form

Volunteers and Employees

Full Name: _____ Daytime Phone #: _____

Street Address: _____ Town/City: _____

Postal Code: _____ Ontario _____

Email Address: _____

Are you....

☐ 18 or younger ☐ 19 - 25 ☐ 26 - 45 ☐ 46 or older

Which area(s) of this ministry are you currently involved?

What other areas of this ministry, if any, do you plan to become involved?

Have you at any time ever:

Been arrested for any reason? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest to any crime? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Engaged in, or been accused of child molestation, exploitation, or abuse? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you aware of having any traits or tendencies that could pose any threat to children, youth, or others?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," please explain in detail:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Verification and Release:

I recognize that Your Church Name CRC is relying on the accuracy of the information I provide on the Worker Renewal Application form. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that the information I have provided is true and correct.

I voluntarily release the organization and any such person or entity listed on this form from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications. I further authorize Your Church Name CRC to conduct a criminal background check, if such a check is deemed necessary.

I agree to abide by all policies and procedures of Your Church Name CRC and to protect the health and safety of the children, youth or vulnerable adults assigned to my care or supervision at all times.

Printed Name _____

Signature _____

Date Completed Click or tap to enter a date. _____

PLEASE RETURN this form to the
Office Administrator
Thank you!

Participation & Release Form

Registration form for Church Group Activities *(e.g., Gems, Cadets, Youth)*

We (I) give permission for our (my) child(ren), _____

to participate in Your Church Name CRC youth ministry events during the months

of **Insert start Month/Year** _____ to **Insert end Month/Year** _____

.In addition, we (I) hereby agree to hold harmless the church or any person in its organization for the result of any negligent, willful, or intentional acts by our (my) child(ren) which requires repair and/or reimbursement of expenses. Further, authorization and permission are given to Your Church Name CRC to furnish the above participant with any necessary food, lodging, and transportation to, from, and during any event which may or may not include student-driven vehicles.

While our (my) child is attending an event, we (I) understand and accept that Your Church Name CRC will provide supervision. Further, we (I), the parent(s)/guardian(s) of said participant(s), hereby grant permission to the pastor, youth leader, or an adult volunteer acting on the child's behalf to authorize medical treatment, including but not limited to emergency surgery or medical treatment. In the event of sickness or injury to our (my) child(ren), we (I) assume responsibility for all medical bills, if any occur.

Further, if it is necessary for our (my) child(ren) to return home due to medical reasons or disciplinary action, we (I) assume all transportation costs.

Address: _____ Street No. & Name _____ _____ Town/City _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature _____

Date Completed _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Ontario Health Insurance Number _____

Physician: _____

Phone Number: _____

Emergency Contact Name _____

Phone Number _____

Relationship to Youth _____

Participation & Release Form

ALTERNATIVE CONTACTS:

Please list below any other person(s) who may be called upon to drop off/pick up your child(ren).

Contact Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Relationship to Youth: _____

Contact Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Relationship to Youth: _____

MEDICAL CONDITIONS/ALLERGIES

Does your child/youth have any (life-threatening) medical conditions/allergies that we should be made aware of?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide condition/allergy with treatment information (if applicable).

CONDITION/ALLERGY	TREATMENT

PHOTO & MEDIA RELEASE FORM

I grant permission to Your Church Name CRC to use photos, videos, or other media of my children in the following ways: Your Church Name CRC website, Facebook page, PowerPoint presentations, and bulletin boards.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date Completed: _____

Accident Reporting Form

Name of Person(s) Involved _____

Address of Person(s) Involved _____

Date of Incident Click or tap to enter a date. Time of Incident _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

(If applicable)
Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Location of Accident
(Be specific) _____

Description of Accident (i.e., how injured, others involved, type of injury, etc.):

Action Taken:

Report Submitted By: _____ Date: Click or tap to enter a date.

Report Reviewed by
(Safe Church Team Member) _____

Please return this form to the church office

Incident Reporting Form

For any ***injury on church property*** or ***suspected abuse***

Date of Incident Click or tap to enter a date. Time of Incident _____

Location _____

Name of Person(s) Involved _____

Address of Person(s) Involved _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Name of Witness _____ Phone: _____

Address _____

Location of Incident
(Be specific) _____

Description of Incident (i.e., how injured, others involved, type of injury/abuse, etc.):

Action Taken:

Persons Notified:

Suggested Future Prevention:

Signature: _____

Please place the completed form in a confidential mailbox outside the church office.
This report must be forwarded to Chair of Council

Incident Reporting Form

Additional Notes

