

Alto CRC Abuse Prevention and Safety Guidelines
(for distribution to all staff and volunteers)

Adopted by Alto CRC Council February 2019

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS:

1. Volunteers must do a mandatory yearly review of the Alto CRC Abuse Prevention and Safety Guidelines, as amended from time to time, and be willing to submit to a criminal background check.
2. If a person is suspected of child abuse, then he/she must take a leave of absence from their work in this capacity 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.
3. Sexual, physical or emotional abuse of a parishioner by a volunteer or church leader will not be tolerated.

DISCIPLINE POLICY:

1. Corporal punishment is not permitted. Corporal punishment includes, but is not limited to, slapping, hitting, pushing or grabbing in an aggressive manner.
2. Abusive verbal discipline is not permitted. Abusive verbal discipline includes, but is not limited to, hurling insults, verbally embarrassing a child, and threatening a child.
3. Parent(s) are to be informed and involved whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehaviour increases.
4. An aide or a parent should be involved weekly in classrooms where misbehaviour is an ongoing problem.
5. Expectations of children's/youth's behaviour must reflect their age and level of comprehension. Similarly, discipline must reflect their age and level of comprehension.
6. Children are to be reminded of the kind of behaviour that is acceptable for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

1. Whenever sunday school classes involving minors are in session, free access with an open door or open barrier must be maintained, so that the class may be clearly seen and heard by those passing by.

2. Only adults may assist children with bathroom needs. If the child does not require assistance, the adult must remain outside the bathroom door. If the child does require assistance, the adult is to leave the bathroom door ajar. Children will be encouraged to use bathroom facilities before and after class.

3. Children should not leave the classroom except for illness, to use the bathroom, or other compelling reasons.

4. Appropriate display of affection is often a part of conveying support and encouragement to one another. Displays of affection between teacher and student should be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open handed pat on the back, a handclasp or handshake, or a light touch on the forearm. Displays of affection should be restricted to public areas. A student's or teacher's right to refuse any of these must be respected.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

This policy applies to adults, while servicing in ministry to youth, who may transport non-related youth in the course of church-sponsored programs.

At least two of the following procedures must be in place:

1. Two adults are present and seated in the front of the vehicle when transporting youth
2. At least two youth are present in the vehicle
3. Youth are seated in the back seats of the vehicle

Adults must have a valid driver's licence and proof of insurance before transporting youth.

Drivers need to abide by state and provincial requirements for car seat use, seatbelt use and airbag safety.

Youth are to wear seat belts whenever the vehicle is in service. Drivers may not transport more youths than available seatbelts. This does not apply to busses without seat belts.

Where required by law, car seats must be available for younger children.

For safety, youth under the age of 12 may not sit in the front seat if there is a passenger-side airbag.

Adult or minor *family members* who transport youth to church-sponsored events are not subject to this policy.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE:

1. When volunteers, staff, or leaders observe signs and symptoms of abuse or have an incidence of abuse reported to them, they shall immediately report this to the senior pastor or to a church council member. If the alleged victim is a child, the first-hand reporter may report the suspected abuse or the incident directly to Children's Protective Services. They must complete an ALTO CRC Report of Possible Child Maltreatment. These steps should be taken within 24 hours.

2. Volunteers, staff, or leaders should never attempt to interview the child in question about any signs or symptoms and must never suggest to the child that they have been abused.

3. For more details on these processes and procedures, please review Alto CRC's *Abuse Awareness, Prevention, and Response Policy*.

MANDATORY SIGNATORIES

All individuals employed by Alto Christian Reformed Church are required to read, sign, and date this policy and the Abuse Prevention and Safety Guidelines. By signing below, they verify that they have read and understood this policy and the following appendix completely.

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: / /

APPENDIX
WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE: WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN ABUSE IS OCCURRING

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse often leaves marks, and can be easier to identify than sexual or emotional abuse or neglect.

Physical Indicators

Unexplained bruises and welts are the most frequent evidence found:

- often of the face, torso, buttocks, back, or thighs;
- can reflect shape of object used (electric cord, belt buckle);
- may be in various stages of healing.

Unexplained burns:

- often on palms, soles, buttocks, and back;
- can reflect pattern indicative of cigarette, cigar, electrical appliance, immersion or rope burn.

Other unexplained injuries:

- lacerations, abrasions, human bite marks or pinch marks; -loss of hair/bald patches;
- retinal hemorrhage;
- abdominal injuries.

Behavioural Indicators

- Requests or feels deserving of physical punishment;
- Afraid to go home and/or requests to stay in school, day care etc.;
- Overly shy, tends to avoid physical contact with adults especially parents;
- Displays behavioural extremes (withdrawal or aggression);
- Suggests that other children be punished in a harsh manner;
- Cries excessively and/or sits and stares;
- Reports injury by parent;
- Gives unbelievable explanations for injuries.

Sexual Abuse

Unfortunately, many children do not report this form of abuse. They rely on adults to be aware of specific physical and behavioural indicators. A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing sexual abuse. Remember, the most reliable indicator of child abuse is the child's verbal disclosure.

Physical Indicators:

- Somatic complaints, including pain and irritation of the genitals;
- Sexually transmitted disease;

- Pregnancy in young adolescents;
- Frequent unexplained sore throats, yeast infections, or urinary infections.

Behavioural Indicators:

- Excessive masturbation in young children;
- Sexual knowledge of behaviour beyond that expected for the child's age;
- Depression, suicidal gesture;
- Chronic runaway;
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints, such as headaches and stomach-aches;
- Drug or alcohol abuse;
- Avoidance of undressing or wearing excessive layers of clothing;
- Sudden avoidance of certain familiar adults or places;
- Marked decline in school performance.

Emotional Abuse

The signs of emotional abuse may be less obvious than other forms of maltreatment. Emotional abuse is suspected when a child exhibits impaired development, destructive behaviour, or chronic somatic complaints that cannot be explained medically or circumstantially. A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing emotional abuse.

Physical Indicators

- Eating disorders;
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares;
- Wetting or soiling by school-age children;
- Speech disorder, stuttering;
- Failure to thrive;
- Development lags;
- Asthma, severe allergies, or ulcers.

Behavioural Indicators

- Habit disorders, such as biting, rocking, head banging, thumb sucking in an older child; -Poor peer relationships;
- Behavioural extremes (overly compliant or demanding, withdrawn or aggressive); -Self-destructive behaviour, oblivious to hazards and risks;
- Chronic academic under-achievement;
- Irrational and persistent fears, dreads, or hatreds.

Signs of Neglect

A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing neglect. Keep in mind; however, that cultural standards which differ from those prevailing in a community are not necessarily neglect.

Physical Indicators

- Height and weight significantly below age level with no plausible explanation; wildly inappropriate clothing for weather;
- Poor hygiene, including lice, body odour, scaly skin;
- Child abandoned or left with inadequate supervision;
- Untreated illness or injury;
- Lack of safe, warm, sanitary shelter;
- Lack of necessary medical and dental care.

Behavioural Indicators

- Begging or stealing food;
- Assumes adult responsibilities;
- Falling asleep in school, lethargic;
- Repeated acts of vandalism;
- Poor school attendance, frequent tardiness;
- Chronic hunger;
- Dull, apathetic appearance;
- Running away from home;
- Reports no caretaker in the home.