

Abuse/Harassment Prevention Policy

Dawson Community Chapel

Dawson City, Yukon

1. Introduction:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to be involved in Christian ministry at Dawson Community Chapel. However with this privilege comes the responsibility of all involved to embody the principles they teach (James 3:1). Therefore, it is imperative that the highest level of moral behavior be observed by all involved in this ministry (Ephesians 3-7, 2 Cor-inthians 5: 17-20). It is with this in mind that the following guidelines are given.

Our desire is to prevent any abusive behavior from occurring. We also wish to do all that is possible to protect our workers (staff and volunteers) from false allegations. This policy covers all those in position of authority, which includes leadership, counseling, or instructing of other persons.

2. Policy:

Dawson Community Chapel ("the church") is committed to providing an environment free from harassment. All allegations of misconduct and harassment will be treated very seriously. The church will take appropriate disciplinary action against any member, adherent, or volunteer staff who subjects another employee or volunteer to any form of harassment.

If the pastor is not able to fulfill the roles prescribed in this document, the church will designate someone to take his place. The name of a reporter or circumstance related to the report will only be disclosed to the extent that it is necessary for the purpose of investigating the report or taking disciplinary measures. Any person filing a complaint can be assured that their privacy will be protected and respected. They can also be assured that anyone filing a complaint against any person who violates the policy will be supported.

The church takes especially seriously our duty to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children. Therefore, special care will be given to the minors who are entrusted to us in the various programs and outreach events sponsored by the church. All staff and volunteers will be on the alert to any possible areas which may cause a child/youth to suffer from any form of abuse. It is our intent that the minors be protected from any harm and that our staff and volunteers are also protected from false and wrongful allegation. Any serious allegation will immediately be brought to the proper authorities.

3. Definition of abuse:

3.1 Abuse consists of physical or verbal violation of a person's dignity, body or well-being.

3.2 Our policy covers three kinds of abuse: verbal, sexual, and physical

3.2.1 Verbal abuse includes denigrating or degrading another individual through comments or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome or hurtful.

3.2.2. Physical abuse includes any act that willfully causes pain such as

slapping, punching, or engaging in any forceful act which in any way victimizes another.

3.2.3 Sexual abuse includes suggestive behavior, invading body boundaries, and any touching that is used to express power or control over another individual.

4. Criteria for working with minors:

4.1 Workers involved with children and youth shall meet the following criteria:

4.1.1 Every worker must be

4.1.1.1. at least sixteen years of age or older

4.1.1.2 must be a professing Christian

4.1.1.3 must exhibit Christ-like qualities in his/her life

4.1.1.4 must be in harmony with the doctrines, policies, and practices of the church

4.1.1.5 must be faithful in attendance.

4.1.2 Assistants to workers must be at least thirteen years of age, must be persons of good repute within the community, and must exhibit a cooperative attitude. This minimum age may be varied according to local situations, e.g., when assistants and parents are known to each other, but in no case should the worker be less than twelve years old.

4.1.3 No person is eligible to serve as a worker or assistant until he or she has been a member or adherent of the church for at least six months. During that period of time, the person will become familiar with church doctrine and procedure and will exhibit a lifestyle that indicates a commitment to live by Biblical principles. An exception to this six month rule will be made for a hired pastor or any other individual who comes to fill a specific position and has been pre-screened to our screening standard. Written confirmation shall be obtained and kept on file.

4.1.4 At no time shall a person who has been guilty of sexual abuse to involved in ministry with minors.

5. Screening process for those working with minors:

5.1 To protect the children/youth in the care of the church, every leader and volunteer will be subject to a strict screening process.

5.1.1. All will undergo a Criminal Record Check. Unwillingness to submit to a CRC will render the individual ineligible for child and youth ministries. All those over thirteen who desire to be volunteers will also undergo the CRC. The CRCs are to be repeated as required for insurance purposes.

5.1.2. All will undergo yearly abuse prevention training.

5.1.3. All will be asked to read and sign the church abuse policy annually to indicate their willingness to abide by this standard. (See appendix 1)

5.2 Workers shall be further screened in two categories:

5.2.1 Category 1: Those who meet the six-month requirement

5.2.2 Category 2: Those who have been long-term members or adherents prior to their beginning work.

5.3 Screening for Category 1:

5.3.1 Workers must complete an application form (See appendix 2) which includes a list of previous church affiliations and ministries. Applicants will provide three references which will be contacted and asked to confirm or comment on the information given by the applicant. The pastor will make these contacts and will make a written summary of the reference's comments to be placed in a confidential file along with the CRC and other relevant information. At the pastor's discretion, the applicant may be asked to undergo fingerprinting.

5.3.2 If, after the initial investigation, the pastor has reason to believe the individual should not be allowed to work with children, he will consult with the district superintendent of EFCC. If they are in agreement, the individual will be asked not to work in a children/youth ministry. The pastor shall not be required to give any explanation for the decision made except to the person involved.

5.3.3 The applicant will undergo an interview with the pastor and one ministry leader in order to ask follow-up questions and enhance their knowledge of the applicant. The potential worker is encouraged to ask questions about any part of the prevention procedures or the ministries which he/she does not understand. Subsequent to a successful interview the applicant will be either approved or rejected.

5.3.4 If questions arise at any time in the entire process and there is a need for the department head or ministry leader to be informed of a matter, or if the pastor wishes to have further consultation with the leader to share information, the department head will regard the information given as confidential. If the offence in consideration is other than sexual abuse, the volunteer may proceed with ministry in the church provided that both the pastor and the department head/leader are in agreement. The following are criteria to be considered when evaluating the information:

5.3.4.1 Number and type of convictions

5.3.4.2 Age and circumstances of the offender at the time of offence

5.3.4.3 Length of time between past criminal activity and the present

5.3.4.4 Likelihood of the individual repeating the offence

5.3.4.5 Evidences of spiritual growth in the individual since the incident.

5.3.5 Applicant will be instructed by pastor or the department head regarding the abuse policy, going over each section thoroughly so there is clarity about its meaning and implications. This will be in addition to the regular training sessions held periodically.

5.4 Screening for category 2:

5.4.1 Those people who have been involved in church ministries for a period of years prior to the acceptance of this policy, who are members and adherents in good standing, will not be required to provide references.

5.4.2 A written recommendation by the pastor and the appropriate department head will be placed on file.

6. Confidentiality:

6.1 Every effort will be made to insure confidentiality of any information that is collected through interview, CRC, references, or any other means.

6.2 The information shall remain strictly confidential, filed in such a way that only the pastor has access to this information.

7. Training program for staff:

7.1 Provision shall be made for training of all workers with minors. These training sessions will be held yearly, in addition to the training done with new staff members.

7.2 The training may include any or all of the following:

7.2.1 Formal abuse prevention training through presentation of resource materials, videos, seminars, etc.

7.2.2 Educating workers to recognize and identify the signs and symptoms of abuse.

7.2.3 Each worker shall be provided with a handbook containing the abuse policy.

7.2.4 Periodic refresher training and reassessment of the abuse policy as deemed prudent.

7.2.5 Provide information on working with minors, including, but not limited to, the information found in appendix 3.

8. Operational procedures:

8.1 Programs that involve children and youth will always include adequate supervisory personnel.

8.2 Supervision shall be maintained at all times when children are under our care.

8.3 Department heads will be responsible for anticipating potentially awkward or threatening situations and will take appropriate precautionary measures as needed.

9. Maintaining a safe atmosphere:

9.1 No worker should be alone with a child or youth under the age of 18, especially not with one of the opposite sex.

9.2 When it is necessary for only one worker to be in a closed room with a group of children, windows in the door will serve the same as an open door.

10. Policy for special events and overnight excursions:
 - 10.1 Activities conducted away from the church property must be approved by a department head.
 - 10.2 Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in overnight trips.
 - 10.3 All activities must be supervised by a minimum of two approved adult leaders. Overnight trips with both boys and girls must be accompanied by a male and female leader.

11. Policy for Bible camp:
 - 11.1 Special screening circumstances:
 - 11.1.1 When summer missionaries come to the camp from SEND International of Alaska, the vetting process used by SEND will be considered as meeting our requirements.
 - 11.1.2 SEND International of Alaska will provide CRCs and any other appropriate documentation requested by the church or camp committee.
 - 11.1.3 Any other pre-screened group serving at camp must meet our screening standards.
 - 11.1.4 Any counselors sought independent of an organization such as SEND International must submit a written application with references, undergo a CRC, and comply with any other special screening procedures requested.
 - 11.2 Special circumstances directly related to camp situation:
 - 11.2.1 All children who attend camp will be required to have written consent and medical release forms signed by parent or guardian.
 - 11.2.2 All events taking place during the Bible camp will be under supervision of an approved leader from the church.
 - 11.2.3 In addition to the counselors, there will be adequate supervision provided by local church volunteers, a camp director, and a camp speaker. These individuals are to be responsible for seeing that the standard set by the abuse policy is maintained as well as creating a secure environment for both counselors and children.
 - 11.2.4 Before Bible camp begins, the summer missionary team will be instructed about our abuse policy and the standards we require. They will also be instructed in various ways to avoid allegations and to protect their own integrity. They will sign a policy agreement to indicate that they understand and accept the responsibility of adhering to it.
 - 11.3 In the event of an allegation of an incident occurring during camp:
 - 11.3.1 The allegation will be brought to the camp director who will be in charge of the preliminary investigation and who will report to the proper authorities where required.

11.3.2 As soon as it is practical, the pastor and department head will be notified, whether or not the allegation is founded.

11.3.3. A written record of the incident will be placed in the confidential file maintained by the pastor.

11.4 Allegations of abuse reported occurring outside the camp situation:

11.4.1 If a child reports to his/her counselor that abuse has occurred other than at camp, he/she will report it immediately to the camp director.

11.4.2 The camp director will notify social services in Dawson.

12. Procedures for responding to allegations of sexual abuse of a minor:

12.1 All allegations will be treated seriously and given prompt attention, reassuring the child or youth that he/she is not at fault.

12.2 Anyone receiving an allegation will promptly report it to the department head.

12.3 The minor making the accusation will be questioned only to ascertain the nature of the abuse.

12.4 The pastor will be informed immediately.

12.5 Anyone who believes on reasonable grounds that the minor is or may be in need of protection must report promptly the belief and the information upon which it is based to social services.

12.6 The accused will be treated with dignity and support. They should be temporarily relieved of duties until the investigation is complete.

12.7 The accused shall have no further contact with the child or youth until the matter has been resolved.

12.8 The incident will be documented and placed in a confidential file by the pastor.

13. Procedures for responding to physical abuse of minors:

13.1 Anyone 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 social services.

13.2 If an act occurs which meets the definition of physical abuse listed in section 3 above, that act will be addressed immediately and taken seriously.

13.3 If a physical assault by a leader has taken place against a child, the leader will be removed from duty while the matter is dealt with.

13.4 A written account of the incident will be made and a follow-up will be done to determine the abuser's suitability to return to children/youth ministry.

14. Procedures for responding to physical injury of minors:

14.1 If an injury occurs because of a leader's negligence or because of his/her direct action, the leader will be removed from duty until the matter has been dealt with.

14.2 If medical attention is needed or there is a possibility of a later complication from

the injury, the child will be taken to an appropriate facility for assessment and treatment.

14.3 Parents will be contacted immediately, the incident will be explained, the action taken will be related to them, and they will be asked if they desire further involvement or action.

14.4 Written records of all injuries, actions, and follow-up will be maintained and kept permanently in a confidential file.

15. Procedures for responding to verbal abuse of minors:

15.1 If anyone is alleged to have abused a child or youth verbally or is heard to have done so, following the guide set up in section 3 above, that act will be addressed immediately and taken seriously.

15.2 The leader will be removed from duty while the matter is dealt with.

15.3 Further action will depend upon the severity of the incident, involving a range from a temporary cooling off period to permanent suspension from working with minors.

16. Procedures for responding to allegations of abuse of an adult:

16.1 A person who brings an allegation of abuse to the pastor and who, in addition to or instead of legal procedures, wants to see the matter resolved in the church, shall have explained to him/her the Biblical procedure for conflict resolution according to Matthew 18.

16.2 The pastor will serve as arbitrator between the parties until there is resolution.

16.3 The person against whom there is a credible allegation of abuse will be relieved from leadership.

16.4 If a serious allegation is made against the pastor, the district superintendent of EFCC shall be notified and his intervention sought for the protection of the pastor and the church.