

# CHILD & YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Updated: January, 9 2018 by Mark Roslund & Kirsten Kroeker in agreement with the Elders

This Child & Youth Protection Policy has been designed to provide the greatest safety possible for the children that are served by Riverwood Church Community.

We recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care and we take our responsibility to them seriously. We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in our ministry to the whole family. All our guidelines are designed to protect and promote growth in God for each child and adult involved.

## 1. APPLICATION

Prior to being placed in a position of trust, all volunteers must go through the following screening process:

- Attend Riverwood for at least 6 months
- Adhere to Riverwood's statement of faith
- Ministry Leaders must be Covenant Community Members
- Complete a child/youth volunteer application form
- Have references checked
- Child Abuse Registry Check (ages 16+, renewed every 2 years)
- Criminal Record Check (ages 18+, renewed every 5 years)
- Complete Riverwood Child & Youth Protection Orientation course (annual online/live refresher)
- Signed code of conduct
- Face to face interview

## 2. SECURITY

All volunteers must wear the appropriate identification whenever serving in children or youth ministry.

Do not allow unauthorized individuals into your group, or trust children to their care. Approved visitors will receive an identification tag, but may not be placed in a position of authority or trust.

When adult visitors wish to visit they must have consent from the ministry lead and follow the visitor check-in procedure.

All programs run by Riverwood will have a check-in and check-out process:

- Every child/youth must check in before being admitted to the program. Up to date attendance records must be kept on file.

- Only approved adult/parent can pick up children/youth from program.
- Riverwood invests in Planning Center Online to facilitate this process. It keeps records, is quick and effective and can print tags to facilitate check out process. It is available for all ministry programs and can be configured for us with or without printed tags, on computers, tablets or smart phones.
- When there is no formal check-out process (drop-in programs), parents must be informed and give consent for their child to take responsibility for their departure.
- Parents are not to enter the classroom when dropping off or picking up their child unless requested to do so. This better enables the ministry personnel to maintain order and provide the level of security that parents would expect.
- If parents wish to visit our program they must follow the procedure of any visitor.

### 3. CONTACTING PARENTS

All children/youth involved in Riverwood programming are required to have parental permission to be involved.

Specific permission is required for programs with no check-out process, off-site or overnight events.

Current parent names, addresses and phone numbers must be kept and updated.

Team leaders/ministry personnel must be able to contact parents at any time while children/youth are involved in our programs. This can be done through our paging system when parents are on-site, or by having quick access to phone numbers when parents or children/youth are off-site. When taking children/youth off-site, phone numbers must be easily accessible.

### 4. STAFFING AND SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

Ministry personnel should always conduct themselves in a Godly manner, being an example of obedience, respect and honesty to those in their care.

Our desire is to provide a safe and loving environment where the child feels comfortable and learning can take place. Therefore we have adopted the following guidelines:

#### Age Expectations:

- We recommend a 5 year age gap between ministry personnel and the children/youth they serve. Ministry personnel between the ages of 12 and 16 must be assigned to an adult overseer whom will monitor their work.

#### Two Leaders:

- As a general rule, there is to be a minimum of two ministry personnel in any room with children/youth

#### Staffing Ratios: Established ratios are:

- two adults for every 4-6 infants

- two adults for every 8-12 preschoolers
- two adults for every 14-20 elementary aged children
- two adults for every 14-20 youth
- If the classroom exceeds these limits, an approved additional ministry personnel will be added, or the classroom may have to be closed to ensure the safety and quality of experience.

#### **Supervision:**

- Programs that involve children/youth must always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision of all ministry personnel will be intentional and will take place through formal and informal visits to classrooms and programs.
- Supervision will also be maintained before and after the program until all children are in the custody of their parent or their authorized representative.

#### **Visibility:**

- Rooms should have windows with clear lines of visibility in place or the door open.
- Lights should remain on at all times. Lights may be dimmed only if a video is being played.
- Keep the door of the room you are meeting in open if it does not have clear lines of sight through the window or doesn't have windows. Anyone who walks by must be able to see into the room
- Avoid being alone with 1 student in a room. If you are alone with 1 or 2 students join another group or make sure you are in a place that has 100% visibility.

#### **Preschool Rooms:**

- All preschool rooms will be staffed with at least one female ministry personnel to facilitate washroom guidelines.

#### **Attendance:**

- All volunteers, staff and adult visitors will have their attendance tracked and kept on file.

## **5. PROPER DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION**

Recognizing that children and youth need appropriate displays of affection that reflect pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love, appropriate touch with children will be age and developmentally appropriate.

#### **Appropriate Touch:**

- Hold a young child who is crying.
- Speak to a child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
- Hold a child's hand when speaking, listening or walking him or her to an activity
- Gently hold the child or youth's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect their behavior.
- Put your arm around the shoulder of a child/youth when comforting or quieting is needed.
- Pat a child/youth on the hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.
- High-five, fist-bump and quick side-hugs

**Note:** All touch must be done in view of others.

**Inappropriate Touch:**

- Do not kiss a child or coax a child to kiss you.
- Do not engage in extended hugging and tickling or wrestling.
- Do not hold their face when talking to or disciplining a child/youth.
- Do not touch a child/youth in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit. (Strictly prohibited except in cases of diapering and assisting preschoolers as outlined in the washroom policies.)
- Do not carry older children/youth and do not allow them to sit on your lap.
- Avoid prolonged physical contact with any child/youth.

## 6. WASHROOM PROCEDURES

**Nursery/Toddler Children:**

As a general rule, ministry personnel in the nursery/toddler room will be expected to check diapers at least once during each service. When checking and changing diapers, the following rules will apply:

- Diaper changing must always take place in such a way that another ministry personnel can easily see the child that is being changed and at the same time see the other children and ministry personnel in the room.
- Children must be 12 years of age or older, with appropriate training (Babysitter's Course, or over 16) before being permitted to change infant diapers.
- Diaper changing procedures will be clearly posted in the nursery/toddler diaper changing area.
- Only female personnel may change diapers

**Preschool Children:**

- Preschool children are not to go to the washroom alone.
- Avoid multiple-stall bathrooms if at all possible (see appendix for safety guidelines if necessary). For single-stall bathrooms:
- Female personnel assists both boys & girls. She waits outside the door for child to finish
- If child requires help, she may enter the washroom cubicle to assist, using the following guidelines:
  - The outside washroom door(s) must be propped open and the adult must stand in an open cubicle doorway.
  - Ministry personnel will take the privacy of the child into consideration.
  - In bathroom emergencies – Use disposable gloves when handling soiled clothing. Soiled clothing should be placed (un-rinsed) in a plastic bag and labeled with the child's name. Disposable gloves will be kept in every room.

**Elementary Children:**

- Elementary boys and girls are not to be sent to the washroom alone.
- Avoid multiple-stall bathrooms if at all possible (see appendix for safety guidelines if necessary). For single-stall bathrooms, send children in same-sex pairs (one waits outside for the other).

### Youth:

- Never enter the washroom of the opposite sex under any circumstances

## 7. ALLERGIES & ILLNESS

- If there is a child with an allergy in your room their tag will indicate it. If you are going to serve a special snack, please indicate that by posting a sign on the door prior to children's arrival.
- We have a well-child policy. We do not provide care for sick children. If a child is sick, they should not be accepted into the program. If they get sick, or are discovered to be sick, during the program, page the parents.
- A child will not be admitted with any of these symptoms: fever, unusual fatigue, coughing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhea or children with a known communicable disease.
- Ministry personnel are not to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medicating, the parent must give it. In extreme cases where Epi-pens or puffers are needed for allergies or asthma written and signed instructions are to be provided by the parent.
- We ask you not to volunteer in any ministry if you are sick. Please notify the Leadership staff and request a replacement. If you wake up sick on the day you are to serve, the best way to reach us is by our cell phones. Leadership cell numbers are on all schedules.

## 8. MINOR ACCIDENTS

- A FIRST AID kit is available at all security desks at all locations, as well as mini-kits in all children's ministry rooms and welcome desks.
- The names and contact information of individuals who have been certified and trained in First Aid must clearly posted.
- Report any hazardous situations to the leadership immediately and correct if safe and/or possible.
- Incident reports must be filled out for minor injuries (rule of thumb: if a bruise might form or a bandaid was given out, fill out the form).
- Deal with it lovingly right away. Do not get the parent unless absolutely necessary. However, DO tell the parent about the injury when they pick up their child, regardless of how minor the injury. If a parent reacts negatively, it is wise to inform the children/youth pastor to prepare them, having heard your side of the story already.
- Procedures for Dealing with cuts or Injuries Involving Blood:
- Separate the injured child from the other children. Isolate the area where any blood may have been dropped on the carpet, toys, etc. Apply first aid measures and send someone to page the parent if serious.
- If other children have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury, their parents should be informed.

## 9. MAJOR INJURIES

- Do not move students, unless they can stand up and walk on their own. If they can move on their own, lead them out of the activity area. Ministry personnel as well as 1-2 witnesses must remain with injured child.

If injury is severe and time is of the essence:

- Call 911 and request ambulance
- Call parents and make them aware of situation
- If decision is made to transport youth to the hospital, and parents are not on-site, ministry personnel should accompany injured youth to the hospital
- When parents arrive, ministry leader should:
  - Introduce him/herself and role in their child's life
  - Explain situation and injury, careful not to place blame or admit fault on any part
  - Return to event unless there is a good reason to stay
  - Ministry leader should follow up the next day with the parents
  - Complete incident report and advise supervising pastor to determine who else (senior leaders, other volunteers, insurance) may need to be informed

## 10. CLEANLINESS:

All child care areas should be thoroughly sanitized on a regular basis (including carpets). Regularly clean all surfaces, toys, tables, and doors. Nursery & Toddler Rooms are required to disinfect toys after use.

## 11. IN CASE OF FIRE OR OTHER EMERGENCY

- Line up students by the door and take a head count.
- Close doors as you leave and take your attendance sheet with you.
- Know your exit route and quietly/calmly lead students out by proper exits.
- Proceed to the park next door, away from the building.
- Once you're clear of the building, take a head count and attendance.
- Return to the building only after the "All Clear" has been sounded.
- For the safety of students, parents may NOT get their child/children before the class has left the building.
- If we are not allowed to return to the building, parents may pick up their children/youth from the designated location. Follow normal check-out procedures.

**Designated Meeting Places:**

- Factory: behind playground
- Warehouse: by the large rock in the parking lot
- Firehall: corner of Talbot & Stradacona, in empty field
- Garage: across the street in apartment parking lot

In case of lock-down, you will be instructed by the team leader, staff member or security team to stay put. Doors will remain closed, and locked if possible. No one is allowed to enter or exit (no bathroom breaks, parent pick-ups, etc.) until the all-clear is given by your team leader/staff member or security team.

## 12. DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

All discipline and classroom management will be conducted in a loving and caring environment. An attempt will be made to prevent discipline problems from arising and to avoid the need for discipline. All attempts are to be taken to adhere to the following.

### **Preventative Discipline:**

- Be on time. Children and youth will behave better with calm, prepared staff.
- Be prepared and keep short transitions between the activities.
- Arrange your environment for children and for learning.
- Establish and communicate realistic expectations. i.e. Use indoor voices, one person talking at a time, keep your hands to yourself, etc.
- Be fair and consistent with all children.
- Be sure your focus is on positive action and reward positive behaviour.
- Be aware of children with special needs and bring their needs to the attention of the Ministry Leader.
- Redirect to positive action

### **3 R's of discipline:**

- **Remind:** Explain to the child why the behavior is unacceptable and instruct them in how to do it correctly.
- **Remove:** Remove the child from the activity (for a time limit of minutes per age) but do not leave the child unattended.
- **Return:** if inappropriate behavior still continues, page the parent to come attend to their child or send the child/youth home

### **Expulsion/Suspension:**

Our youth ministry is committed to creating a safe and enjoyable environment for students. Under certain circumstances we may suspend or in certain cases ban youth from attending our programs.

Youth who do not abide by the rules and boundaries may either be permanently banned or given a period of suspension before they are allowed to come back. In any case, the ministry lead and leader involved will determine the best course of action so it's important that you, the youth leader, report all incidents.

You are responsible to fill out an incident report for any of the following situations and report it to the ministry lead for further investigation:

- Acts of violence
- Carrying weapons
- Carrying/selling drugs

- Bullying
- Sexual activity
- Gangs/gang activity
- Theft
- Deliberate damage to church property or personal property
- Blatant disregard to other students or leaders
- Any behaviour that is contrary and/or disruptive to our culture

### 13. BULLYING

Our children and youth have a right to caring, respectful and safe church environment where they will encounter the love of God in action. All ministry personnel will take action to prevent bullying, teach against it, and assist and support children and youth who are being bullied. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.

### 14. OFF-HOURS OR ONE-ON-ONE MINISTRY

One-on-one meetings, or small group gatherings outside of programming hours, must be done in public settings and only under the following conditions:

- Ministry leader pre-approves one-on-one mentoring
- Ministry leader is informed of time and place prior to meeting
- Parental permission is granted (written or verbal)
- Separate transportation is arranged
- Meetings are conducted in public and cannot go later than 9:00pm on school nights
- Same-gender pairings
- For group events, more than one adult is present
- Check [imdb.com](http://imdb.com) for movie ratings and only view appropriate content
- Ministry personnel working with youth may not, under any circumstances, pursue a dating relationship with a student while in a position of trust or authority over that student.
- Avoid being alone in a house or behind closed doors with one child/youth
- Do not take Children/youth to dark or solitary places
- Do not visit a child/youth when they are home alone

In relation to alcohol consumption we ask you to use your wisdom and remember that as a youth leader, you're an ambassador for Christ and the Church at every moment. Here are some guidelines to help with your decision making:

- Youth ministry personnel must not drink in the presence of or with any youth who participates in our youth program
- Do not consume alcohol at any church related event or activity
- Drink responsibly and in moderation, if you choose to drink



## 15. OFF-SITE AND OVERNIGHT EVENTS

- All off-site trips must be pre-approved by Ministry Leader and have proper consent form
- Overnight activities such as sleepovers are not permitted without consent from the parents and the approval of the ministry lead. There must always be at least 2 adults present.
- Written communication regarding off-site trips should be available to families one week prior to event. Include exact location, emergency phone numbers and a list of adult ministry personnel attending event
- Minimum 2 adult ministry personnel is required
- Copies of authorization and consent forms must be kept on hand at each event
- Attendance of ministry personnel and youth/children must be recorded and kept on hand as well as in church office
- For overnight events, female ministry personnel will be assigned responsibility for female youth and male ministry personnel for male youth.
- Youth may not leave the event without parental permission
- Female and male youth and ministry personnel are not allowed in each other's sleeping areas for any reason and may not sleep in mixed company

## 16. TRANSPORTATION

Ideally, Riverwood does not provide transportation for children or youth to/from events. When transportation is necessary, use the following guidelines:

- Drivers must abide by traffic laws. Reckless or unsafe driving will not be tolerated.
- Parents need to drop-off and pick up children/youth if at all possible
- Buses will be given priority over individual passenger vehicles
- Any ministry personnel drivers must complete the following prior to the event:
  - Pre-approval by ministry lead
  - A copy of valid drivers license and automobile insurance be given to church office
  - Non-graduated licenses only
  - Number of occupants in vehicle does not exceed number of seat belts.
  - Youth Ministry personnel should not drive students without at least 1 other adult in the vehicle
  - Arrange to drop-off/pick-up 2 youth at the same place so you are not alone with 1 youth in the vehicle.
- Never carry a child/youth on the back of a motorcycle.

## 17. CARE

There are things that you are capable of dealing with but there are also things that you need to let the ministry lead know about.

**Leaders can pastorally care for:**

- Mild school issues
- Friendships
- Boy/girl problems
- Homework
- Time Management
- Relationship with God
- Mild family issues
- Mild sexual challenges - Mild pornography, masturbation

**These situations must be reported to the ministry lead:**

- Substance abuse
- Bullying at school
- Severe family issues - Divorce care, separation, death
- Abuse - sexual, physical, verbal, emotional
- Eating disorders
- Severe sexual challenges - severe sexual or pornography addiction, homosexuality
- Mental disorders - Anxiety, depression
- Life threatening situations - violence, mental health, suicide, self harm

## **18. SOCIAL MEDIA**

Ministry personnel are permitted to interact with children/youth via social media platforms when done so with discernment and wisdom. Here are a few guidelines for engaging with minors online:

- Save all of your messages with children/youth and do not delete conversations that you have had with them online
- Never discuss anything inappropriate (sexual, violent, etc.)
- Avoid sending pictures to students
- Avoid prolonged interactions/conversations online (especially with members of the opposite sex) and do not send any messages past 10:00pm unless absolutely necessary.

# ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

This Abuse Prevention Policy has been designed to care for children and youth served by ministries through Riverwood Church Community to protect children and youth beyond our walls.

## 1. ABUSE DEFINITION

All ministry personnel will be trained on the definition and types of abuse through a thorough orientation training when they start their volunteering process. Annual refreshers will be available online or live.

- Child abuse is defined as “an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical or mental health or a child’s welfare.” -[Faith Trust Institute]
- Physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect are all forms of abuse

## 2. SUSPICION OF ABUSE

For the protection of our children and youth, all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse against children and youth will be taken seriously.

Upon hearing of potentially unsafe situations in a child or youth’s life, ministry personnel should inform Ministry Leader and fill out “suspected abuse” form (see appendix). Avoid asking leading questions, and do not contact abuser or any other parties at this point.

## 3. REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

Any allegations of abuse to a child or youth must be reported to proper authorities. This reporting should be done in conjunction with Children’s Pastor, Youth Pastor, Community Pastor or Executive Pastor.

Any person, including but not limited to, ministry personnel over the age of majority who has reasonable grounds to believe a child or youth is in need of protection, is legally required to report the matter to authorities. If it is urgent, call 911. Otherwise, contact Child and Family Services.

It is really important that when a student or child discloses abuse information that you make them aware that you are legally bound to report the information to the proper authorities and will need to inform the ministry lead as well.

Under no circumstances should you ever promise to keep something a secret.

A person who knowingly fails to report in these circumstances is in violation of the law and may be subject to fines up to \$50,000, up to 24 months jail time and may be subject to discipline action in the church.

If the suspected abuse happens in the context of church ministries or was committed by a church member or attendee, the Lead Pastor or Executive Pastor should be notified.

Here are the steps you should follow when abuse has been disclosed from a child/youth:

1. Report disclosure to ministry lead immediately
2. Report disclosure to proper authorities immediately

#### 4. ASSESSING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

No persons, including church leadership, are to assume the function of assessing, substantiating or investigating the need for intervention or interpretation of suspected child abuse.

We support authorities as they investigate, we do not investigate ourselves.

#### 5. PROTECTING DIGNITY

During the process of reporting and response, all ministry personnel will be committed to prayer and strive to remain calm and hopeful.

Discretion must be observed and details of suspected abuse must not be shared beyond a need-to-know basis. Confidentiality for the suspected victim and the accused must be protected.

#### 6. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS

Spiritual Response and Counsel for Victims:

- All allegations will be taken seriously and handled with the utmost care. Suspected victims will be treated with dignity and respect
- During the process of reporting and response, ministry personnel will be committed to prayer and strive to remain calm and hopeful.
- Situations of abuse or allegations of abuse must be handled forthrightly with respect for people's privacy and confidentiality
- Church leadership will seek to provide individual care and counsel both for the victim and their family.

Biblical Response and Discipline for the Accused or Convicted:

- The accused is to be treated with dignity and respect. If the accused is paid ministry

personnel, that person will be relieved temporarily of their duties until the investigation is completed with arrangements made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

- It is the responsibility and right of church leadership to exercise and practice church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18
- Church leadership will seek opportunity to provide individual care for both the accused and their family. Church leadership will determine the need for professional assistance and evaluate and designate resources as needed and able.
- Anyone accused of abuse to children or youth will be prohibited from having access to children or youth until they are cleared of any and all charges. Clear written guidelines will be provided to the individual with restricted activities and areas of the church they are not permitted to use.
- Anyone convicted of child abuse will be prohibited from having access to children or youth. Church leadership may designate an individual to be responsible to be informed whenever the convicted person attends church activities and to accompany the convicted person while on church property. Clear, written guidelines will be provided to the individual listing restricted areas and access points on the church property.

## 7. MEDIA RELATIONS

- It is the responsibility of the church leadership and Lead Pastor to designate a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the church to media and to the public in relation to a suspected abuse case. All inquiries should be directed to this person and comment should not be made by other individuals unless given permission to do so.
- Public statements will be well prepared and presented.

## 8. ONGOING INVESTIGATION

- Full cooperation must be given by all parties to civil authorities under the guideline of legal counsel.
- At no time should church leadership or its individuals either engage in denial, minimization or blame, or admit responsibility which could prejudice the case or cause increased liability to the church.
- Confidential follow up report with conclusions and actions taken must be documented by the Lead Pastor, Executive Pastor, Children's Pastor or Youth Pastor following a report of abuse. This report should be placed in a confidential ministry personnel file
- Children and youth ministry departments will inform others of any ongoing investigation strictly on a need-to-know basis.

# APPENDIX

1. Multi-stall washroom guidelines
2. Incident Report
3. Suspected Abuse Report

# INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of injury/incident:

Incident Date & Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Incident location & event: \_\_\_\_\_

All leaders present:

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Action taken (include date & time, if different):

Contacted parents? ☐ yes ☐ no

Parent's response?

Leader's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader's Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness' signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness' printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

# SUSPECTED ABUSE REPORT FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person filling out report: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of alleged perpetrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship between suspected victim & perpetrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Indications of suspected abuse (including facts, physical signs and course of events):

Action taken (include date & time):

If a child is reporting, what did the child say (give quotes where possible):

What was your response?

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**911 – urgent and immediate response required**  
**1-866-345-9241 – all other abuse or neglect concerns**