

**Bethel Business Committee**

**Policy & Procedure #019 and #020**

**Revised: June 15, 2014**

## **Youth Protection and Ministry Policy**

The attached Youth Protection and Ministry was reviewed and approved by the Business Committee and the Elders of Bethel Bible Chapel to replace the following policies and procedures:

- **Policy & Procedure #019 - Youth Ministry Policy (Dec. 2005)**
- **Policy & Procedure #020 - Child Protection Policy(Dec. 2005)**

## **YOUTH PROTECTION & MINISTRY POLICY**

### **PURPOSE**

The Church family of Bethel Bible Chapel has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a safe environment for the youth who participate in our various programs. This policy contains guidelines that will ensure a safe environment for children that will reassure parents that we are diligent about the care we give their children, and that will provide guidance and protection for volunteers who work with our youth. Although we have not had a problem in past years, in view of the society in which we live, we feel it wise to develop a policy which clarifies and formalizes what has been our long-term commitment to love, guide, respect and protect the youth in our care.

### **1.0 DILIGENCE IN APPROVING YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS**

- 1.1 Each person who wishes to volunteer in any of our youth (persons under 18) programs will be required to submit and complete the following:
  - Volunteer application (at least once every five years - Appendix A)
  - Adhere to six-month waiting period
  - Face to face interview
  - Reference checks
  - Police records check (at least once every three years - Appendix C)
  - Final approval from church leadership
- 1.2 The individual(s) responsible for 'staff' selection will exercise due diligence in the selection of applicants for all positions.
- 1.3 Before being placed in a supervisory position (position of trust/unsupervised leadership), youth ministry volunteers must be at least 18 years of age and have completed the recruitment and screening process (see also 3.5).
- 1.4 Youth ministry volunteers who serve youth must have a personnel file kept with church records. These files are to be kept permanently and will be kept in a secure location.
- 1.5 A minimum six-month waiting period prior to serving is required for individuals wanting to serve in youth ministries. All prospective youth ministry volunteers will have regularly attended the church for the previous six months.
  - Exceptions can be made in circumstances where the youth ministry volunteers have come from another church in which they have been long-time members, are in good standing and are already known within the Bethel community. References must be received from at least three individuals, including one from their previous minister or youth ministry director.

- 1.6 Individuals that have been charged or convicted, or are under current allegation of crimes against youth will not have any involvement in ministries or programs where youth participate. Individuals that have been convicted of crimes not directly related to youth may be considered for involvement in ministries or programs where youth participate on a case by case basis.
- 1.7 Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the recruitment and screening process. Applicants are welcome to request a review of the decision.

## **2.0 TRAINING**

- 2.1 Each youth ministry volunteer will participate in annual training.
- 2.2 Each youth ministry volunteer will be required annually to read Bethel Bible Chapel's Youth Protection & Ministry Policy.
- 2.3 A record will be kept to ensure that all youth ministry volunteers have completed the required annual training.

## **3.0 YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES**

All youth ministry volunteers will be expected to conduct themselves at all times in a Christ-like manner and treat all children in a manner which is considered appropriate in our Christian community. The following guidelines provide concrete examples of appropriate behaviour in various settings. It is assumed that these guidelines refer to instances where people are providing care for other people's children.

- 3.1 Supervision of Youth Ministry Volunteers - Classrooms will be monitored by supervisory personnel on a regular basis whenever they are being used for ministries involving youth.
- 3.2 Plan to Protect Program Maintenance - A strategy for program maintenance will be developed and reviewed at the beginning of each ministry year to ensure training, the updating of files and the physical environment are compliant with policy.
- 3.3 Teacher/Student Ratios - It is required that a reasonable ratio of adults to children is maintained at all times involving the supervision of youth. The ministry leader shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of workers to youth giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.
- 3.4 Mentoring - Mentoring or individual counselling of youth shall be conducted in the presence of one additional person or in a highly visible location.

- 3.5 Classroom Staffing - Youth ministry volunteers between the ages of 12 and 17 must be assigned to work alongside another ministry volunteer over the age of 18. Ministry volunteers must be 18 years of age or older to work alone in a classroom. Ministry volunteers in a position of trust (unsupervised leadership) must be at least five years older than the youth they serve.
- All classroom doors must have a window with a clear line of visibility, or the door must remain open.
  - Designated hall monitors will circulate periodically from room to room.
- 3.6 Occasional Observers - Occasional observers who join a class will have their attendance recorded and kept on file with the classroom attendance for that day. Visitors will be clearly identified and if they have not been screened and approved, they will not be placed in a position of trust with children who are not their own.
- 3.7 Ministry Volunteer Identification - Youth ministry volunteers are clearly identified with a name-tag or approved clothing which identifies them to parents, children and newcomers.
- 3.8 Photos/Videos - Any photos or videos of youth taken during any Bethel ministry activity shall not be posted publicly by youth ministry volunteers. Church leadership may publicly post photos or videos of youth with parental/caregiver consent for reasonable use.
- 3.9 Child Registration & Compliance with the Personal Information Protection Electronic Data Act (PIPEDA)
1. The names and addresses of children and their parents or guardians will be carefully maintained, updated annually and kept permanently in a central file.
  2. A release and permission statement will be included on all registration forms releasing the church from unforeseen and accidental damages along with contact information in case of an accident.
  3. The inclusion of 'liability shields' on permission forms has been considered for activities that involve a level of risk.
  4. A statement will be included on all registration forms which stipulates the purpose and extent for collecting personal information of children and youth.
  5. Registration forms (Appendix E) will be available for all programs. It is the responsibility of the ministry lead or ministry personnel to ensure that forms are completed and submitted for all participants. In the case of a visiting child, the parent bringing the child will be considered the guardian for the evening and the registration form must be sent home at the conclusion of the first program. All effort must be made to keep registration forms updated and current. Registration forms are to be filed and kept permanently.

### 3.10 Receiving and Releasing Youth

For Babies to Kindergarten Children:

1. Receiving and releasing children under the age of 6 is strongly monitored. A mandatory sign-in and sign-out form is to be used in all children's programming.
2. Children are not to be dropped off in a classroom without ministry volunteers present.
3. Babies and preschool children will only be released into the care of the child's parent or designate utilizing a signature.
4. Parents and visitors are not to enter the nursery or preschool classroom when picking up their child unless requested to do so.

For Elementary Students:

1. Younger elementary students and newcomers are to remain in the classroom until the parent or designate comes to pick them up and the student demonstrates recognition.
2. Consideration must be given to security, church facilities and location when determining the age release of older elementary children. Ministry volunteers are to ask on an informal basis whether the child knows where to find his or her parent. If the child demonstrates uncertainty, the ministry volunteer will keep the child with them in the classroom until the parent or designate picks up the child.

### 3.11 Attendance - It is the responsibility of the ministry leader to ensure that:

1. Attendance of children is taken each time a classroom or program is in session. These attendance records are kept on file permanently.
2. A record will be kept of youth ministry volunteers on duty in each classroom or program. This record will be maintained with the record of attendance and kept on file permanently.

### 3.12 Washroom Guidelines

1. The youth ministry volunteer should ensure that communication with parents has happened that encourages them to deal with their child's toileting needs and to take their children to the washroom prior to each class or service.

For Nursery:

1. Diaper changing procedures are clearly posted in the nursery diaper changing area (Appendix D).
2. Diaper changing will be done by the child's parent, when they are present. Otherwise, diaper changing is to be done by a nursery ministry volunteer and must be conducted within view of another ministry volunteer.

For Preschool Children:

1. Preschool children are not to go to the washroom alone.
2. One of the following will be adhered to when accompanying preschool children to the washroom:
  - Two youth ministry volunteers will escort a group of children to the washroom, or,
  - One youth ministry volunteer will escort a group of children to the washroom with one hall monitor appointed to assist with washroom and security duties.
3. No youth ministry volunteer will ever be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and they are never to go into the cubicle with a child and shut the door.
4. When a preschool child needs assistance in the washroom, youth ministry volunteers may enter the washroom cubicle to assist utilizing the following guidelines:
  - Where possible, female youth ministry volunteers will assist both boys and girls in the washroom.
  - The outside washroom door must be propped open and the adult must stand in an open cubicle doorway,
  - Youth ministry volunteers will take into consideration the privacy of the child.

For Elementary Children:

1. Younger elementary students and newcomers are not to be sent to the washroom alone but should be accompanied by a youth ministry volunteer.
2. An older elementary child may go to the washroom unaccompanied where the youth ministry volunteer has determined that the child's disposition/maturity level, the child's knowledge of the washroom's location and the church function permit.
3. Where a child needs to be accompanied to the washroom: a youth ministry volunteer will escort the child to the washroom, make sure that everything is in order and then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting them back to the classroom.
4. Where possible, female youth ministry volunteers are to accompany an individual child to the washroom.
5. Youth ministry volunteers are not to be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and are never to enter into the cubicle with a child and shut the door.

### 3.13 Special Events & Overnight Policies

Field Trips and Special Events:

1. All off-campus activities will be pre-approved by the ministry leader with parents being notified at least one week prior to the outing.
2. Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each youth participating in field trips and special events. Copies of the forms must be kept in the ministry leader's possession during trips and events with the originals of the completed forms filed in the church office; permanently (Appendix E).
3. All trips and outings will be supervised by a minimum of two youth ministry volunteers (both male and female or as the activity dictates).

4. When planning local special events, it is preferred that parents drop off and pick up their children at the event location. For out of town events, it is preferred that commercial carriers be employed.
5. Youth may not be transported one-on-one without verbal or written parental consent; in either case it must be documented. Again, parents are encouraged to drop their children off and pick them up.
6. All ministry volunteer drivers transporting youth during church activities must be pre-approved by the ministry leader, provide a copy of their valid driver's license and current automobile insurance in accordance with the church insurance policy, and have had a minimum of five years of driving experience.
7. Church vehicles are to be driven by ministry volunteers that have been pre-approved by church leadership. These drivers will be insured under the church automobile insurance policy.
8. The number of occupants in the vehicle will not exceed the number of seat belts and each youth will be in age appropriate safety restraints. Seat belts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times the vehicle is in motion.
9. Youth will not be left unattended in a vehicle.
10. All overnight activities will be pre-approved by church leadership.
11. All overnight activities must have a minimum ratio of two ministry volunteers for every ten youth. Ministry volunteers will be assigned a specific group of youth for who they are responsible. Female ministry volunteers will be assigned to female children.

### 3.13 Proper Display of Affection

#### Appropriate Touch:

1. Recognizing that children need appropriate displays of affection that reflect pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love, appropriate touch with youth will be age and developmentally appropriate. We encourage ministry volunteers to:
  - Hold a preschool 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(s) when necessary/appropriate while speaking, listening or walking him or her to an activity,
  - Gently hold the child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour,
  - Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting or quieting is needed,
  - Pat a child on the head, hand, shoulder or upper back to affirm him or her.
2. All touch shall be done in view of others.

**Inappropriate Touch:**

1. Recognizing that the innocence of children must be protected, ministry leaders will be made aware that the following actions are deemed inappropriate and will not be permitted:

- Ministry volunteers shall not, under any circumstances, administer corporal punishment of any kind,
- Do not kiss a child or coax a child to kiss you,
- Do not engage in extended hugging,
- Do not engage in tickling,
- Do not hold a child's face when talking to or disciplining the child,
- Do not touch a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (strictly prohibited except in cases of diapering and assisting preschoolers as outlined in washroom policies),
- Do not carry older children and do not allow them to sit on your lap,
- Avoid prolonged physical contact with any youth.

2. Ministry volunteers shall not be alone with a youth as has been outlined in this policy.

#### **4.0 REPORTING AND RESPONSE TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

##### **4.1 Hearing of and Reporting an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse**

The following policies outline the recommended procedure and sequence for reporting suspected abuse cases as the protection of our youth, all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse against youth will be taken seriously.

Any person including, but not limited to, ministry volunteer leaders, who suspects potential abuse or allegations of abuse or has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protection shall follow the guidelines as indicated below:

1. Complete the Suspected Abuse Report Form (Appendix F), documenting all pertinent information. The victim should not be asked leading questions nor should the accused or any other parties be contacted at the point of completing the Suspected Abuse Report Form. All forms shall be kept permanently.
2. Immediately report any allegations of abuse to the Children's Aid Society (this is a legal requirement). Reporting shall be done by phone or in person.
3. Reporting shall be done in conjunction with the ministry leader who will notify the elders.
4. 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.
5. Situations of abuse must be handled forthrightly with due respect for the privacy and confidentiality of all parties involved. Discretion must be observed and details of the suspected abuse must not be shared as the privacy and confidentiality for all parties must be protected.
6. The elders and/or their designate shall notify the church's insurance provider and seek legal counsel upon hearing of a suspected child abuse case.



7. If the suspected abuse happened in the context of church ministries or was committed by a church member or attendee, the parents of the victim must be notified by the church leadership.
8. Church leadership will seek opportunity to provide individual care and counsel both for the abuse victim and their family. Church leadership will determine the need for professional assistance and evaluate and designate resources as needed and able.
9. It is the responsibility of the church leadership to designate a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the church to individuals, the media and to the public in relation to a suspected child 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 must be well prepared and presented under the guidance of legal counsel.
10. 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.
11. A confidential follow-up report (Appendix G) with conclusions and action taken must be documented by the church leadership following a report of abuse. This report should be placed in a confidential ministry volunteer leader file and kept permanently.

#### 4.2 Allegations of Child Abuse Against Ministry Volunteer Leaders

If the allegations of child abuse involve a ministry volunteer leader, the procedures in 4.1 shall be completed as well as the following:

1. The accused is to be treated with dignity and respect. Any action taken by the church shall not be seen or accepted as the "guilt" of the personnel, but only as an indication of the priority given to the need to protect the children.
2. That person will be suspended from his or her duties at Bethel Bible Chapel and will be prohibited from having access to youth until the church leadership is satisfied that the person is not a risk to youth. Clear written guidelines will be provided to the individual with restricted activities and areas of Bethel that they are not permitted to use.
3. Anyone convicted of child abuse will be prohibited from having access to youth and from participation in any further ministry at Bethel Bible Chapel unless specifically authorized in writing by the church leadership. 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.
4. It is the responsibility and right of church leadership to exercise and practice church discipline as outlined in Bethel's Statement of Principles and Practices.