

**Breslau Mennonite Church**

**Revised  
Guidelines to  
Promote Safety**

**October 2017**

**Updated January 2026**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>MISSION STATEMENT</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A. PROMOTING SAFETY WITHIN OUR CHURCH</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>B. PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>C. EDUCATION</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>D. PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST YOUTH AND CHILDREN</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>E. PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE IN CASES NOT INVOLVING YOUTH AND CHILDREN</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>F. ENSURING COMPLIANCE</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>19</b>
Appendix 1: Children’s Ministry Information and Permission	19
Appendix 2: Youth Information Record and Assumed Consent	21
Appendix 3: Permission Form for High Risk/Offsite Events	23
Appendix 4: Volunteer Commitment to Create a Safe Environment	24
Appendix 5: Incident Report	25
Appendix 6: Additional Resources	27
Appendix 7: Limited Access Agreement Suggested Template	28
Appendix 8: Frequently Asked Questions on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect	30
Appendix 9: Support and Assistance for Vulnerable Adults who have experienced abuse	32

# SAFE PLACE GUIDELINES

## MISSION STATEMENT

We, members and adherents of Breslau Mennonite Church, are committed to providing an environment that is safe and healthy for our members, attenders, and children to learn about and experience God's love.

The ethical mandate for Christian ministry with children and vulnerable persons is rooted in Jesus' gospel teachings. Jesus points to the child as the one who is the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus is consistent in his assertion of the specialness and value of children. He also points clearly to the responsibility of those around children to care for them. And Jesus said, "Let the children come to me for such is the Kingdom of heaven.. Luke 18 15-19. For as much as you have done it unto one of these, you have done it unto me."

Jesus continually reached out to persons who were marginalized and vulnerable. These guidelines go beyond safety for children. These guidelines will hopefully assist us as a congregation to be mindful of potential areas of abuse when others in our midst may carry greater vulnerability.

During Jesus' ministry he responded with love and care for people who were viewed as marginalized or as "outcasts". Jesus engaged with Zacchaeus, who was not accepted as a result of his vocation. Jesus requested water from the Samaritan woman who was marginalized due to her culture and being a woman.

Jesus modeled compassionate and healthy relationships between all people and he did not reinforce societal customs, assumptions, and stereotyping in his relationships with women, the outcast, and the people on the margins of society.

We recognize that there are incidents of broken boundaries specifically between adults and children that occur within society and also acknowledge that these incidents do happen within our churches.

We are committed to being proactive in protecting persons of all ages within our community from abuse.

Facing the possibility and pain of abuse requires limitless courage which the Church is called to demonstrate.

This policy will be used to aid us in our commitments to prevention. Our desire is that everyone who attends BMC will experience respect, care and inclusion.

When an abuse is reported, we are committed to address it in an open and transparent way that listens to the needs of the person who has experienced abuse. This policy will be our guide for being proactive in preventing abuse and addressing abuse if and when it happens within our faith community.

Breslau Mennonite Church commits itself to encourage an atmosphere in which all forms of abuse, including but not limited to racism, homophobia, and bullying are not tolerated. We as individuals are compelled to increase our awareness and knowledge about being safe when carrying out church programming and assisting others in feeling safe and secure when they participate in BMC ministries.

## **A. PROMOTING SAFETY WITHIN OUR CHURCH**

### **a. GENERAL DEFINITIONS**

**Adult** - anyone 18 years of age and over.

**Child(ren)** - anyone under the age of 18. Breslau Mennonite Church (BMC) ministries for children are often divided into two sections: Children and Youth - The participating ages are fluid.

For the purpose of this document children refers to everyone under 18 years of age.. — we are obligated to protect you.

**Vulnerable people** - includes adults with physical or mental challenges, children, and the elderly.

**Observed symptoms** - any unusual cuts, bruises and/or lacerations on the body or abnormal behaviour unbecoming the child or youth in question.

**Premises** - any location, inside or outside, at which an official BMC event is being held. Premises can also include the period of transit between two locations, such as the bus ride to and from an event.

**Reasonable Discipline** - natural consequences for actions that are contrary to the stated rules or expectations of proper behaviour at BMC events; will not involve physical contact or verbal or emotional abuse

**Staff** - any person hired by BMC council that assists with the BMC ministry.

**Volunteer** - any unpaid person, or person receiving an honorarium, who has been asked or volunteers to assist in BMC programs and events.

## **b. TYPES OF ABUSE**

**Child Abuse** - an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though they may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health, or a child's welfare.

**Physical Abuse** - any deliberate physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child. It can include punching, slapping, shaking, burning, biting, hitting or throwing a child. It is different from what is considered **reasonable discipline**.

**Emotional Abuse** - a pattern of behaviour that attacks a child's development and sense of self-worth. It includes excessive, aggressive, or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond his or her capacity. Emotional abuse includes constant criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child.

**Sexual Abuse** - occurs when a child is used for sexual gratification of an adult or an older child. It can take many forms. This includes:

- Exposing a child's private areas
- Fondling for sexual pleasure
- Intercourse
- Verbal comments
- Pornography, allowing a child to look at or perform pornographic pictures or videos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism (a compulsion to display one's genitals or other intimate body parts or to behave sexually in public.)
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

**Sexual Harassment** - occurs when an individual is subject to unwanted and/or offensive sexual advances, gestures or comments. It can occur at work, school, in stores, on the bus, at social gatherings, and in churches. This behaviour can be enacted by a stranger, people we know, relatives or even close family members. It can include:

- sexually suggestive remarks, jokes or gestures
- displaying degrading pictures or objects
- unwanted physical contact such as touching, pinching, patting and/or sexual demands
- comments that demean or disrespect a person's sexual or gender identity
- grooming actions (giving of expensive gifts, situating oneself to be alone with the individual being targeted)

**Sexual Assault** - sexual acts committed WITHOUT a person's consent or against a person's will. The absence of a "no" is not consent. Consent is clear, active, ongoing and willing. It is not silence and it is not ambiguous. Consent is not based on what someone agreed to in the past.

**Coercion** (physical, psychological or emotional) is intrinsic to sexual abuse.

- **Neglect** - the failure of those responsible for the care of children or vulnerable adults to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs to an extent that the individual's health, development or safety is endangered.
- **Harassment and abuse** revolves around power and control. This does not mean it is the conscious intention of the individual to gain power and control, but it nevertheless results in the feeling and experience of powerlessness; of not being able to control or have agency over one's boundaries. If, as the result of someone else's behaviour, you feel insecure, frightened, marginalized, belittled or manipulated, then you may want to consider whether you are being harassed or abused.
- **Bullying** - occurs when a stronger, more powerful person hurts, frightens or threatens a smaller or weaker person deliberately and repeatedly. It is a series of repeated, intentionally cruel incidents, involving the same individuals, in the same bully and victim roles. It can also consist of a single interaction.
- **Improper Touch and Discipline:** Corporal punishment (punishment administered by an adult to the body of a child ranging in severity from a slap to a spanking) is unacceptable. Touching a child in any area that is considered private is unacceptable. Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling all constitute improper touch.
- Unacceptable touch includes any touch to a child or adult that is uncomfortable even when *the touch is well intentioned*.

### **Appropriate and inappropriate touching**

A touch can convey a multitude of positive messages and communicate care, comfort and love; however, it is important to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate touching. It is also important to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in interpretation to touching based on sex, culture or personal experience. Adults and children must be granted the right to back away from any well intentioned touch. One can easily consider the appropriateness of touch by asking themselves if they would be comfortable doing such an action in public.

### **Some examples of appropriate touch:**

- Holding or rocking an infant who is crying
- Affirming a participant with a pat on the hand, shoulder, or back
- Bending down to the child's eye level and placing a hand gently on the child's hand or forearm
- Putting your arm around the shoulder of a person who needs comfort
- Taking a child's hand and leading them to an activity
- Holding hands for safety when changing locations
- Shaking a person's hand in greeting
- Holding a child gently by the hand or shoulder to keep his/her attention as you redirect behaviour
- Providing comfort with a wet, warm cloth.

**Some examples of inappropriate touch:**

- Kissing a child, youth or vulnerable adult or coaxing them into kissing you
- Extended cuddling
- Tickling
- Touching anyone in any area that is considered private or typically covered by a bathing suit. (except when changing an infant's diaper)
- Hand holding, except for the examples listed above
- Stroking a child's hair
- Hugging, where an adult knows or ought to have known that hugging is inappropriate

**c. SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE AND MOLESTATION**

1. **Physical** signs may include:

- lacerations and bruises
- nightmares
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- difficulty with urination
- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing

2. **Behavioural** signs may include:

- anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- nervous or hostile behaviour toward adults
- sexual self-consciousness
- "acting out" sexual behaviour
- withdrawal from church activities and friends
- Self destructive behaviours

3. **Verbal** signs may include the following statements:

- I don't like (names a particular person)
- (Particular person) does things to me when we're alone
- I don't like to be alone with (particular person)
- (Particular person) fooled around with me

#### **d. RECOGNIZING ABUSE/NEGLECT OF VULNERABLE ADULTS**

Elder / vulnerable adult abuse is the mistreatment of an elderly / vulnerable person by someone they should be able to rely on. It can take different forms including:

1. Physical Violence: pushing, shaking, hitting, sexually molesting, rough handling, deliberate over/under medication or the improper use of restraints
2. Psychological Harm: threatening, bullying, name-calling, humiliating or degrading
3. Financial: withholding money, forcing the sale of property or possessions, theft, coercing changes in wills or misusing power of attorney responsibilities
4. Neglect: failing to provide adequate food, drink or medical attention; leaving an elderly person / vulnerable adult in an unsafe or isolated situation

#### **Risk Factors:**

Any vulnerable person may be a victim of abuse/neglect. Victims come from all walks of life, may be any gender, may be frail or in good health, and may be from varied ethno-cultural backgrounds. There are several risk factors including, but not limited to:

- A history of difficult family relationships, including past abuse;
- A suspected abuser has a history of poor adjustment e.g. emotional or psychiatric problems, substance abuse, antisocial behaviour, inability to sustain employment, inability to sustain other relationships;
- A suspected abuser is having difficulty coping with the stress related to caring for the vulnerable person, especially when there are other risk factors present;
- A vulnerable person is physically or socially isolated, especially when isolation is the result of cognitive or physical impairment, or lack of community resources.

#### **Signs of Vulnerable Person Abuse**

Vulnerable person abuse escalates the longer it continues. Signs of abuse are often subtle and many signs can also indicate other conditions such as physical or mental illness and sensory deprivation. It is important not to jump to conclusions; however, it is equally important not to ignore or justify the signs.

#### **Signs that may be exhibited by the vulnerable person experiencing abuse/neglect:**

##### **1. Behaviour**

- Is anxious, withdrawn, agitated, evasive, depressed or suicidal
- Shows fear of potential abuser; behaviour changes when potential abuser enters/leaves room
- Is frail or cognitively impaired and attends emergency treatment alone, without regular caregiver

##### **2. Habits**

- Sudden/unexpected change in social habits

- Sudden/unexpected change in residence or living arrangements
- Unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills, account withdrawals, changes to the person's will and/or Powers of Attorney, or the disappearance of possessions
- Refusal to spend money without consulting caregiver
- Claims of being "accident-prone"
- Missed/cancelled appointments, especially medical appointments

### **3. Health/Well Being**

- Sudden/unexpected decline in health or cognitive ability
- Decline in personal hygiene; skin ulcers
- Dehydration or malnutrition; sudden/rapid weight loss
- Signs of over/under medication
- Suspicious injuries: bruising in various stages of healing, on the face or eye area, the inner part of the thighs or arms, or around the wrists or ankles
- Sexually transmitted disease, itching, pain or bleeding in genital area, difficulty sitting or walking
- Explanation of injury or condition is: inappropriate to type/degree, vague or bizarre; or conflicting explanations are received from the vulnerable person and the caregiver or the person suspected of abuse
- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment
- Denial in view of obvious injury
- Previous reports of similar injury

### **4. Environment**

- Poor living conditions in comparison to assets
- Inappropriate or inadequate clothing
- Lack of food
- Lack of required medical aids, functional aids, or medications
- Evidence of locks or restraints
- Living in worse conditions than others in the home
- Involuntary separation from others in the home, friends or other family members

### **Signs that may be exhibited by the Potential Abuser:**

- Is verbally aggressive, insulting or threatening toward the vulnerable person
- Shows unusual degree of concern towards the vulnerable person (either too little or too much)
- Speaks for the vulnerable person - does not permit their involvement in making decisions
- Is reluctant to leave the vulnerable person alone with professionals

## B. PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

1. Worship Committee/Adult Education/Youth and Children's Ministry will provide yearly education during worship regarding the content of this document, and prevention/indicators of abuse to the church as a whole and all volunteers working with children, , and vulnerable adults (e.g. Sunday School teachers, pastors, elders, nursery caretakers, mentors, and Young Adult sponsors.)
2. Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, and Worship Committee (Children's time) will provide yearly education to children on personal safety, healthy adult-child relationships, and steps to take if they have been harmed.
3. Education could involve accessing and using Circles of Grace materials from Mennonite Church USA [Revised Circle of Grace Curriculum - 2023 version | CRC Network](#)

### CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The church, by its very nature as Christ's presence on earth, desires to be a safe place for all people. Creating a safe environment involves the physical space as well as the social/emotional environment. A safe social/ emotional environment is marked by its acceptance and respect for each individual's right to inclusion and participation in the group and their expression of ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Inclusive and respectful language is essential to a safe environment. Human warmth fosters a sense of acceptance, belonging, and evidence of God's Love.

Recognizing that abuse often happens outside the building or formal programs, these principles extend to all BMC events, including those gatherings in homes, vehicles and public places. A BMC event is defined as an event sanctioned by the church and has been publicized (i.e. in the bulletin or on the church calendar). It is the responsibility of all adults to **maintain appropriate boundaries** and not the responsibility of children, youth or vulnerable persons when there are authority differentials.

#### 1. Ratios of Children, Vulnerable Adults to Teachers and/or Leaders

BMC will endeavor to adhere to the adult/child ratios. Below are suggested child, and vulnerable adult-to-leaders ratios in a regular program, but additional adults can be helpful if one adult needs to leave the program temporarily. When and where possible it is recommended to account for gender specific ratios (i.e. 1 male and 1 female). For the purpose of supervision, it is recommended to be at least 5 years older than those they are supervising.

0-18 months: 2 adults to 6 children

2-5 years: 2 adults to 12 children

Ages 5-14: 2 adults to 15 children

Ages 15-18: 2 adults to 15 children

Vulnerable adults: 2 adults to 10 vulnerable adults

## **2. Restroom procedures**

When a child needs assistance with going to the restroom, the restroom door should remain open. Parents/guardians of small children are encouraged to take their children to the restroom before Sunday School or other supervised activities. If a young child is assisted in the restroom, the volunteer will inform the parents or guardians when they pick up the child at the end of class.

Changing of diapers to be done by parent/guardian.

## **3. Facility Safety**

Classrooms, offices, and meeting places have been designed to create a feeling of safety (e.g. windows installed in classrooms or doors or an 'open door policy').

Open door policy means the door is open when only one adult is in the room with children or vulnerable persons.

Renters of our facility and congregants are encouraged to notify the church office/ Property and Facilities about items that need repair and or could cause harm.

On Sunday mornings, running should only happen in the gym or outside and be careful to avoid bumping into anyone.

2. Our sanctuary is a very special place for BMC and therefore the church chairs/pews are for sitting rather than for jumping or running.

3. When we are sharing the outside space or gym with others who are not playing with us, we always throw or kick the balls away from where people are sitting or standing.

4. Visitors to the church office during the week will ring the doorbell at the front door to access the church office or call the staff on cell phone to enter the church.

5. Church doors will be locked at the start of evening meetings or within 15 minutes of the start of meeting.

The Children's Ministry Team will meet with Families to share and discuss safety concerns and will make additional decisions regarding safety for all.

## **4. Volunteer/Teacher Guidelines**

- All volunteers working with children, or vulnerable adults are required to have attended BMC for 6 months. Individuals new to the faith or without a previous church background will have a waiting period of one year to be considered for teaching or leading within BMC ministries.

- Volunteers will submit a Vulnerable Sector Check every 5 years. Annually, volunteers will sign a volunteer commitment (Appendix 4) stating that their record is clear. Anyone that refuses to provide these documents within a reasonable time period will not be permitted to work with children until they have met this criteria.
- Once a year, teachers/volunteers (including for church camp) will participate in education on training/abuse awareness and prevention. This may be reading suggested materials and or reviewing an online resource. New teachers/volunteers will participate in a group session.
- Once a year, teachers/volunteers (including for church camp) will be asked to read the Safe Space Guidelines and sign an agreement to abide by the policy (Appendix 4). Anyone who refuses to sign this agreement within a reasonable time period, will not be able to provide leadership or teach at BMC,
- If adults need to talk to a child in confidence, it is required to have another adult present. This protects both children and adults.

## 5. Parental Permission

For the safety of children, and leaders, it is important to receive permission from parents/guardians for their child's participation in activities. This includes activities such as Children's Sunday School, Summer Camp, and Youth events. This permission is divided into two areas: assumed consent and informed high risk consent.

- *Assumed Consent:* Parents of Children participating in regular BMC events or programs will be asked to fill out a consent form (Appendix 1 and 2). This form provides the church and program leaders with necessary information, including medical information and emergency contacts. This form grants parental consent for activities whether on or off church premises which are not determined to be high risk, including transportation to events and the taking of photographs.
  - The consent for each activity will be assumed when the parent/guardian brings the child to the activity.
  - These forms will be kept confidential and kept in the church office. Adult volunteers should be made aware of where these consent forms are located and should have access to these during their volunteering time frame and events.
- *Informed/High Risk Consent:* Throughout the year there may be events which are considered higher risk. These events could include non-BMC sponsored events (e.g. MCEC overnight trips, or events which require permission forms or signatures for another agency). This additional permission form can be found in Appendix 3.

## 6. BMC Social Media Policy

BMC recognizes the benefit of communication and learning via social media tools, while also acknowledging the wide reaching and publicly accessible nature of social media which can result in the potential for abuse and/or negative impact on individuals and the BMC community. These guidelines are intended to be a useful tool within all BMC ministries.

*Protection of Personal Information:* BMC strives to ensure all personal information remains confidential. This is done through:

- Protecting the names and information of children under 18 years of age. The church office will make distinctions between the use of names online and offline. .
- Any documents containing personal information that are accessible online will only be posted in the log-in section of the church website which requires password access.
- The church office will not give out personal contact information to anyone outside of BMC.
- Consent will be obtained from the parents of children for photo and video use by BMC. Consents are divided into internal and external (website, facebook, instagram etc) use and parents must indicate their preference regarding use of photos by BMC designated people.
- Parents need to complete another form when their preferences change.
- When individuals wish to post images of congregants on their personal social media they must obtain this consent from the parents of the children and from the adults who are on these images.
- The registration forms found in the appendix will be updated by BMC staff as church information changes and these updated forms will replace the previous version online. This is part of the information and permission forms for all children under the age of 18 years, (Appendix XX and XX)

*Authorization:* When it comes to any and all BMC social media or online presence, oversight and resources are provided by BMC's Communications Committee and the Web Manager.

Any social media presence representing BMC must be authorized by the Communications Committee and the Web Manager. The same goes for any additions or changes to BMC's website. Any concerns arising from representing BMC online will be brought by the Communications Committee to Church Council.

*Use of Social Media with Children:* Social media and other electronic communications will be used for the purpose of BMC ministries and children. These guidelines should be followed:

- Adults will not initiate one-on-one conversations via social media with children
- If a child initiates online communication with an adult, the adult should keep a log of name/date/time/topic of conversation. If possible, save the text of the conversation. The adult needs to inform the parent and/or another leadership person about this occurrence. The adult will explain to the child about appropriate communication.
- Use platforms that allow for some kind of record to be created. Save chats or texts. Save or record videos.
- Adults will limit one on one electronic communication with children . "Emails, messages, text or phone conversations should be short and should usually be a one off communication to arrange a meeting or reminder to attend an event."
- Parents or guardians will be copied on emails and kept apprised of ongoing text or phone conversations.
- Online platforms can be used by a sub group of the congregation to promote participation in an event or activities. We will be mindful of inclusion practices and respect people's personal

choices and preferences. When individuals make changes to their preferences these will be communicated to the participants/leaders of the group. When a new platform is used- an invitation will be sent to everyone who relates with this group and conversation will occur regarding the use of this platform.

- Individuals will take photos of their friends at church. These photos will not be shared on FB, instagram or other social media sites unless permission has been granted.
- Adults should never send connection requests to children.
- BMC has a login section that is password protected. This password will be changed when there are any abuse allegations against a congregant. Congregants need to request the password from the church office.

*Use of BMC Wireless Connection:* This wireless network is provided as a free service by BMC. This public connection is intended for the limited personal, non-commercial use of congregants/visitors at BMC. In providing this free wireless connection, BMC may restrict access to certain sites considered to be illegal, malicious, or inappropriate.

- BMC does not guarantee the security of this wireless connection; participants use it at their own risk.
- BMC's wireless connection is password protected. Individuals will be provided with the password as needed.

## **C. EDUCATION**

1. BMC Revised Guidelines to Promote Safety are available on the church website and a paper copy is available in the church office and the bulletin board rack.
2. Pastoral staff are required to comply with the Guiding Ministerial Leadership in Mennonite Churches (GLMC) training mandate. As of the writing of this document, MCEC requires training with initial employment and additional training every 2-3 years.
  - Pastors are required to provide a recent vulnerable persons clearance upon hiring and then every 5 years thereafter. One copy should be sent to the church office.
3. All persons working with children and vulnerable adults will participate in an education session before they begin their assignment and will annually review the BMC Revised Safe Space Guidelines.
4. Volunteers will sign the volunteer commitment form (Appendix 4) annually and these will be stored in the church office. Children's Ministry/Youth Coordinator/ Pastor will decide next steps when volunteers do not complete these forms within a reasonable amount of time and reminders.
5. All BMC leadership (Children's ministry, Youth Ministry, Church Council, Elders Pastors) will familiarize themselves with this document regularly and/or at least annually so that they have a working knowledge of the guidelines.
6. The Worship Committee will plan and facilitate one worship service and the Adult, Education Committee will host an adult/youth session annually on Healthy relationships and Abuse prevention. The vice chair or their designate will ensure that these occur.

7. All persons working with children are required to complete annual training on abuse prevention, planned by the Children's Ministry Team and Pastor.
8. Resources and training documents listed in Appendix 6 can be utilized for this training. This training shall include:
  - The policies and procedures within the BMC Safe Space Guidelines
  - Recognizing signs and symptoms of child abuse
  - Responding to a child's report of abuse (Appendix 8: Frequently Asked Questions on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect)
  - Procedures for reporting abuse
  - Behavioral expectations for volunteers, staff and leaders in children's programs
  - Location and use of all first aid and safety equipment
  - Reminder regarding Incident Reports

#### **D. PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST CHILDREN**

The purpose of implementing procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse is to protect the innocent and the vulnerable, stop the abuse, and promote justice, restoration and healing. These procedures offer, for the victim and the offender, opportunities for the truth to be spoken, for any violation to be acknowledged, for accountability to be exercised, and for compassion to be demonstrated in ways that serve justice and restorative healing.

Suspicions of potential child abuse may be raised in a number of ways, including:

- witnessing an abusive incident
- observing physical or psychological signs
- symptoms of abuse with no actual report by the child
- hearing a report from the victim or another child

Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region has the exclusive mandate to investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect, and provide child protection services. An official will be assigned and will investigate the allegations, involving other authorities as needed.

In the case of any suspected child/ abuse, BMC leadership will work alongside the authorities in ensuring the protection of victims and pastoral care for the entire congregation, according to the following procedures:

1. Anyone with reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is being mistreated or is receiving inadequate care and supervision is required to report such suspicions to: Family and Children's Services( F&CS) of the Waterloo Region, 200 Ardelt Avenue, Kitchener. 519-576-0540.

2. The call must be made by the person who is making the allegation. Often we are unsure if this situation is reportable and so one can call Family and Children's services on a consultative basis. When the F and CS worker states it is reportable then the report must be made revealing the identity of the people involved along with all pertinent information to this situation.
3. A pastor/elder may be informed/consulted before reporting, and if not available, then the call must be made to Family and Children's services and a pastor or Elder designate must be informed following the call. The Chair of the Church Council will also be informed that a report has been made.
  - When an allegation is made against a BMC pastor or congregational leader, then Read the options available at <https://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resources/leader-misconduct> and follow one of the options available online. One of the options is contacting the Executive Minister, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada at the time of reporting (226-476-2500 (ext. 704)). Additional MCEC guidelines for navigation, resolution and support will be followed.
4. The Family and Children's Services official will guide the process and will advise whether and when it is appropriate to speak with the parent or guardian as well as what steps BMC is required to take.
5. Any person suspected of the abuse will not be told of the suspicion or the intention to report. Only under the direction of Family and Children's Services will the information be disclosed to the alleged person.
6. Incidents of suspected child abuse or neglect must be documented after the reporting.
  - Documentation must be prepared by the person who reported the suspected abuse, must be factual and must be signed and dated. It should be released at such time that there is a legal requirement to do so. The Incident Report in Appendix 5 should be used.
  - All documentation related to an allegation needs to be secured in a locked file in the church office.
  - Access to this information should be limited to the specified persons in the congregation responsible for providing leadership in this area, to the Family & Children's Services, and police, and when required, a church appointed lawyer and/or insurance carrier.
7. All information related to disclosure or an allegation of abuse will be treated confidentially to the extent possible.
8. The notification of the child's parents of the suspicion of abuse must be carried out only in consultation with the Family & Children's Services or the police.

More guidance regarding reporting can be found at  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/report-child-abuse-and-neglect>

If, after a report is made to the Family & Children's Services or the police, the authorities choose not to investigate and, if there is still concern for the child's wellbeing, then the witness

and other employees/volunteers or person generally in contact with the child in the church should be instructed to keep a written log of any further signs, symptoms or events that may indicate neglect and/or abusive behaviour.

## **Congregational Procedures for Allegations of Abuse of Children**

### **Confidentiality:**

Any report and subsequent documentation of suspected child abuse is to be considered and treated as confidential.

Family and Children's Services will provide guidance and instruction regarding next steps.

It is recognized that the witnesses to any suspicions of child abuse will require support, especially once a report is made to the authorities. Appropriate pastoral support is key to their well-being, and they should also be instructed on how to respond if the child, parents, or other interested parties contact him/her. Such instructions should include:

- refraining from sharing any statement made by the child with anyone other than the authorities until the authorities have determined whether or not the child needs to be protected from contact with that person
- refraining from sharing with the parent, or any other person, information that has not been reported to the authorities
- refraining from attempting to convince a parent that the alleged abuse did or did not happen
- listening to any information a parent or other party may offer about the suspected abuse, recording it immediately after the conversation, and ensuring this additional information is reported in a manner consistent with the original report of suspected abuse
- assuring parents of the confidential nature of the report and the need to maintain confidentiality to the degree permitted by law

### **Precautions:**

Appropriate precautions must be undertaken to ensure that the child who has experienced abuse and other children in the church are kept safe during the ongoing investigation by the authorities, which may include immediate suspension of the alleged perpetrator pending outcome of investigation.

### **Support:**

Plans for pastoral and possibly clinical support of all parties involved need to be developed by Elders and pastoral team as soon as the investigation is underway. Resources for children, parents, the accused, and the congregation are available via counselling services, church-related ministries, MCEC offices in Kitchener, Family & Children Services, and police services.

## **E. PROCEDURES FOR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE IN CASES NOT INVOLVING CHILDREN**

The purpose of implementing procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse is to protect the innocent and the vulnerable, interrupt the abuse, and promote justice, restoration and healing. These procedures offer, for the victim and the offender, opportunities for the truth to be spoken, for any violation to be acknowledged, for accountability to be exercised and for compassion to be demonstrated in ways that serve justice and restorative healing.

In the case of any suspected abuse, neglect or harassment, BMC leadership (pastor/elders) will work alongside the Pastor Congregation Resources Committee in ensuring the protection of victims and pastoral care for the entire congregation. If you suspect the abuse of a vulnerable person, see Appendix 9 for further information.

Any person with allegations of abuse or neglect will be immediately suspended from all leadership activities, pending completion of an investigation. Depending on the context of situation, church leadership can instruct the accused individual to refrain from participating in any BMC programming.

When reporting the abuse of an adult/vulnerable person, seek the consent of that adult before reporting to local authorities or church leadership. If you are the abused adult/vulnerable person, you are also encouraged to pursue any or all of the following options. See appendix 9 for additional information regarding abuse of vulnerable adults.

### **When a report is made:**

1. In a case of alleged Church leadership misconduct (pastor or congregation leaders), immediate contact will be made to the MCEC Executive Minister or Camino: Wellbeing + Mental Health Agency, according to the circumstances. Further information can be found at <https://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resources/leader-misconduct>
2. Incidents shall be recorded in writing by the concerned party (Incident Report: Appendix 5). Blank copies of this form can be obtained from the church office or the church website. Pastors or Elders are available to help with this step. Completed forms should be given to a pastor or elder for filing in a secure location in the church office.
3. The complainant will be directed to local resources as needed.
4. Throughout the process, the complainant is entitled to an advocate to help them evaluate their options and to communicate about the case on their behalf.
5. The alleged abuser may also name an advocate to aid in communication with the Response Team (described below).

### **Congregational Response:**

When the congregational leadership becomes aware of a report of abuse, the following steps will be taken. These steps apply whenever the person accused of abuse is in fellowship within the congregation, regardless of the victim's involvement with the congregation.

1. A Response Team will be named consisting of the Chair or Vice-chair of Church Council, an Elder, and the member advocate to carry the congregational process forward. The Response Team can invite additional members to assist with this process, as needed.
  - The Response Team may include pastoral staff depending on circumstances of the situation. Individuals closely related to one another or any of the parties in the complaint are not to be part of the Response Team.
2. MCEC will be contacted for congregational support and resourcing ASAP. This could include contacting additional resources (e.g. Counselling Agency) to create and facilitate the investigation plan.
3. The Response Team will inform the accused individual that an allegation has been made against them, and will be asked to sign a limited access agreement for the duration of the investigation. This limited access agreement will relieve them of their congregational responsibilities, and set the terms for their continued participation in congregational life, up to suspension from all congregational events. The exact terms of the limited access agreement will be determined by the Church Council/Response Team. Resources on limited access agreements can be found in Appendix 7.
4. The accused individual may be asked to cease contact with the congregation."
5. Church Council will inform the congregation of the limited access agreement within 7 days, both verbally and in writing. This may happen through an announcement during worship, a letter in church mailboxes or an e-mail. This will include a call for other complainants to come forward to the Pastors and/or Response Team.
6. Pastoral care resources will be offered. The congregation will be asked to pray for those involved.
7. When there is change with the situation, and it is advisable for the congregation to be informed, and respecting confidentiality and privacy, the congregation will receive an update from the Response Team.

## **F. ENSURING COMPLIANCE**

All adults involved in programs with children and vulnerable adults will be required to:

1. Read the Revised Safe Place Guidelines.
2. Participate in educational session provided by BMC
3. Sign the Annual "Volunteer Commitment to Create a Safe Environment" form set out in Appendix 4.
4. Provide a Vulnerable Sector Check every 5 years.

<https://www.wrps.on.ca/en/services-reporting/police-vulnerable-sector-check.aspx>

The BMC Church Administrative Assistant, along with those running the various programs (e.g. Children's Ministry Coordinator, Youth Ministry Coordinator, etc.) will be jointly responsible for distributing and collecting volunteer forms at the beginning of the school year or other program/activity. Program leads will provide a list of all volunteers that are working with children and/or youth in the coming year to the Administrative Assistant. These forms will be kept in the

main office along with the complete list of everyone who has filled them out and has provided a recent Vulnerable Sectors Check. The staff person responsible for children may also keep these forms in their office for handy reference.

Additionally, the Administrative Assistant will collect the Annual “Volunteer Commitment to Create a Safe Environment” forms of all volunteers working with children, and vulnerable adults. If these forms have not been received within one month, the Administrative Assistant will immediately inform the Pastoral team.

When the Administrative Assistant is a member of the congregation, discretion will be used regarding their involvement/awareness of sensitive/confidential situations.

This revised document will be shared with BMC’s insurance provider after council has reviewed it. When reports of abuse allegations occur, this information will be shared with the insurance broker within a reasonable time period by the congregation insurance representative.

It will be the responsibility of the Vice Chair of Church Council to ensure yearly educational components are offered to all volunteers, preferably at the beginning of each school year.

Every 3 years, the Vice Chair of Church Council will lead an ad hoc committee to audit the church’s compliance with the Revised Safe Place Guidelines and to assess if changes are needed to the Guidelines.

Safe Church USA document encourages congregations to include a section about the inclusion of a known sex offender wanting to attend the faith community. At this point the review committee does not have the capacity to create guidelines for this inclusion. It is suggested that this be included in the next review.

**Next review to be completed by October 2028**

## **APPENDICES**

# Appendix 1: Children's Ministry Information and Permission ( Draft)

## Breslau Mennonite Church

226 Woolwich Street South, Breslau, Ontario N0B 1M0 Phone: 519-648-2501

Email: [office@breslaumc.ca](mailto:office@breslaumc.ca) Website: [www.breslaumc.ca](http://www.breslaumc.ca)

### CHILDREN'S MINISTRY INFORMATION AND PERMISSION

**Name of Child (1):** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Sept 2025: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade of Sept 2025: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Child (2):** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Sept 2025: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade of Sept 2025: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Child (3):** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Sept 2025: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade of Sept 2025: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parents'/Guardians' Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell)

Email Address(es): \_\_\_\_\_

Other adults who may be picking up or dropping off child(ren): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Emergency Contact during Church and Sunday School Hour:

- I/we will probably be in the church building
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Emergency Contact Information (name and phone number): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Special interests and activities:**

**Allergies/medications:**

**Is there anything that would be helpful to know to help make Sunday School a positive experience for your child? (e.g. do they require extra support in school, strategies or adaptations that are helpful for them etc.) Please indicate what (if anything) you would like shared with the Sunday School teachers.**

**Photo Consent: Photos convey important messages and from time to time BMC ministries prefer to use photos of children to communicate our BMC story.**

Do you give consent for your child/children's photos or videos used during a church service, powerpoint presentation, newsletter etc.? No names will be posted in any formats, unless parental permission has been granted

- Yes, my children's photographs can be used for BMC purposes.
- No, to the use of my children's photographs for Church communications... I recognize that our boundaries require this information to be shared amongst the platform members so that this boundary is known and will be respected. Should we change our decision we will sign another form to update BMC.
- Additional consent given for more specific direction.

Comments/stipulations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Parental Consent:**

I hereby give permission for my child/children listed above to participate in children's ministry at Breslau Mennonite Church. I understand that leaders will follow BMC Safe Place Guidelines to the best of their ability. I give leaders permission to procure treatment to the best of their judgement for any medical injury requiring immediate attention, and in such an event I will be contacted as soon as possible. I will not hold BMC or its leaders responsible for injury or damage to person or property while participating in this program.

Parent/Guardian Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

*All above information will be stored in a confidential file and shared with teachers and pastors as needed.*

**Appendix 2: Youth Ministries Information Record and Assumed Consent**

**Breslau Mennonite Church**

### YOUTH INFORMATION RECORD AND ASSUMED CONSENT

Name of youth: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade (Sept '25): \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Youth's Email (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

#### EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Parent/Guardian 1

Name (1) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian 2

Name (1) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell)

#### MEDICAL INFORMATION:

Youth's Health Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies/sensitivities: \_\_\_\_\_

Medications: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_

#### GENERAL PERMISSION AND ASSUMED CONSENT

*Photo Consent:*

Do you give consent for your teenager's photo to be taken and used in Breslau Mennonite Church media (e.g. newsletter, photo albums, PowerPoint Presentations, internet, bulletin

board, etc)? All photos and videos will be used for church purposes, and could be distributed, upon request, to families of persons in the photos or videos taken. It will be for private use only. Any internet posting by the church will not include names.

- Yes
- No

Comments/Stipulations: \_\_\_\_\_

*Driving Consent:*

I give permission for my teenager to be driven by a sponsor during events, with the understanding that those driving will follow BMC Safe Place Guidelines to the best of their ability.

- Yes
- No

Comments/Stipulations: \_\_\_\_\_

I give permission for my teenager to be driven by other youth during events, with the understanding that those youth have met the proper requirements for their G2 licence.

- Yes
- No

Comments/Stipulations: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby give permission for my teenager listed above to participate in youth ministry at Breslau Mennonite Church. I acknowledge that by dropping my teen off at events, I am therefore giving permission for them to participate in the event. This assumed consent covers events at the church, overnight events at the church, and local off site events. Any high risk or overnight away events will require additional permission. I understand that leaders will follow BMC Safe Place Guidelines to the best of their ability.

I give leaders permission to procure treatment to the best of their judgement for any medical injury requiring immediate attention, and in such an event I will be contacted as soon as possible. I will not hold BMC or its leaders responsible for injury or damage to person or property while participating in this program.

Parent/Guardian Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Appendix 3: Permission Form for High Risk/Offsite Events

### Breslau Mennonite Church

226 Woolwich Street South, Breslau, Ontario N0B 1M0 Phone: 519-648-2501

Email: [office@breslaumc.ca](mailto:office@breslaumc.ca) Website: [www.breslaumc.ca](http://www.breslaumc.ca)

### PERMISSION FORM FOR HIGH RISK/OFFSITE EVENTS

Event Details: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Adult Leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name of Youth: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade (Sept '25): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent contact during event: Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact during event: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Has the youth filled out a BMC information sheet?

- Yes
- No

If no, please contact the church to request the form

If yes, has there been any change to the youth's health, medications or other concerns?

- Yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- No

#### 2. PARENTAL CONSENT

I hereby grant permission for my youth \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the BMC sponsored event named above. I understand that leaders will follow BMC Safe Place Guidelines to the best of their ability. I give leaders of this event permission to procure treatment to the best of their judgment for any medical injury requiring immediate attention, and in such an event I will be contacted as soon as possible. I will not hold BMC or its leaders responsible for injury or damages to person or property while participating in the program.

Parent/Guardian Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

*The above information will be kept with the leaders during the event, and stored in a confidential file at the church.*

## Appendix 4: Volunteer Commitment to Create a Safe Environment

### Breslau Mennonite Church

226 Woolwich Street South, Breslau, Ontario N0B 1M0 Phone: 519-648-2501

Email: [office@breslaumc.ca](mailto:office@breslaumc.ca) Website: [www.breslaumc.ca](http://www.breslaumc.ca)

### VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT TO CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

As a volunteer at Breslau Mennonite Church:

- ⇒ I have read the BMC Revised “Safe Space Guidelines” and will follow it to the best of my abilities.
- ⇒ I accept the responsibility to speak and act in ways that honour the image of God in the individuals in my care.
- ⇒ I will not use words, electronic communications or actions that constitute abusive behaviour.
- ⇒ I acknowledge that it is necessary for me to seek parental permission to be alone with a child or youth who is part of a church program (e.g. taking a youth out for a birthday lunch).
- ⇒ I acknowledge that program events should take place in public spaces or spaces equipped with windows in the doors.
- ⇒ I acknowledge that if I have a reasonable suspicion of the abuse of a child within the congregation or at a church sponsored event, I must report the suspicion to Family and Children Services Waterloo Region.
- ⇒ I DECLARE, since the last Vulnerable Sectors Check collected by Breslau Mennonite church that: I have no convictions under the Criminal Code of Canada up to and including the date of this declaration.

Volunteer’s Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Pastor/Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5: Incident Report

### Breslau Mennonite Church

226 Woolwich Street South, Breslau, Ontario N0B 1M0 Phone: 519-648-2501

Email: [office@breslaumc.ca](mailto:office@breslaumc.ca) Website: [www.breslaumc.ca](http://www.breslaumc.ca)

### INCIDENT REPORT

#### General Information

Reported by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time of Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Reported Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Reporter Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Incident Information

Date/Time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Location of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and age of individual the report is regarding: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of the incident: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Description of injuries sustained: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Description of actions taken: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Was the parent/guardian contacted and informed about the incident? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

If no, please state the reason.

**Witnesses**

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

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby confirm that the information provided in this report is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

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

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

If you have reason to believe that a child is in need of protection or is at risk of harm, call Family and Children Services of Waterloo Region (<https://www.facswaterloo.org/>) at 519-576-0540

- For further guidance in determining whether to report to Family and Children Service, see the BMC Safe Space Guidelines – Appendix 8: FAQs on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

## Appendix 6: Additional Resources

To ensure an adequate understanding of abuse, all congregants are encouraged to read Let the Children Come: Preparing Faith Communities to End Child Abuse and Neglect, by Jeanette Harder (Herald Press: 2010). A copy is available in the church library.

Other helpful resources include:

### References:

**Safe church policy** [Safe Church - Mennonite Church Canada  
www.mennonitechurch.ca/safe-church](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/safe-church)

**Commonword Webinars/** Videos and books available from Mennonite Church Canada's: CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Center, [www.commonword.ca](http://www.commonword.ca)

### Circles of Grace

Elder Abuse: What you Need to Know, by the Waterloo Region Committee on Elder Abuse. Available in the church library.

Safe Place Handbook. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Board of Church Ministries, Feb. 1996.

Broken Boundaries. Resources for Pastoring People. MCC Domestic Violence Task Force, 1989.

Five Ways Your Parish Can Work to Become a Safe Place. ELCA Commission for Women, 1989.

Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church. Melton, Joy Thronburg. Nashville: TN, Discipleship Resources, 1998.

A Plan to Protect The Children, Youth, and Leaders at your Church. PAOC 2003.

### Videos:

Bless our Children: A 40 minute video produced by the Centre for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1993. For those exploring the possibility of implementing a child sexual abuse prevention program based on the curricula listed below.

Hear Their Cries: A 48 Minutes video produced by the Centre for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1992. A documentary on the role of clergy and lay leaders in preventing child abuse.

Ask Before You Hug: 31 minute video, produced by UM Com, 1995. This training video presents six different situations that portray a range of inappropriate behaviour in church settings. It offers suggestions on how to act and react appropriately.

### Children's Curricula

Reid, Kathryn Goering. Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: A Curriculum for Children Ages Five Through Eight. Cleveland: OH, United Church Press, 1994.

Reid, Kathryn Goering with Marie M. Fortune. Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: A Curriculum for Children Ages Nine Through Twelve. New York: United Church Press, 1989.

**For Adult Study**

Anderson, Bill. When Child Abuse Come to Church. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers. 1992.

Heggen, Carolyn Holderread. Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches. Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1993.

Cameron Altaras Carol Penner Resistance confronting Violence, and Power and Abuse within the Peace Churches - 2022 book available in BMC library

Safer Sanctuaries Nurturing Trust within Faith communities 2023 Available from Upper Room [Safer Sanctuaries - Upper Room Books](#)

*Safer Sanctuaries* acknowledges the fears that swirl around the subject of abuse and encourages churches to respond with honesty, open communication, and accountability to the challenges faced in these communities. This approach allows communities to encourage flourishing instead of fear and build welcoming, thriving communities that are open and safe for everyone.

## Appendix 7: Limited Access Agreement Suggested Template

### Breslau Mennonite Church

226 Woolwich Street South, Breslau, Ontario N0B 1M0 Phone: 519-648-2501

Email: [office@breslaumc.ca](mailto:office@breslaumc.ca) Website: [www.breslaumc.ca](http://www.breslaumc.ca)

### LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT

Serious accusations have been made against you and have been brought to the attention of the pastor and Church Council. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and others. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be kept in a locked file in the church office.

#### Agreement

We welcome you as part of this congregation and your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of others.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ am entering this Limited Access Agreement with Breslau Mennonite Church. It will be in effect for the duration of my participation with the church, unless Church Council and/or the Response Team revises or cancels it.

Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in worship, committee meetings, adult education, and adult social events, with the exception of any legal restrictions placed upon you that may bar your participation. You are to avoid contact with children on congregation property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes the following:

- Do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone, or participate in events for children, youth, and vulnerable adults including religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- Avoid being in the building or on the church grounds unless supervised by a member of the Response Team or their designate at all times.
- Do not engage with children, youth or vulnerable adults through social media.

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I do not sign this agreement or I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property. I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every six months by the Response Team and will remain in effect until determined otherwise by the leadership of Breslau Mennonite Church.

Alleged abuser name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

We, the designated representatives of Breslau Mennonite Church, have met with the party to this agreement to review the provisions of this covenant.

Pastor name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Church Council Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Advocate of alleged abuser: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 8: Frequently Asked Questions on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Taken from Let the Children Come: Preparing Faith Communities to End Child Abuse and Neglect, by Jeanette Harder, p. 171-175

### 1. What if I'm not sure?

- \* Think about the facts - what did the child tell you? What did you observe? What did you hear? Don't second-guess the facts. Report what you heard and saw.
- \* Talk with someone who is knowledgeable about child abuse and neglect and/or the family (but don't let this delay you too long in making the report).
- \* Think about the abuse from the perspective of the child(ren), not the possible abuser. Is the child safe? Does the child need protecting?
- \* Think about how you would feel if the child is hurt and you hadn't taken action
- \* Please share your concern with an elder/pastor.

### 2. Whom should I call?

Family and Children Services of Waterloo Region: 519-576-0540, <http://www.facswaterloo.org/>

### 3. What Happens When I Call Family and Children Services?

Your call will be answered by a child protection worker who will listen carefully and ask questions about what you have seen and heard. What you say will help the child protection worker assess if there are child protection concerns and, if so, the best way to help and how quickly we should respond. If new concerns arise since your initial call, it is important that you call us again to let us know.

Just because you call and make a report does not mean that the child will be taken away from the family. In fact, over 90% of the families we work with just need help to make some changes. We work in a respectful way to provide support and guidance for families so that they can safely care for their children. We are here to help.

**If you have reason to believe that a child is in need of protection or is at risk of harm, or you are looking for support for your family, call us at 519-576-0540. Let's talk together, work together and figure it out together.**

### 4. Will I have to give my name?

It is preferred to provide your name and contact information but you can report anonymously.

### 5. How will Family and Children's service assist?

*Information from Waterloo Region Family and Children's service website*

When we receive a call, we gather as much information as possible to determine if help is needed and how we should respond. If a child or youth may be in need of protection, we will develop a plan together with the family that creates safety and well-being of the child or youth and supports the family.

When help is needed over a longer period of time; assessment, planning and supports are provided for the family by child welfare professionals who have a blend of expertise and resources that best fits the child, youth and family's situation.

We believe the best way to help is by planning together with families and their networks of support at the earliest stage possible.

Children do best when they are at home safely with their families. It may be helpful for families to know that the vast majority of the work we do is supporting families to care safely for their children at home.

Sometimes there is a concern that is serious enough that the child will not be safe in either of their parents' care. When this happens, we look for extended family or others known to the child who can take care of them while their parents work on making some changes.

#### **6. Should I tell the child or parent?**

Please ask the child protection worker about whether it is appropriate for you to share with the affected family when reporting a concern.

#### **7. I'm feeling sad/confused/angry about reporting abuse - is this normal?**

Absolutely. Reporting child abuse or neglect feels awful. On one hand, you feel frightened for the child, but on the other hand, you wonder if you're making too big a deal of what you saw or observed. Perhaps you doubt your own eyes or ears. It doesn't help that it may feel like you're telling on someone. You may also feel angry toward the alleged abuser.

Here are some tips on what you can do:

- \* Focus on the child's need for safety and remind yourself that you acted on the information you had available to you at that time.
- \* Remember that no child deserves to be hurt or placed in harm's way
- \* Seek the support of someone who is knowledgeable of child abuse and neglect and talk about your feelings (but remember to protect the confidentiality of the child and/or family).
- \* Write your thoughts and feelings in a journal.
- \* Hug your own family members.
- \* Do something that you find comforting: talk to a friend, exercise, listen to music, read a book.
- \* Immerse yourself in your regular daily activities

#### **8. I've reported, now what do I do?**

If you have not done so already, inform a pastor or elder.

#### **9. What if the child protection authorities do nothing?**

The authorities may not respond as quickly as you wish or in the way that you wish. They must work within the constraints of their context and must find evidence of abuse or neglect in order to take action. You can report suspected abuse and neglect again later, and this time, more evidence may be available. In the meantime, remain available to the child and parents, as appropriate.

## **Appendix 9: Support and Assistance for Vulnerable Adults who have experienced abuse**

### **Additional Information on assessing abuse or neglect of vulnerable persons**

#### **Explore the causes / explanations for signs which suggest abuse by:**

- \* Talking to the vulnerable person, if possible alone (do not rely on the explanations given by others)
- \* Observing behaviour closely
- \* Using non-threatening questions to the vulnerable person such as, "Are you getting all the help you need?" and to the caregiver, "Do you need more help looking after...?"
- \* Focusing on the unmet needs of the vulnerable person as opposed to blaming or reprimanding the suspected abuser
- \* Being reassuring, as guilt and shame are barriers to getting help
- \* When there is a concern about the well-being of a vulnerable person, consider requesting a Wellness check.

#### **Give every vulnerable person an opportunity to express concerns about being abused.**

Do this by routinely asking non-threatening screening questions of every vulnerable person and of every caregiver, such as:

- \* Is everything going alright at home?
- \* Is there anything going on in your life that you'd like to talk about?
- \* Are you getting all the help you need?

Note: Do not ask questions of this type if the vulnerable person is in the presence of someone who is suspected of abuse.

**~Remember to document everything~**

### **Assessment of Abuse**

The assessment of the alleged abuse will be coordinated by a Response Team, similar to the Response Team identified previously in the guidelines, which may include external organizations for assessment and interventions.

### **INFORMATION FOR THE RESPONSE TEAM ON ADDRESSING ABUSE**

Considerations for addressing the alleged abuse or neglect:

#### **1. Is this an emergency?**

An emergency is any situation in which the vulnerable person's safety, health or well-being is in imminent and serious danger. Serious danger may result from physical assault, the threat of imminent assault, the presence of life threatening medical problems or living in an unsafe environment.

If there is an emergency, police and/or ambulance involvement may be necessary.

## **2. Does the person have sufficient cognitive capacity?**

If the individual does not understand and is not able to make decisions, the intervention will emphasize taking protective actions. To ensure that the individual's values and wishes are respected, it is important to involve the individual to the extent that they are able and to involve other trusted family members and friends.

If an individual has limited understanding and is experiencing serious harm due to abuse and there are no other family members willing and able to make decisions, contact the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee's Investigations line at 416-327-6348 or Toll Free 1-844-640-3615.

## **3. Is the vulnerable person ready to act?**

An informed choice by a mentally competent individual to stay in an abusive situation must be respected.

An informed choice means the individual understands the situation, the options available, the consequences of pursuing those options and the ability to choose freely. If the individual is saying he or she does not want things to change, but there is a question about whether this is an informed choice, pursue this further and attempt to refocus the intervention.

Instead of working with the vulnerable person directly on abuse/neglect issues, try to provide assistance to improve the vulnerable person's sense of worth and self-confidence. Find out what small changes the vulnerable person would like to make and then provide support and assistance towards these goals.

### **If the vulnerable person is resisting all efforts of intervention:**

- \* Express concern for their well-being;
- \* Provide a number to call for help;
- \* Inform the individual about vulnerable abuse: that it is a problem affecting thousands; that it gets worse the longer it continues; that there is help; and that the individual is not alone;
- \* Arrange a follow-up visit and develop a safety plan.

### **Approaches to Intervention**

Once the situation is understood, begin to work with the cognitively capable vulnerable person to resolve the problem.

Build on strengths:

- \* Educate on abuse..... abuse is never acceptable; options available for responding to the situation
- \* Support - be nonjudgmental and open minded; listen and try to understand the person's needs and wants
- \* Explore options - let the vulnerable person know there is help and the options available
- \* Build social networks/reduce isolation -increase the number of people who are able to provide positive support; provide opportunities to build self-esteem.
- \* Encourage responsibility for safety - encourage the vulnerable person to develop a safety plan
- \* Relieve the caregiver - when caregiver stress is a factor in the abuse, it may be relieved by services designed to provide respite and assistance. Options include home health and home support services, day programs, respite admissions or placement in a Long-Term Care Home.

- \* Be open-minded with the abuser - appreciate that the vulnerable person usually wants to maintain the relationship with the abuser. Avoid being judgmental about care-giving efforts.
- \* Multi-agency or multi-disciplinary approach - The person who recognizes the abuse may be advised or assisted by other agencies and professionals who have experience working with people affected by abuse.

### **Protective Measures**

- \* Bring outsiders into the home - In many cases, abuse will subside when it is open to public scrutiny. Introducing home health or home support services and re-establishing family ties and visits, may all serve this purpose. In some cases, but not all, commencing a police investigation serves as a deterrent, even if no charges are laid.
- \* When there are concerns about an individual and one has not been able to make contact with this a vulnerable person, then one can call the non emergency police number and request a wellness check. When making the call provide details regarding your concern and a police officer will visit the home. Depending on the situation the police officer may request another professional to join this person for this visit
- \* Separate the abuser and vulnerable person - the most intrusive, and often least desired option is to separate the abuser and vulnerable person. However, separation does provide needed safety and security for the vulnerable person. Options include removing the vulnerable person from the home by finding alternative accommodation or long-term care placement. Another option is to remove the abuser by using legal options such as peace bonds or restraining orders.

**NOTE:** Many forms of vulnerable person abuse are crimes under the Criminal Code of Canada. Some of these include:  
assault, forcible confinement, fraud, theft and failure to provide basic necessities of life.

### **REFERRAL TO OTHER AGENCIES FOR ASSISTANCE**

Shalom Counselling

tel:519 886 9690

[Safe & Found | MedicAlert Foundation Canada](#)  
[Waterloo Wellington area | Ontario Health atHome](#)

Waterloo Regional Police Services

tel:519 570 9777

Wellness check

tel:519 570 9777

Victim Services of Waterloo Region

tel:519-585-2363

(After Hours 519-570-5143)

Office of Ontario Public Guardian & Trustee

tel: 1-800-366-0335