

Policy 7
SAMC Safe Place Policy
(revised and reformatted 2021)

Table of Contents

1.0 FOREWORD AND UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

2.0 DEFINITIONS

3.0 SCREENING

4.0 OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

- 4.01 General
- 4.02 Training
- 4.03 Premises and staffing arrangements
- 4.04 When a child in your care gets hurt
- 4.05 Guidelines for disciplining children
- 4.06 Registration
- 4.07 Activity choices and supervision
- 4.08 Records

5.0 DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

- 5.01 General Procedure
- 5.02 The Safe Place Committee
- 5.03 Questionable Conduct
- 5.04 Disclosure of Abuse
- 5.05 Handling Disclosures
- 5.06 Records and Documentation
- 5.07 Congregational Response Procedures
- 5.08 Church Response Committee

6.0 DEALING WITH HARASSMENT

APPENDIX A	Signals of Possible Abuse from a Potential Victim
APPENDIX B-1	Personal Information Form
APPENDIX B-2	Field Trip Permission Form
APPENDIX C	Ministry Agreement Form
APPENDIX D	Accident Report Form
APPENDIX E	Abuse Incident Report Form
APPENDIX F	Safe Place Policy Audit

1.0 FOREWORD AND UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Our vision, as members of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, is to have the activities and ministry of our congregation reflect our core values as followers of Jesus Christ: to love God, love our neighbour, and to be committed to the ministry of Christ's Church. As such, all children and adults are entitled to expect relationships in the church to be characterized by respect, love, and integrity.

Guided by these values, Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church is committed to:

- Take measures to prevent the possibility of abuse and harassment
- Never tolerate abuse
- Investigate all reports of abuse/harassment appropriately
- Provide support for complainants, respondents and the congregation in the event of an allegation
- Protect all our pastoral staff and children's and youth ministry volunteers from false allegations

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Child—a person under the age of majority (18 years in Manitoba)

Abuse—According to Section 1 of the Child and Family Services Act, abuse is defined as an act or omission by a person where that act or omission results in exploitation of and/or harm to the child with or without cause.

In need of protection—means: “where the life, health or emotional well-being of the child is endangered by the act or omission of a person”

A child is in need of protection when the child:

- is without adequate care, supervision or control;
- is abused or is in danger of being abused;
- is in the care, custody, control or charge of a person
 - a) who is unable or unwilling to provide adequate care, supervision or control of the child,
 - b) whose conduct endangers or might endanger the life, health or emotional wellbeing of the child,
 - c) who neglects or refuses to provide or obtain proper medical or other remedial care or treatment necessary for the health or well-being of the child or who refuses to permit such care or treatment to be provided to the child when the care or treatment is recommended by a duly qualified medical practitioner;
- is beyond the control of a person who has the care, custody, control or charge of the child;
- is likely to suffer harm or injury due to the behaviour condition, domestic environment or associations of the child or of a person having care, custody, control or charge of the child;

- is subject to aggression or sexual harassment that endangers the life, health or emotional well-being of the child;
- being under the age of 12, is left unattended and without reasonable provision being made for the supervision and safety of the child; or
- is the subject, or is about to be the subject, of an unlawful adoption under subsection 63 or of an unlawful sale under section 84

Harassment—Any unwanted behaviour that persists over time. This includes verbal or non verbal harassment. Harassment may include repeated verbal or written challenges to others’ theological convictions or decisions of congregational direction that call into question the integrity of another’s faith and or concern for the faith community

Examples of verbal harassment include: unwelcome remarks, jokes, threats or intimidations on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or any other grounds of discrimination.

Examples of non verbal harassment include: distribution, display, or discussion of any written or graphic material that ridicules, denigrates, insults, belittles or shows hostility, aversion or disrespect toward an individual because of race, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other grounds of discrimination.

Sexual Harassment—any repeated and unwelcome sexual comment, look, suggestion, or physical contact that creates an uncomfortable working or learning environment for the recipient. It is made by a person who knows, or ought to know, that such action is unwelcome. Such behaviour includes, but is not restricted to:

- Demeaning remarks based on gender
- Suggestive jokes about sex
- Inappropriate comments about clothing, physical characteristics or activities
- Inappropriate displays of sexual pictures or material
- Derogatory terms or graffiti which degrades a person based on their gender or sexual orientation
- Leering, ogling and suggestive or insulting sounds
- Unwanted questions or comments about one’s private life
- Unwanted physical contact, such as brushing up against one’s body, patting or pinching
- Sexual assault (an offence under the Criminal Code)
- Sexual harassment may also be a single sexual advance, particularly one by a person in authority, that includes or implies a threat and/or a reprisal after a sexual advance is rejected

Category A Volunteers—adults who work with children in a position of trust, e.g. Sunday School teacher or Youth Sponsor

Category B Volunteers—those who always work with children in the presence of other adults

Agency—means a Child and Family Services Agency incorporated under the Child and Family Services Act.

Insurer—The company that underwrites an insurance risk.

3.0 SCREENING

Volunteers and church staff are called into ministry by church leaders because of the gifts they exhibit and wish to share with the church. Screening includes a Criminal Record/Vulnerable Sector Check and a Child Abuse Registry Check.

- .01 All hired staff will require two background reference checks, a Criminal Record check, a Child Abuse Registry check, and have a personal interview. Updated screening is required every three years of service, or after a break in service exceeding one year.
- .02 Every Category A volunteer will complete screening and sign the Ministry Agreement form at the beginning of service. Updated screening is required every three years of service, or after a break in service exceeding one year.
- .03 Category A volunteers will not be approved or appointed until they have been a regular attendee at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church for at least six months.
- .04 Category B volunteers will not need to undergo screening.
- .05 A registry of volunteers is the responsibility of the lead pastor and will be maintained by the office.
- .06 No person who has been convicted of a sexual offence of child abuse will be hired or invited to volunteer with children.
- .07 Checks completed for other organizations are accepted within six months once reviewed by the lead pastor.

4.0 OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

4.01 General

Staff and Volunteers are encouraged to follow the example of Jesus Christ as they serve Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church. They are to prioritize respect, integrity and safety in all environments

4.02 Training

All new staff and volunteers will receive training on the SAMC Safe Place Policy
Annual refresher training will be provided to all staff and volunteers.
The lead pastor will ensure this training takes place and that records are kept.

4.03 Premises and staffing arrangements

.01 All public use rooms at the church, except washrooms, must have windows. Doors to rooms should be open when occupied if they do not have windows.

.02 Staff and volunteers should not enter a bathroom stall with a child except in case of emergency, in which case a second adult should accompany them if possible.

.03 Consideration should be given to always having two adults present when working with children.

.04 The following adult/child ratios are generally accepted in educational circles:
Preschool—1 adult per 4 to 6 children, Grades 1-6—1 adult per 8 to 10 children.

4.04 When a child in your care gets hurt

- a)** Inform personnel in charge of the program (i.e. coordinator)
- b)** The coordinator is to inform the parent(s) or guardian(s) as soon as possible.
- c)** The injury is to be documented, using an Accident Report Form.

4.05 Guidelines for disciplining children

Staff and volunteers are expected to engage in preventative practices rather than the need for negative consequences. If issues arise, clear behavioural expectations should be set. If these cannot be met, a discipline plan can be discussed together with parent(s) or guardian(s) along with coordinator/team in charge of the program and a member of the pastoral team.

4.06 Registration

.01 Attendance will be registered at the beginning of each group activity (e.g. Sunday School, Junior Choir, etc.). Program supervisors are only to release a child under 13 to a parent/guardian or parent/guardian's representative

.02 A Personal Information Form and a Field Trip Form (Appendix C) are to be completed annually for each child in a church program.

4.07 Activity choices and supervision

The following precautions should be taken when planning and engaging in special class activities:

- a)** Avoid activities that could easily lead to allegations of abuse or harassment.
- b)** Have another adult (not a relative of the leader) present; keep ratios in mind

- c) Parents will be notified, in writing if possible, of an away-from-church activity. Such notices should state WHERE you are, WHEN you will be back, and WHO is in your group
- d) A copy of the “Personal Information Form” for each child will be taken along on any away-from-church activity.
- e) Volunteers are discouraged from having privately arranged, non-sponsored, off premise contact with children or youth.

4.08 Records

Annual records of names and addresses of children attending church programs and their parents/guardians are to be kept by the lead pastor/church office. A secure, limited access, confidential registry of volunteers is to be maintained by the lead pastor and kept indefinitely.

5.0 DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

5.01 General Procedure

- .01 For each case of alleged or suspected abuse that is reported, an Incident Form (Appendix D) is to be completed.
- .02 When an allegation surfaces, the staff or volunteer will be asked to step aside from duties. Paid staff will be suspended with pay until disposition of the case.
- .03 If the abuse is perpetrated by one of the pastors, the Director of Leadership Ministries at Mennonite Church Manitoba will be contacted to guide next steps, following the Mennonite Church Canada Misconduct Guidelines for Clergy.
- .04 Follow through and follow up for each case is done by the Safe Place Committee.

5.02 The Safe Place Committee consists of three members appointed by Church Council for three-year, staggered terms. The Committee will name a coordinator from among its ranks. The duties of the Safe Place Committee are as follows:

- a) When an abuse is disclosed or alleged, the committee will:
 - i) Accept the report from the staff/volunteer who heard the disclosure, and support and assist them in writing up the report or reporting the incident to the agency.
 - ii) Set up the initial support system for the complainant and the respondent (the person named in the complaint). When support includes counseling, the counselor should not be a participant of SAMC
 - iii) Ensure that the pastor and congregational chair are notified of the allegation and that the congregational chair notifies the Insurer of any potential investigation and consults a lawyer.
- b) Oversee documentation and be responsible for maintenance of documentation.
- c) Accept any formal harassment complaints.
- d) Perform an audit every two years to ensure SAMC is in conformance with this policy

5.03 Questionable Conduct

When questionable conduct surfaces, which in and of itself would not interest the police but which makes a child uncomfortable, steps will be taken by the supervisor or activity leader to prevent a recurrence. This conduct would include, but is not limited to: extended hugging, spending time alone with a child behind closed, windowless doors, or spending too much time alone with a child.

If questionable conduct reoccurs, the Safe Place Committee will be notified to determine the next step.

5.04 Disclosure of Abuse

.01 Legal Duty to Report. Section 18(1) of the Child and Family Services Act requires that “where a person has information that leads the person reasonably to believe that a child is or might be in need of protection as provided in Section 17, the person shall forthwith report the information to an agency or to a parent or guardian of the child”.

If the situation is reported to Child and Family Services, that agency is responsible for taking action to protect the child, contacting the police, arranging medical examination and informing the parent

.02 Reporting a Child in Need of Protection. As stated, the Act requires a person to report a child in need of protection to the Agency.

For further clarification:

- a) The Manitoba Guidelines issued by the Province of Manitoba caution that “While reporting of a child in need of protection is mandatory, some discretion is required in deciding on whether or not a child is or reasonably might be in need of protection.”
- b) Lawyer David Thwaites recommends in Canadian Council of Christian Charities (CCCC) Bulletin #3 (1994) that “if one is in doubt about reporting an incident, that you or a third party can phone Child and Family Services anonymously describing the situation and get counsel on how to proceed. It is always good to contact an outside person trained in abuse issues for advice.
- c) Appendix A lists indicators of possible abuse. One should remember, however, that these same indicators are sometimes consistent with problems that have nothing to do with abuse.
- d) In any event the duty to report applies even where the information was obtained through the discharge of professional duties or within a confidential relationship.

5.05 Handling Disclosures

As condensed from the Red Cross Child Abuse Prevention Program, when handling disclosures, it is important to:

- a) Listen—provide privacy, stay calm, don’t promise not to tell.
- b) Believe—express belief and reassure them they have done the right thing by telling and that abuse is not their fault.

- c) Affirm—Acknowledge the feelings that they are feeling. It is important to convey the following: “I’m glad you told me, I’m sorry this happened to you, It’s important that this never happens again to you or anyone else”. Affirm them as worthy individuals.
- d) Avoid telling them how they should feel. Avoid looking for cause. Do not probe or ask “Why?”. Make no presuppositions; avoid being judgmental. Avoid projecting your own reactions onto them.
- e) Determine their immediate need for safety and any possible medical concerns.
- f) Do not ask leading questions or encourage a more detailed description or introduce more precise language.
- g) Allow the complainant to maintain as much control over the situation as possible (when they will tell, whether you will accompany them), telling only those who need to know.

.01 Follow up will be the responsibility of the Safe Place Committee, including acknowledging the personal needs of the staff/volunteer. The staff/volunteer should be encouraged to, and supported in recognizing and acknowledging their own feelings. They may feel the need to talk to someone trustworthy about their response to the situation, but it is important to respect the complainant’s need for confidentiality.

5.06 Records and Documentation

.01 Everything that happens between the staff/volunteer and the child must be documented. It is important to document the involvement of other people in the situation including as much of the conversation as possible. Document only facts, not personal theories. Documentation is confidential. It is the responsibility of the Safe Place Committee to oversee the collection and maintenance of documentation.

.02 When abuse or sexual misconduct is alleged or has occurred, confidential sealed records will be kept indefinitely.

5.07 Congregational response procedures

.01 While any police investigation is underway, the church is to stay as far removed from the situation as possible. This is necessary from the police perspective so that the investigation is not interfered with. It is also an indication to all parties that the complaint is being investigated impartially, and the church is not ‘siding’ with any one party or another.

.02 Statements made to a pastor or minister are not privileged, and anything said by a complainant or alleged offender to their pastor is admissible in court. Even if such statements were given under the impression that they would not be passed on to anyone else, the person they were made to could be compelled to disclose what those statements were. When such statements disclose that a child is in need of protection, the disclosure must be reported.

.03 The Leading Pastor and the Congregational Chair are to be notified that a police investigation is taking place.

.04 After the investigation is completed, the church must still determine if the respondent (alleged offender) can return to service regardless of the outcome of the investigation. If the complainant is a child, the staff/volunteer must be reassigned or relieved of their duties as determined by SAMC. Child safety, real or perceived, cannot be compromised.

5.08 Church Response Committee

After an investigation is completed, Council will appoint three to five people of high integrity to a Response Committee, which may include resources from outside of SAMC. Care is to be taken not to appoint personal friends and/or relatives of the complainant or respondent. There will be no representative of the pastoral team on the Response Committee. The duties of the committee are:

- a) Develop an Action Plan following a general evaluation which outlines what, if anything, should be done to ensure the safety of those at SAMC.
- b) Make recommendations from the Action Plan to Church Council. Those on Council who may be in a conflict of interest should disqualify themselves from any discussion on this matter.
- c) At the request of the Safe Place Committee, provide long-term support as needed.

6.0 DEALING WITH HARASSMENT

In the spirit of Matthew 18: 15-20, the following steps should be taken in dealing with harassment:

- a) The person feeling harassed should state objections directly to the offending person involved if the individual feels safe enough to do so.
- b) If dealing with the concern directly does not produce results or the individual does not feel safe to do so, the person feeling harassed should ask one or two other trusted people to support them in stating objections to the offending person(s) involved.
- c) If the above does not produce the desired results, the person feeling harassed is encouraged to make a formal complaint to the Safe Place Committee, which will devise a plan of action.
- d) In any case, the person feeling harassed should be encouraged to consult with a pastor or a member(s) of the Safe Place Committee if they are not sure how to proceed or are uncomfortable with any of the above steps.

APPENDIX A

Signals of Possible Abuse from a Potential Victim

Those who work in settings with children should become familiar with the possible indicators of abuse typically portrayed by victims. Obviously, however, one must proceed with caution in this

area, because the same signals which are consistent with abuse can often be consistent with a great many other life-related problems. Rarely is one indicator conclusive proof that a child has been harmed. In most instances, children will present with a cluster of behavioural and physical indicators. When considered in conjunction with other possible indicators of abuse, however, the staff member may suspect abuse and need to make a report.

Indicators of Physical Abuse (behavioural):

- Cannot recall how observed injuries occurred, or offers inconsistent explanation.

Indicators of Physical Abuse (physical):

- unexplained welts or bruises.
- presence of several injuries that are in various stages of healing.
- presence of various injuries over a period of time.
- facial injuries in infants and preschool children e.g. cuts, bruises, sores, etc.
- injuries inconsistent with the child's age and developmental phase.

Indicators of Sexual Abuse (behavioural):

- age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self, others, e.g. replication of explicit sexual acts.
- age-inappropriate, sexually explicit drawings and/or descriptions.
- bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge
- promiscuity
- seductive behaviour directed towards members of the opposite sex.
- self-mutilation.
- obsessive cleanliness.

Indicators of Sexual Abuse (physical)

- unusual or excessive itching in the genital or anal area.
- torn, stained or bloody underwear may be observed if the child requires bathroom assistance.
- Pregnancy
- injuries to the genital or anal areas, e.g. bruising, swell or infection.
- experiences pain when urinating.
- venereal disease.

APPENDIX B-1
Personal Information Form
(For children/youth under 18 years of age)

Your child will be cared for as if they were our child. It is understood that caution will be taken by those persons in charge to prevent injury, but neither those in charge nor the church shall be held responsible in case of an accident.

Child's name (printed): _____ Birthdate: _____
Address: _____
Phone number: _____

<p>Are there any medical conditions the church should know about? (Please be sure to provide the kind of information we would need to make sure that your child can be safely cared for during events such as field trips.)</p> <p>Allergies:</p> <p>Other:</p> <p>Medical Numbers Registration # _____ 9-digit Personal ID# _____</p>

Emergency contact name: _____
Phone number: _____
Relation to child: _____

I, _____, hereby consent to allow my child to participate in church-led activities.

Signature _____ Date _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name(s): _____
(please print)

APPENDIX B-2
Field Trip Permission Form
September 1, 20__ to August 31, 20__

Throughout the year your child may have the opportunity to participate in field trips, service projects and other social activities away from the church. To enable your child to participate in such activities, we request that you complete the field trip permission form below. This consent will be in effect for up to one year, from September 1 to August 31, and must be completed annually.

A note will be sent home indicating the nature of the trip, where the group will be going, who will be in the group, and when the group will be back, prior to all trips. (There may be exceptions when such notice is not needed because all parents/guardians already know all the details.)

You are asked to inform an Assistant Pastor in writing if at any time during the year you wish to change the permission choice on this form.

Child's Name: _____, _____ **has** or _____ **does not have** permission to participate in field trips and other away from church activities sponsored by the Sargent Avenue Mennonite church and supervised by staff and/or approved volunteers.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return to the program supervisor by September _____ 20____

APPENDIX C
Ministry Agreement Form

A. Personal Information (please print)

Last Name: _____ First: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (res) _____ (work) _____

Birth date: (day/month/year) _____

B. Involvement in the Church

I am a church member _____ adherent _____

I have been a member/adherent for _____ months/years

I attend worship regularly _____ occasionally _____

In the past I have used my gifts to serve in the following areas of church programming
(This congregation or another)

<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Congregation</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

C. References

I, _____, was asked to complete this form because I was called to use my gifts in Church ministry. I am supported in this call by the following two persons:

1. Pastoral Staff:

Name: _____ Signature: _____

2. Church Member:

Name: _____ Signature: _____

D. Criminal record:

Have you ever been arrested? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, when and for what? _____

Were you convicted? Yes _____ No _____

Have you ever been accused or convicted of a crime against children?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please explain _____

E. **Agreement**

I have read, signed, and agree to abide by Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church's Safe Place Policy, and consent to Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church conducting a criminal record check and child abuse registry checks deemed necessary.

Signature: _____

Please print name: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D
Accident Report Form

Name of Injured Person: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Telephone #: _____ Date (D/M/Y) & Time of Accident: _____

Where did the accident occur: _____

Was a staff/volunteer present, or providing supervision: YES NO

Exact nature and location of injury: _____

Guidelines on Classification of Accidents/Injuries (**check one**)

“MINOR” - scratch, bruise, scrape, minor cut, minor sprain, etc.

“MODERATE” - serious cut, more severe sprain, broken finger, etc.

“SEVERE” - injury to eye, head, face, back, broken arm/leg, etc.

Was child: Sent Home Taken to Hospital Administered First Aid

Was injury treated: Yes _____ No _____ By Whom: _____

Type of treatment: _____

Describe in detail how accident occurred: _____

Name(s) of staff/volunteer(s) present: _____

Name(s) of witness(es): _____

Was parent/guardian notified: Yes ____ No ____ By Whom: _____

Has there been any subsequent contact with the parent(s)/guardian(s): _____

Any Additional Comments: _____

Date: _____ Submitted by: _____

(please print)

Signature: _____

Pastor Staff: _____

(please Print)

Signature: _____

APPENDIX E

Abuse Incident Report Form

(to be completed by the person who observed the [suspected] abuse
or to whom it was reported)

Date of Report: _____ **Submitted To:** _____

Reported By: _____
(Person completing this report)

Signature: _____

Incident: _____

Date _____ **Time** _____ **Location** _____

Description of what happened: (Use additional sheets if required)

People Involved:

Affected Individual - Name: _____ **Age** _____
(Victim of alleged abuse)

Name of person accused of abuse: _____

Name(s) of witness(es): _____

Submit form to lead pastor or chair of the Safe Place Committee

APPENDIX F
Safe Place Policy Audit

1. The Safe Place Committee will conduct an audit to ensure that SAMC complies with the conditions of the Safe Place Policy. This audit is required every two years in accordance with our church insurance policy.
2. The underlying principles of the policy are that all children and adults are entitled to expect relationships in the church to be characterized by respect, love, integrity, and morality.
3. The Audit Checklist covers staff and volunteer screening and training. This includes regular police and child abuse registry checks, as well as procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse; the safe use of the church premises, especially Sunday school classrooms and washrooms; and documentation of attendance, injuries, accidents, and incidents of alleged or suspected abuse or harassment.

Safe Place Policy Audit Checklist

VOLUNTEERS

- _____ All hired staff have two background reference checks, a police check, a child abuse registry check, and have had a personal interview.
- _____ Every Category A volunteer has had police and child abuse registry checks and signed the Ministry Agreement form.
- _____ Ministry Agreement forms and police and child abuse registry checks are being completed every three years after beginning service.
- _____ A secure, limited access, confidential registry of workers is being maintained by the lead pastor.

TRAINING

- _____ All new workers have received training on the SAMC Safe Place Policy.
- _____ Annual refresher training has been provided to all workers.

PREMISES AND POLICIES

- _____ All public use rooms at the church, except washrooms, have windows.
- _____ Doors without windows are being kept open when rooms are occupied.

_____ Teachers and leaders never enter a bathroom stall with a child except in case of emergency, in which cases a second adult accompanies them.

DOCUMENTATION

_____ When an injury occurs it is documented, using an Accident Report Form which is filed with the office.

_____ Attendance is registered at the beginning of each group activity.

_____ Parents of pre-school-aged children sign their children into and out of church program activities.

_____ Program supervisors do not release a child under 13 to a parent/guardian or their representative.

_____ A "Personal Information Form" and a "Field Trip Form" are completed for each child in church programs annually and kept by the church office.

_____ A copy of the "Personal Information Form" for each child is taken along on any activity away from the church.

ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

_____ For each case of reported, alleged or suspected abuse, an "Abuse Incident Report" has been completed.

_____ The Safe Place Committee has dealt with the Incident Report according to the policies outlined in the Safe Place Policy.

_____ When abuse or sexual misconduct is alleged to have occurred, confidential sealed records have been filed and kept indefinitely.

AUDITS

_____ An audit is being performed every two years to ensure SAMC is in conformance with the Safe Place Policy.

Audit performed _____ by _____
(date) (signature)