

STEINMANN MENNONITE CHURCH
Policy Statement
SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Approved by Vision Focus Team – February 21, 2006

Updated – May, 2009

Updated – September, 2017

Updated – December, 2018

Approved by Vision Focus Team – February 13, 2019

Section I STATEMENT OF POLICY

Scope of Policies –The policies and procedures included in this document apply to all programs and activities of Steinmann Mennonite Church (SMC). The policies and procedures apply to all members, adherents, friends, volunteers or employees of the church.

Purpose

It is the commitment of SMC to maintain a safe and caring place for all. The intent of this document is to protect children, youth and vulnerable adults from harm and abuse, adults who work with them from false allegations, and the church from unnecessary litigation.

Basis of this policy

SMC has a mandate to minister to individuals, families, adults, youth and children. As a congregation we have committed ourselves to grow in the ways of Christ. We affirm that each of us matters to God. We recognize our calling and responsibility to mentor children and youth to join us in these commitments. We do this by modelling healthy relationships that include healthy physical, sexual and emotional boundaries in which the safety and well-being of children, youth and vulnerable adults are ensured. We strive to provide an environment where risk is minimized.

We recognize our spiritual, moral, legal and societal obligations and we accept our responsibility to implement clear policies and procedures to minimize the risk of abusing those who are vulnerable.

Our faith and practices are shaped by:

- Our vision statement and its summary: "Love God, Live Differently" and our Shared Commitments
- Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995
- Mennonite Vision Statement, *Vision: Healing and Hope*
- *A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership, 2014*

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes [a] child in my name welcomes me" (Matt. 18:5)

Section II DEFINITIONS

1. **Child abuse** includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse and/or neglect. It also addresses a pattern of abuse and risks of harm.

Some definitions include:

- 1.1 **Physical abuse** is any deliberate physical force or action, by a parent or caregiver, which results, or could result, in injury to a child. It can include bruising, cuts, punching, slapping, beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a child. Using belts, sticks or other objects to punish a child can cause serious harm and is also considered abuse.
- 1.2 **Neglect** occurs when a caregiver fails to provide basic needs such as adequate food, sleep, safety, education, clothing or medical treatment. It also includes leaving a child alone or failing to provide adequate supervision. If the caregiver is unable to provide the child with basic needs due to financial inability, it is not considered neglect, unless relief has been offered and refused.
- 1.3 **Emotional abuse** is a pattern of behaviour that attacks a child's emotional 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 constantly criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child. It may also include exposure to domestic violence.
- 1.4 **Sexual abuse** occurs when a child is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or an older child. The child may co-operate because he or she wants to please the adult or out of fear. It includes sexual intercourse, exposing a child's private areas, indecent phone calls, fondling for sexual purposes, watching a child undress for sexual pleasure, and allowing/forcing a child to look at or perform in pornographic pictures or videos, or engage in prostitution.

Definitions 1-4 are taken from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. <http://www.oacas.org/childrens-aid-child-protection/what-is-abuse/>

2. **Consent** is to permit, approve, or agree to something that is done or proposed by another. However, anyone working or volunteering with children, youth and vulnerable adults are considered to be persons in a position of trust. Any relationship of a sexual nature, between a leader and program participant is **never** considered consensual, due to the power differential.

Facts about Consent - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/lets-stop-sexual-harassment-and-violence>

3. **Harassment** includes, but is not limited to actions that are: disturbing, worrying or unnerving, tormenting or distressing with annoying labour, care or misfortune. Harassment can take a variety of subtle or overt forms ranging from name calling to physical confrontation. The “accessory role,” whether by silence, laughter, or non-intervention, implies indifference to a particular viewpoint or even tacit approval and is therefore also considered a form of harassment.

From *A Plan to Protect* - MCEC

- 3.1 Sexual harassment is unwanted attention of a sexual or gender related nature (verbal, non-verbal, physical) - jokes, touching, suggestive remarks, leering, or demands for sexual favours, threats...

<https://uwaterloo.ca/conflict-management-human-rights/sexual-harassment>

4. **Misconduct/Inappropriate Behaviour** includes:

- 4.1 Communication by adults volunteering with children that goes beyond their role with a child/youth and is not occurring within the context of their volunteer duties and responsibilities.
- 4.2 Inappropriate interactions with a child/youth that go beyond the individual's role with that person.
- favoring a child/youth and giving her/him personalized gifts
 - inappropriate physical boundaries, touch and sexualized behaviours
 - telling sexual jokes
 - showing sexually explicit or sexist material or displaying such material in plain view
- 4.3 Behaviour that embarrasses, humiliates or shames. Physical contact that makes her/him feel uncomfortable, violates reasonable boundaries, or is not appropriate for the context of the situation. Inappropriate boundaries, sexualized behaviours (e.g. sexual talk, leering, flirting) or touching that make someone feel uncomfortable.

From, Commit to Kids, Canadian Centre for Child Protection

5. **Bullying**

We want to become more aware of bullying in order to provide a safe environment for all. Bullying is repeated and targeted aggression and does not need to be physical in order to be hurtful. Physical bullying may be more present during the elementary school years, while more covert forms such as social and cyber-bullying can take precedence during high school and beyond

- 5.1 **Physical Bullying:** Includes hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, beating up, stealing or damaging property.
- 5.2 **Verbal Bullying:** Includes name-calling, mocking, hurtful teasing, insults, slurs, humiliating or threatening someone, racist comments, or sexual harassment.

- 5.3 **Social Bullying:** Includes rolling your eyes or turning away from someone, excluding others from the group, getting others to ignore or exclude, gossiping or spreading rumours, setting others up to look foolish, and damaging reputations and friendships.
- 5.4 **Racial Bullying:** Includes treating people badly because of their racial or ethnic background, saying bad things about a cultural background, calling someone racist names or telling racist jokes.
- 5.5 **Religious Bullying:** Includes treating people badly because of their religious background or beliefs, making negative comments about a religious background or belief, calling someone names or telling jokes based on his or her religious beliefs in an effort to hurt them.
- 5.6 **Sexual Bullying:** Includes leaving someone out, treating them badly, or making them feel uncomfortable because of their gender; making sexist comments or jokes; spreading a sexual rumour; touching, pinching or grabbing someone in a sexual way; making comments about someone's sexual orientation, sexual expression or gender identity.
- 5.7 **Disability Bullying:** Includes leaving someone out or treating them badly because of a disability, making someone feel uncomfortable, or making jokes to hurt someone because of a disability.
- 5.8 **Electronic or Cyber bullying:** Includes the use of email, cell phones, text messages, any form of social media and internet sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships.
- PREVNet, promoting relationships and eliminating violence network. York and Queen's University <http://www.prevnet.ca/bullying/types>

Section III SCREENING

SMC requires all persons in the high, medium and low risk positions, as noted below, to obtain a Police Vulnerable Sector Check. This list of positions could be expanded at **any time**.

- Church staff: pastors, administrative assistant, custodians
- Baden Summer Bible Camp volunteers
- Christian education volunteers with children, youth and vulnerable adults
- Congregational Care Team
- Fellowship Events
- Lay Visitors
- Midweek children's program volunteers – excluding kitchen volunteers
- Nursery/Cradle roll volunteers
- Refugee sponsorship volunteers
- Ushers
- Vision Focus Team members
- Youth group sponsors (MYF)

The Gift Discernment Committee prepares the slate for approval by the congregation at the annual Program Review Meeting, prior to the beginning of each new church year, which begins in September. The coordinators of programs working with children and youth (eg. Christian education, MYF, midweek children's programs, Baden Summer Bible Camp, Cradle Roll) ensures the checks are completed before the program begins. The assigned Pastor and program coordinators screen all the information. Volunteer Registration Forms, reference check reports (see Appendix #3) and police check reports are kept indefinitely in a locked file accessible only to the Pastors and the Administrative Assistant.

A minimum six month waiting period is required before new attendees begin to work in roles listed above.

No person with a child abuse or other related conviction is allowed to serve in any capacity in the roles listed above. Persons with a record of any other criminal offence may be considered for a position on an individual basis by the Pastor and Program coordinator.

Volunteers with Police Vulnerable Sector Checks on file at the church will be asked to update the information every two years by dating and signing the Police Vulnerable Sector Check Update (Appendix # 5)

Section IV OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

We respect the integrity of all people regardless of ethnic or family background. Through example and training, we as a congregation at SMC encourage healthy relationships. Clear policies and procedures will serve to protect not only the children and youth, but also those who work with them, and the church as a whole.

Some of the ways we will do this are:

1. Coordinators of programs listed in Section III (page 5), and a Pastor are together, responsible for organizing training regarding this policy to volunteers.
2. Informing the congregation of the role of training and the existence of the Response Team, to ensure that members are aware of procedures and support available if a concern arises.
3. Establish guidelines for building healthy relationships. These relationships are nurtured through example and training. It is the responsibility of adults, not children or youth, to maintain appropriate boundaries, and to ensure these guidelines are followed:
 - 3.1 Make a point of showing affection or comfort to a person in open places where others can see and share in the warmth. Always respect the integrity of the other person. Allow the individual to back away from your well-intentioned affection if he/she wishes and respect that some people may be fearful or distrustful of any physical contact.
 - 3.2 Have another adult present, or remain within view of the group, if a worker and a child/youth need to talk to each other in confidence.
 - 3.3 If someone is hurting physically or feeling ill and needs to be assessed, seek help. A list of people with CPR/first aid training is posted on the bulletin board near the entrance of the sanctuary.
 - 3.4 Avoid “out of program” contact between children/youth and workers, unless it is within the context of our mentoring programs. Ensure that the parents are well aware of your plans for your time together.
 - 3.5 Avoid activities such as unsupervised internet access, vehicle transportation by workers alone with unrelated youth, or improperly supervised sleepovers.
 - 3.6 Observe extra safeguards when supervising overnight group activities. Ensure that congregational awareness and parental consent of the activity is clear. Under no circumstances shall fewer than two adults supervise an overnight event.
 - 3.7 Manage classrooms and meeting places to create a feeling of public space, and to be conducive to good teaching. In situations where two people need to be in a room by themselves, leave the door open.
 - 3.8 Practice an “open door “policy in which parents are welcome to attend or drop in to all programs in which children and youth are participating.

- 3.9 Seek responsible and caring ways to intervene when a child or youth demonstrates inappropriate behaviour. Recruit more volunteer support. Consult parents/guardians concerning management. Corporal punishment is prohibited.
4. Implement a team approach to children's/youth ministries:
 - 4.1 There are at least two adults present for all kids' clubs, junior youth and youth activities where possible one male, one female.
 - 4.2 There are at least two volunteers, one of which must be an adult, for other programs in which children and youth are participating, such as Cradle Roll.
 - 4.3 Designated monitors are available during Sunday School to assist with escorting children to the washroom and attending to other needs.
5. Address health, safety, and sanitation issues and document the receiving and releasing of infants and toddlers in nursery programs.
 - 5.1 A sign in and out protocol/procedure is used in preschool programs, and children will be released from the preschool program only to a parent or a known prescribed caregiver.
 - 5.2 If a child needs help with toileting, he or she is assisted in an appropriately designed washroom.
6. Written consent is required by parents/guardians for all children and youth participating in church sponsored programs and activities. This includes contact information and health related concerns. This information is protected within the boundaries of privacy legislation, and be available to responsible adults in case of emergency. See Appendix # 1.
7. In the event of a concern or complaint reference the Responding Section (Section VII) of this document.

Section V PREMISES

Facilities at SMC which discourage abuse incidents include:

1. windows in all doors to classrooms, offices and the nursery
2. locked storage rooms, furnace room and supply closets
3. appropriate design of washroom facilities
4. adequate lighting inside and outside of the building

Section VI TRAINING

SMC provides training for all staff members and volunteers, including all teachers and sponsors. This training focuses on healthy relationships and team building. The oversight of training is the responsibility of the Vice Chair of Vision Focus team to either provide the training, or ensure someone else does.

This is achieved through the following means:

1. Distribute a summary of this policy to all households in the congregation. New members and attendees also receive a copy.
2. Those responsible for training educate volunteers in:
 - 2.1 developing healthy relationships and team building
 - 2.2 promoting a safe environment to reduce risk
 - 2.3 recognizing and identifying the possible signs and symptoms of abuse.
3. Follow up with periodic refreshers.
4. A copy of the complete policy is kept in the church office and available on our website for easy accessibility.

Section VII RESPONDING

The purpose of implementing procedures for responding to allegations of various forms of inappropriate behaviour is: to protect the innocent and the vulnerable; stop the behaviour; and promote justice, restoration and healing. These procedures offer the involved parties opportunities for the truth to be spoken, for any violation to be acknowledged or acquitted, for accountability to be exercised, and for compassion to be demonstrated in ways that serve justice and restorative healing.

1. **Underlying Principles:** An effective response strategy recognizes:
 - 1.1 All allegations are taken seriously.
 - 1.2 Situations are handled promptly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
 - 1.3 Adequate care is shown for the well-being of all involved.
 - 1.4 Full co-operation is given to civil authorities as described by law.
2. **Response Team:** The Response Team consists of a Pastor, Vision Focus Team designate (Vice Chair or otherwise appointed), and others as deemed necessary.
3. **Duty to Report:**
 - 3.1 Upon witnessing, hearing, and/or receiving an allegation concerning an individual under the age of 18, you have the duty to report to Family and Children Services (F&CS) (519 576-0540). Contact is also required with the coordinator of the program concerned and a Pastor.
 - 3.2 Documentation/incident reports are based on what you have seen or heard
 - 3.3 Make a report every time you have a concern, even if you have made reports before about the same child
 - 3.4 Recognize that any delay in reporting or providing the appropriate information may place the child at risk.

While it may, at times, be appropriate to ask a child how an observed symptom appeared (e.g., a bruise on the body), it is never appropriate to ask any leading questions which might suggest to a child that s/he has been abused or suggest names, places or methods of abuse. Further, no person shall conduct any investigation or question any individuals regarding suspected child abuse unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate authorities. Such investigations can be undertaken only by F&CS or the police.

4. **Documentation:** it is expected that any witness(es) to symptoms or events raising concern regarding abuse of children documents their observations in an incident report form (Appendix #4) including:
 - specific signs or symptoms observed
 - any report of abuse made by the child or others
 - any witnessed event that raises suspicion
 - the date and time relating to any of the above
 - any response the child made to any of the above

Keep documentation on file indefinitely-all Police Vulnerable Sector Checks, including expired ones, all Police Vulnerable Sector Check updates (Appendix #5) and all Incident Report Forms (Appendix #4).

5. **Confidentiality:** Any report and subsequent documentation of suspected child abuse is considered and treated as confidential. Access to this information is limited to the Response Team (refer to Operational Procedures Section IV), F&CS, and when required, a church-appointed attorney and/or insurance carrier. An attorney should be consulted as to storage and disposition of documents.
6. **SMARRT Team:** Mennonite Central Committee has established the Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Resource Response Team (SMARRT). This team coordinates the overall process of congregational healing following incidents of sexual misconduct and abuse by providing investigative, supportive and healing services. Ask them to become involved early.
7. **Responding to allegations of misconduct or inappropriate behaviour** (as defined in Section II.4): if the concerns could more accurately be described as misconduct or inappropriate behaviour, the concepts outlined above, are still applicable. The Response Team determines if outside resources may be helpful, eg. F&CS, SMARRT
8. **Coordinating care and support:** The Response Team will ensure that support is offered to all individuals involved for restoration and healing.
9. **Contact Insurer:** The Response Team contacts the insurance broker.

Notes:

- (a) The alleged perpetrator is suspended from children's or youth ministry duties pending the outcome of the investigation.
- (b) In some cases the authorities may choose not to investigate. If there is still concern for the child's well-being, then any further signs, symptoms or events that may indicate abusive behaviour will continue to be reported to the Response Team.
- (c) The employee/volunteer may be restored to his or her previous position or duty, dependent on the outcome of the investigation
- (d) In the event of prosecution resulting in conviction, the abuser will not be restored to his/her previous position or duty within the church.

Appendix # 1.1

**REGISTRATION AND MEDICAL FORM, CHILDREN
Steinmann Mennonite Church**

Name of Child: _____

Registering for (circle all that apply): KidsLIFE Sunday School

Date of Birth _____ Grade as of September 2018 _____

School Attending: _____

Emergency Contact

Parent / Guardian # 1

Name _____ Home/Cell # _____ E-mail _____

Parent / Guardian # 2

Name _____ Home/Cell # _____ E-mail _____

Family Physician: _____ Phone: _____

Family Dentist: _____ Phone: _____

Ontario Health Card Number _____

Does your child/youth have any allergies/food intolerances? (bee stings, food, penicillin, other medication) YES _____ NO _____

If yes, please explain:

Does your child/youth carry an EpiPen? YES _____ NO _____

Would your child/youth bring medication with him/her on an overnight event? (eg. inhaler, ADHD medications, insulin) YES _____ NO _____

If yes, please explain: _____

Date of last Tetanus shot: _____

Check if your child/youth is currently experiencing any medical issues such as the following conditions. Be sure to explain.

Surgery ____ Asthma ____ Epilepsy ____ Diabetes ____ Fainting ____

Other _____

Explain _____

Does your child/youth have any concerns (**behavioural or emotional**) that would limit their full participation in our programs? YES ____ NO ____

If yes, please explain:

Is there any extra support required or anything else we should know about you child/youth?

Volunteers will occasionally take pictures for church use and publicity. I give permission for my child to be photographed. YES NO

Waiver or Release of Liability

Precautions are taken for the safety and health of your child/youth, but in the event of accident, sickness **or death**, *Steinmann Mennonite Church*, its staff, and its volunteers are hereby released from any liability.

In the event that your child/youth requires special medication, x-rays or treatment, the parents/guardians will be notified immediately.

In case of an emergency, I hereby give permission for the adults in charge to act on our behalf to seek and approve medical assistance, and agree to cover the appropriate costs. Your child/youth must be covered by Provincial Health Insurance or equivalent medical insurance.

I hereby give my child/youth permission to participate in the activities of Steinmann Mennonite Church and to travel with designated drivers to such events for the church year September 1, _____ to August 31, _____.

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix # 1.2

**REGISTRATION AND MEDICAL FORM, YOUTH
Steinmann Mennonite Church**

Name of Youth: _____

Date of Birth _____ Grade as of September 2018 _____

School Attending: _____

Youth Email address: _____ phone # _____

Emergency Contact

Parent / Guardian # 1

Name _____ Home/Cell # _____ E-mail _____

Parent / Guardian # 2

Name _____ Home/Cell # _____ E-mail _____

Family Physician: _____ Phone: _____

Family Dentist: _____ Phone: _____

Ontario Health Card Number _____

Allergies/Sensitivities/Medical Conditions (i.e. food, penicillin, bee sting, epipen)

YES _____ NO _____

If yes, please explain:

Date of last Tetanus shot: _____

Is there anything else we should know in order to provide the best environment for each youth (i.e. behaviour or emotional concerns, desire for extra support)?

If yes, please explain:

Do you give consent for your teenager's photo to be taken and used in Steinmann Mennonite Church's media (e.g. newsletter, photo albums, PowerPoint Presentations, internet, bulletin boards etc.)? All photos and videos will be used for church purposes, and could be distributed, upon request, to families or persons in the photos or videos taken. Any internet postings by the church will not include names.

YES _____ NO _____.

Driving Consent

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

YES _____ NO _____

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 license.

YES _____ NO _____ Comments: _____

Waiver or Release of Liability

Precautions are taken for the safety and health of your child/youth, but in the event of accident, sickness **or death**, *Steinmann Mennonite Church*, its staff, and its volunteers are hereby released from any liability.

In the event that your child/youth requires special medication, x-rays or treatment, the parents/guardians will be notified immediately.

In case of an emergency, I hereby give permission for the adults in charge to act on our behalf to seek and approve medical assistance, and agree to cover the appropriate costs. Your child/youth must be covered by Provincial Health Insurance or equivalent medical insurance.

I hereby give my child/youth permission to participate in the activities of Steinmann Mennonite Church and to travel with designated drivers to such events for the church year September 1, _____ to August 31, _____.

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix # 2

**Volunteer Registration Form
For Ministries with Children and Youth
Steinmann Mennonite Church**

Information received will be kept confidential.

In our desire to reduce the risk of abuse within our church ministries, we believe this information is necessary to protect both our children and our volunteers. Thank you.

Personal Information

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Business Phone: _____

How long have you attended Steinmann Mennonite Church (SMC)? _____

If you have attended SMC for less than two years, please complete the following:

Present and previous experience with children/youth

1. List all previous church work involving children or youth. Please give name and address of church, pastor or supervisor, type of work and dates.

2. List all non-church work involving children or youth. Please give name and address of organization, supervisor, type of work and dates.

3. If you have no previous experience as noted in 1 or 2 above, please provide names and phone numbers of two references (not family members).

Consent to Disclosure of Personal Information

I hereby acknowledge that the information contained in this application for ministry is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any reference or church listed in this application to give any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for children's or youth ministry and, except in the case of the conscious giving of false information. I release all such referenced from liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such evaluation to SMC.

I also acknowledge I have read and understand *SMC's Safe Church Policy Summary* and I agree to comply with the policies and procedures as outlined therein.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix # 3

**Background Checks – Confidential
Steinmann Mennonite Church**

Record of contact with a reference or church, identified by a children’s or youth ministry volunteer.

Name of Applicant: _____

Reference or Church Contacted	Date of Contact	Person Contacting the Reference	Method of Contact (telephone, letter, personal conversation)	Summary of Contact

Appendix # 4

**Incident Report Form
Steinmann Mennonite Church**

Name of person writing this report: _____

Names of staff/volunteers involved: _____ Date of incident: _____

Time of report: _____ Time of incident: _____

Location of incident: _____

Details:

Include: specific signs or symptoms observed, any allegation of abuse made by child or others, any witnessed event that raises concern, any response child made to any of above. Use reverse side of paper if necessary.

Was anyone else present at the time of this incident?

Signature of person making report: _____

Date: _____

Reported to: Family and Children Services (519 576-0540)

SMC pastor

Program coordinator

Appendix # 5 Police Vulnerable Sector Check Update



Steinmann Mennonite Church

1316 Snyder's Rd. West
Baden, Ontario N3A 3K8

T: 519.634.8311
www.smchurch.ca

*To be filled in every two years.
For volunteers who have Police Vulnerable Sector Checks on file in the church office.*

Thank you for your continued service as a volunteer at Steinmann Mennonite Church. The church's Safe Church Policy requires two year updates on Police Vulnerable Sector Checks and a new Check every six years. Please verify that your record has not changed.

Since my last Police Vulnerable Sector Check I have not had any criminal convictions or outstanding charges against me and I have read the current Safe Church Policy.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Witness (employee of church) _____

Appendix # 6
Police Vulnerable Sector Check Volunteer Letter



Steinmann Mennonite Church

1316 Snyder's Rd. West
Baden, Ontario N3A 3K8

T: 519.634.8311
www.smchurch.ca

[Date]

Waterloo Regional Police Headquarters
200 Maple Grove Road
Cambridge, ON
N3H 5M1
519 653 7700

Dear Police Chief:

[Volunteer's Full Name] is a volunteer at Steinmann Mennonite Church.

Our Safe Church Policy requires volunteers who work in our children, youth, vulnerable adults, and refugee programs to submit a completed Vulnerable Sector Police Check prior to beginning volunteer duties.

We thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

[Pastor's Name]
[Pastor Title]