

Leading with Care:

**A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of
Safety in The Presbyterian Church
in Canada**

Draft

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Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in The Presbyterian Church in Canada

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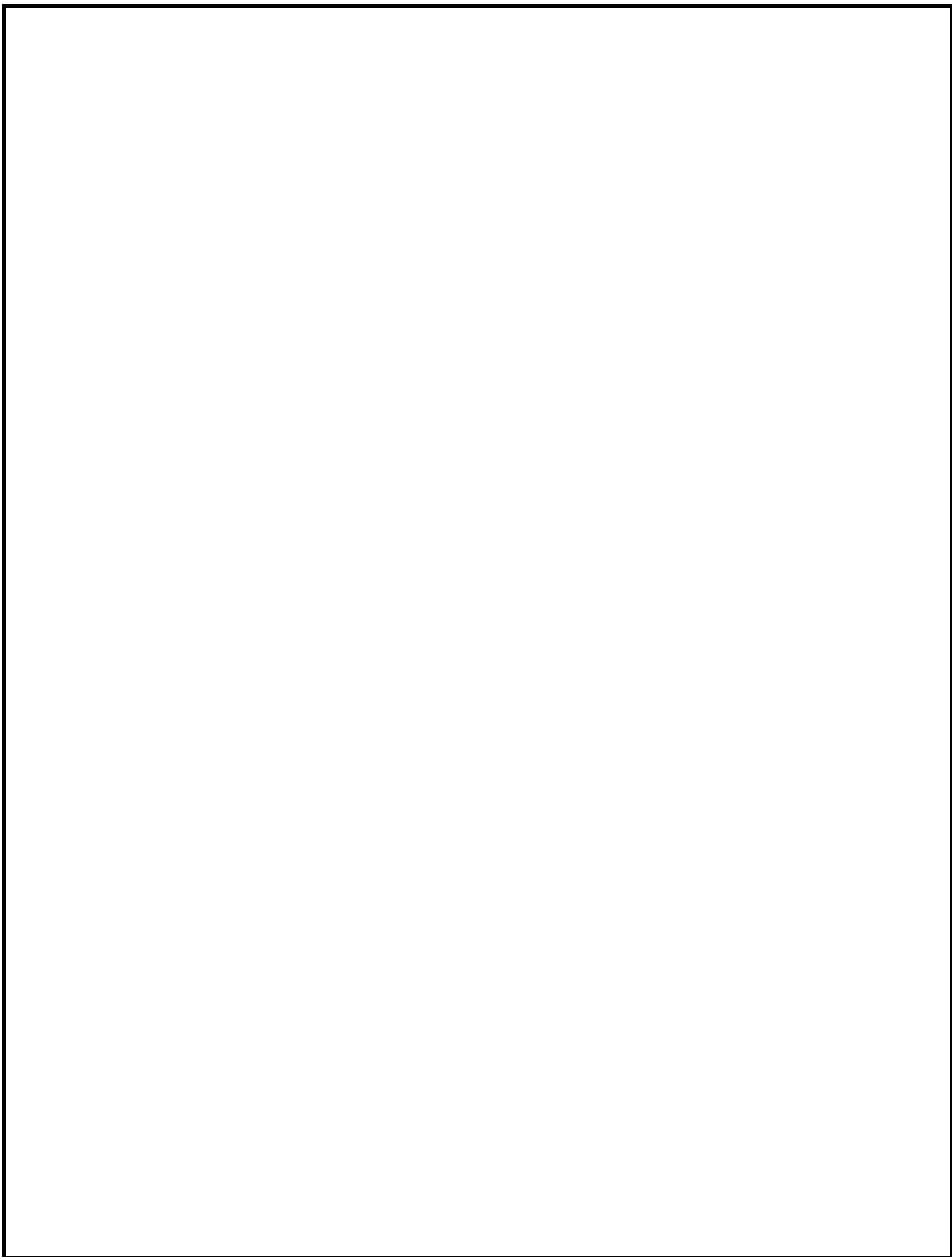
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Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Section 1: The Policy

Leading with Care is a policy for the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The intent of this policy is to do two things:

- engage in equipping teachers/leaders in our church for their ministry with children, youth and vulnerable adults *and*
- work actively to ensure a safe environment for that ministry.

In this way, we will lead with care.

1. The policy statement

It is the policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that all persons, *in particular children, youth and vulnerable adults*, who participate in the programs/ministries and use the facilities of the denomination will be cared for with Christian compassion and will be safe.

2. Reasons for the policy

This policy is not about us as individuals. It is about us as a body of people trying to ensure the highest quality of ministry by offering our best to Christ and working to make sure that the worst does not happen. It is a time for entering the age of lost innocence, whether real or imagined.

All would agree that we should care for children/youth/vulnerable adults and follow the ways of Jesus. So, why is this policy necessary? Because children, youth and vulnerable adults are precious to us, we want to ensure that their teachers and leaders are equipped and trained in the best ways to nurture their faith journey. But, we also want to assure them, their parents and guardians that there is safety in our programs.

While we believe that the church is supposed to be a safe place, it has not always been so. No one can dispute that. Abuse and unsafe practices have occurred in congregations where no one would expect it by people no one would question. To say 'it can't happen here' is not supported by what we know.

We also know that when vulnerable people are taken advantage of, it dishonours the name of Christ and the church. It dishonours the good work that many faithful servants have contributed over many years. Fifty years of faithful ministry could be seriously undermined by the act of one person. Therefore, our task is to uphold the name of Christ and to protect the work that has been achieved in our congregations. One way to protect is to make sure we have policies and procedures in place that, as best we can, provide a safe environment.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is committed to providing safe environments for children, youth, vulnerable adults, and those who minister to and with them. The Church's ministry includes times of worship, service, study and play in all milieus (e.g. courts, congregations, camps) that fall under the jurisdiction of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. All staff, both volunteer and paid, must support this policy.

The following action statements describe both the reasons for this policy and our active commitment to it:

- We will **train and support** our teachers and leaders. Many congregations already have in place a process for recruiting, training, supervising and supporting teachers and congregational leaders. One of the reasons for this policy is to provide ways for congregations to begin, continue and/or improve on this process so that teachers and leaders are well trained and equipped for their ministry tasks.
- We will **prevent** abuse of children/youth/vulnerable adults. Prevention includes having good processes in place in order to keep opportunities for abuse, neglect and harm from occurring.
- We will **protect** the vulnerable in our midst. The Presbyterian Church in Canada affirms that the protection of all children, youth and vulnerable adults is a spiritual, ethical and legal imperative.
- We will **report** incidents of abuse, neglect and harm. Incidents of abuse, neglect and harm, in accordance with civil law and the current policies of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, wherever and whenever they are encountered, will be reported immediately to the police and the appropriate agency.

3. History of the policy

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, through its *FLAMES* initiative, focused on children, youth and young adults in 2000. In that year, national staff and the national advisory committee for children and youth (Covenant Community with Children and Youth) began to draft a policy for the protection and care of children and youth. This policy arose from an awareness of the biblical imperative to follow the example of Jesus in assuring that the young, weak and vulnerable in our midst are cared for, cherished and protected. It also arose from a variety of practical questions directed to church offices and the national committee over the years such as these: Does our church have a policy around youth being billeted in private homes? Is there a ratio of leaders to children? Do we have national regulations about sleepovers in church?

The process of developing a draft protection policy began in 2000 and continued to 2004. The committee and staff for children and youth talked with the Experimental Fund administrator, the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Lakeshore, which was drafting a comprehensive congregational policy and other congregations in Canada who had drafted their own congregational protection policy. In addition, they looked at protection policies of other denominations. In 2002 an insurance concern arose when the insurance broker (Marsh) which covers approximately 200 of our congregations, required more extensive implementation than was anticipated. In 2002, a draft of a policy and implementation was prepared by Education for Discipleship staff at national office and circulated to 100 readers. Further revisions were made and another draft was circulated, by permission of the 129th General Assembly (2003), to all congregations and presbyteries. Comments were received at church offices by January 31, 2004. Over 100 congregations and presbyteries responded with hundreds of suggestions and comments, which caused the policy to move in the direction of its present form, a more pastoral response to the issue of ensuring safe environments.

4. The pastoral heart of the policy

This policy is titled *Leading with Care* for the following reasons:

- our Lord modeled for us how to lead with care as he healed, welcomed the young, the weak, and the vulnerable
- *Leading with Care* is our awareness that some people in our church need special protection
- *Leading with Care* affirms our commitment to training and supporting teachers and leaders in our churches so that children/youth/vulnerable adults will grow in faith and the love of Christ in a climate of safety.

Of prime importance in putting policy into practice is the dual focus on training, support and evaluation of the church's ministries *and*, secondly, on ensuring a safe environment for that ministry. Through training, support and evaluation, ministry is enhanced, enriched and strengthened in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In creating a safe environment, the church protects people, prevents abuse, and, if necessary, reports abuse.

The Policy as outreach in a reforming, evangelical Church

In addition to enriching ministry, the policy is also part of our Church's outreach and evangelism. Having this policy in place will be very reassuring to newcomers. While everyone in the congregation may know each other, a new person entering may not know anyone. He or she will wisely ask, "Is this a safe environment for my child? What signs do I see that tell me that good procedures are in place?" Creating a safe environment is part of the outreach plan of a congregation.

Some smaller congregations may object to this policy because they say, "We know everyone in our congregation." That may be true. But should we know everyone in our congregation? We wouldn't be able to do that if we were constantly reaching out to new people. As new people enter our congregational life and want to get involved, we should have a way of discerning where they might be involved. Even in small churches and small towns, a new person may move into the area, start attending church and eventually want to lead the youth group. Without some policy in place there is no way of knowing whether or not we are placing our children in a safe setting.

We cannot expect new people to go through a screening process that we ourselves are not willing to go through.

Since the intent of this policy is pastoral, not punitive, governing bodies in The Presbyterian Church in Canada should be guided by these procedures:

- Ministers and elders will set an example for the rest of the congregation by actively supporting the implementation of the policy.
- Ministers and elders will model to the rest of the congregation their commitment to safety and prevention by obtaining a police records check if their ministry involves one-on-one counselling or visiting.
- If confidential matters arise in putting the policy into place, the session should handle that information with the same careful respect its members have for all confidential congregational matters.

5. Biblical and theological foundation

Our concern for the protection and care of all children, youth and vulnerable adults is firmly grounded in scripture. Many biblical passages bear witness to our tradition of valuing the positions of these three groups of individuals within families, communities and the church. Of prime importance is that we were commanded by our Lord to treat “the least of these” with special care and respect.

Our chief endeavour as Christians is to imitate the example of Christ and be rooted in his love in all of our relationships. The Gospels contain many stories of times when Jesus met and healed children (Mt 9: 18-19, 23-25) and portrayed them as examples for others (Mt 19:13-15; Mk 9:33-37; Jn 4:46-54), and the Gospel of John includes an incredible account of an occasion when a child helped Jesus (Jn 6:1-13). Moreover, the Bible gives us examples of the importance and primacy of family life—the nuclear family and the extended family (Gen 1:27; Deut 6:4-9; Luke 15:11-32; 2 Tim 1: 3-5).

In Mark’s gospel we read about Jesus healing a man possessed by evil spirits (Mk 1:21-25), a man with leprosy (Mk 1:40-41), a crippled man (Mk 2: 1-5), a dying girl and a sick woman (Mk 6:22-43), sick people in Gennesaret (Mk 7:53-56), and a deaf man (Mk 8:31-35). We read about Jesus feeding the hungry (Mk 8:1-9), healing a blind man (Mk 9: 14-27), healing blind Bartemaeus (Mk 11:46-52), and commending a poor woman’s generosity (Mk 12:41-44). In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus preached the Beatitudes (Mt 25:35-40) which affirm that strangers, prisoners, and the naked, hungry, thirsty and sick of the world are to be cared for and loved; these words of Christ himself constitute, as declared in *Living Faith*, “a call to help people in need and to permeate all of life with the compassion of God.”¹

Since our denomination strives for excellence in the Christian education and nurturing of children, youth and vulnerable adults, we encourage their involvement in the entire life and ministry of the church; to this end we support both their mentoring and their continual interaction with persons of all ages. Adults are commissioned by God not only to protect and care for children, youth and vulnerable adults, but also to acknowledge that they possess valuable gifts to contribute to a community of faith. Concerning this, *Living Faith* declares:

The church is the family of God. Here all should be valued for themselves. We are one body in Christ: together rejoicing when things go well, supporting one another in sorrow, celebrating the goodness of God and the wonder of our redemption.²

6. Communicating the policy in all the courts of our Church

This policy and its procedures must be clearly communicated to all ministers, church leaders and teachers, sessions, other paid staff, volunteers, and congregations, to all groups governed by and run by The Presbyterian Church in Canada and to all others using church facilities. (See 15, Community groups using your church facilities, p. 24). Copies of this document will be delivered free of charge to all clerks of sessions, presbyteries, synods and General Assembly and will be posted on the national church website (www.presbyterian.ca). Whenever changes are made to this policy, copies will be distributed accordingly.

¹ *Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief* (The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1984), s. 9.1.3.

² *Living Faith*, s. 8.2.6.

It is important to note that, for clarity in writing, this policy refers to users in congregational terms. However, **all ministries** in The Presbyterian Church in Canada are governed by this policy. This includes ministries under the purview of presbyteries, synods and the national church. This means that, wherever an instruction is made to a congregation, people involved in a ministry at another level will need to make a parallel change. Here is an example from page 45 of how this would work. That instruction reads:

Records that are of a personal, confidential or personnel nature are kept for 75 years, according to the policy of our national church. Each congregation must have a locked, metal file cabinet for this purpose. The session will decide which one or two individuals in the congregation have a key to this cabinet.

In a synod camp setting, for instance, the camp board will adapt this instruction in this way:

Records that are of a personal, confidential or personnel nature are kept for 75 years, according to the policy of our national church. Our synod camp must have a locked, metal file cabinet for this purpose. The camp board will decide which one or two individuals have a key to this cabinet.

7. Definition of terms used in the policy and implementation

- a) **The Presbyterian Church in Canada**—for the purpose of this policy The Presbyterian Church in Canada shall include The Presbyterian Church in Canada including all related courts—congregations, presbyteries, synod and General Assembly—and the programs/ministries they oversee and sponsor.
- b) **child/youth** – a person who is under eighteen (18) years of age. Some Canadian provinces/territories classify children/youth as 16 years of age and younger. However, for this policy, we use the definition of under eighteen.
- c) **vulnerable adult** – a person who, because of his/her age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, are in a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by persons in a position of authority or trust relative to them.³
- d) **program/ministry** – a structured series of similar activities or events governed and run by The Presbyterian Church in Canada which spans a period of weeks or months and in which the level of risk is expected to remain constant. *Examples: weekly Sunday school; the routine pastoral visitation of an elder in the home of a frail, elderly person; weekly youth meeting at the church; operation of the Sunday morning nursery; an out-of-the-cold program.*
- e) **Leading with Care committee** – a group of persons responsible for ensuring that the policy is put into place. The *Leading with Care* committee may be the session, part of the session or governing board of a ministry, or the session/board may appoint a committee of respected people specifically for this task.

³ Definition used in Bill C-7, proclaimed by The Government of Canada, August 1, 2000.

- f) **ministry position** – a leadership role in which there is expected to be direct interaction with children, youth or vulnerable adults. *Examples: the positions of Sunday school teacher, youth group leader, elder, pastoral care worker, camp counsellor.*
- g) **teacher/leader** – a lay person of at least 18 years of age who devotes significant portions of his/her time and energy in faithful church service, has gone through a time of orientation and training, and is therefore equipped to hold a ministry position. *Examples of teachers/leaders: Sunday school teacher, youth leader, pastoral care visitor, leader of a group for developmentally challenged adult, and so on.*

Sidebar: It is common practice in many of our congregations to use leaders under the age of 18. Youthful leadership is to be encouraged and supported. However, it should be noted that, when leaders and teachers are mentioned in this policy, we are referring to people of at least 18 years of age. Even though a youth under 18 is technically a child, he/she is expected to follow the policy when acting as a leader.

- h) **volunteer** – a lay person of at least 18 years of age involved peripherally in ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults but has not chosen to become a teacher or leader. *Examples: someone who delivers cookies to a children's program; someone who collects and presents socks to men at a shelter or collects and distributes food bank items to families.*
- i) **risk assessment** – The process by which programs/ministries are rated according to risk factors—low, medium or high. High risk ministries require special attention. (See pp. 12-16.)

8. Using the policy in all sizes of congregations

It is required that people in all sizes of congregations and ministries use this policy. Some small congregations may object to putting this policy into practice because they know everyone in the congregation. Small congregations should be just as vigilant because of the following reasons:

- When new people enter the congregation, as we hope they will, they need assurance that the congregation has been careful about creating a climate of safety and nurture.
- Without policies in place there is no way of knowing if people are suitable as leaders/teachers in the congregation.
- Abuse and unsafe practices have occurred in congregations where no one would expect it by people no one would question. To say 'it can't happen here' is not supported by what we know.

If congregations—either small or large—have few resources for putting this policy in place, they can obtain outside help from their presbytery, a neighbouring congregation or regional staff.

9. Insurance considerations

By following the procedures as set out in this document, a congregation/ministry prepares for but may not be guaranteed coverage by an insurance company. Knowing what kind of insurance coverage is in place for your congregation or court is critical information, for this coverage can vary from one insurance company's policy to another.

If an incident of abuse, neglect or harm occurs in an environment within a church's purview, the church may be faced with certain liabilities. Insurance coverage does not negate the liability;

however, it could provide very important financial coverage for defence and/or settlement should the church be confronted with legal action.

Liability can be of various types. **Vicarious liability** is a no-fault liability that can be found against an institution such as a church even if the church did not know about the incident of abuse and even if good prevention policies were followed. **Negligence** is a liability that can follow if protocols are not in place or were not followed. **Breach of fiduciary duty** is a liability that can follow if it is shown that an implied or direct understanding of trust was broken. For example, it is generally understood that a church will protect and care for children, so if church policy leads to a child not being cared for, that understanding of trust is broken and this kind of liability may follow.

Generally, an alleged perpetrator will not receive coverage on the church's policy unless proven innocent, at which point there may be some limited reimbursement of defence costs. It is important to advise your insurance company as soon as possible if there is an incident of abuse, an allegation of abuse, or a lawsuit filed.

The following requirements were outlined by a letter from an insurance broker, Marsh Canada, in 2002. (Marsh provides coverage for approximately 200 congregations in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.) While policy demands vary from company to company, these are guidelines that are most likely to provide coverage:

- Clear definitions for all forms of abuse (in print or video) so that everyone, including volunteers understand requirements and boundaries
- Recruitment procedures to screen unacceptable candidates for clergy and lay positions
- A clearly defined covenant of care/code of conduct for employees and volunteers
- Training and coaching procedures to ensure understanding of what is considered to be abuse and how to prevent occurrences or allegations
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures
- Communication and feedback procedures
- Procedures to screen adult volunteers which include: filling in an application form, giving written agreement to commitment to safety and protection procedures, an interview by at least two interviewers, completed reference checks, police records checks, and approval followed by orientation and probation.

Acknowledgements of resources used with permission:

Safe Haven: A Policy for Establishing a Safe Church Environment, Lakeshore Presbyterian Church, 2001

Faithful Footsteps: Screening Procedures for Positions of Trust and Authority in the United Church of Canada: A Handbook, The United Church of Canada, 1999

Windsor-Essex County United Way, Centraide Process

Section 2: Putting the Policy into Practice

10. Thoughtful beginnings—people, present ministries, purpose, place

As your congregation works intentionally to establish a nurturing and safe environment for your teachers/leaders in their ministry with children/youth/vulnerable adults, you will need to consider these things—people, purpose, present ministries, and place.

a. People

The **key question** for the session: **Who will be responsible on behalf of the whole congregation to help put this policy into practice?**

The church is a covenant community. All people care for and respect each other. However, within the community, some people have special need of care—the young and vulnerable adults. Some people have the unique responsibility of putting this policy into action: these are people chosen by the congregation and ordained to eldership—members of session.

In putting this policy into action, you need to decide who, on behalf of the congregation, will have responsibility for the policy implementation. It may be the session, part of the session, or it may be respected individuals in the congregation who are named by the session. This group will be called *The Leading with Care* committee in this document. This group is responsible for making sure that all groups in the congregation know about the policy and follow the implementation steps with integrity and a reasonable amount of consistency. Where there is no committee appointed, the committee is the session.

b. Purpose

The **key question** for the *Leading with Care* committee: **What is our congregation's mission statement? Or, if you have not formulated one, what are the hopes, dreams and desires for your congregation's life together?**

This step reminds the committee of the ultimate reason for putting this policy into practice. Using the policy enhances the ministry of your congregation. Teachers/leaders will be assisted in the ministry tasks they undertake *and* the environment in which children/youth/vulnerable adults learn, serve, worship and play will be safe and nurturing.

Reviewing the purpose for your congregation also reminds you that this policy is an attempt to be faithful to God's leading in *this* congregation, in *this* denomination, at *this* place, and in the lives of *this* people.

c. Present ministries

The **key question** for the *Leading with Care* committee: **What ministries with children/youth/vulnerable adults are we currently doing?**

This is a time to list all types of ministries you are currently offering such as:

- ministry with preschoolers
- ministry with grades 1-6
- ministry with teens
- other specialized ministries such as a day-away program for mentally challenged adults.

If you offer a regular program with children such as an after school program, it should be listed separately from church school programs.

After you list all types of ministry, pause and celebrate the things you are currently doing. Pray for these programs and their leaders.

d. Place

The **key question** for the *Leading with Care* committee: **In what church locales does this policy apply?**

All ministries in The Presbyterian Church in Canada are governed by this policy. This includes ministries under the purview of congregations, presbyteries, synods and the national church.

11. Looking at your present experience

There are **key questions** that emerge as you look at your present experience.

- a. Do our teachers/leaders have ministry (job) descriptions?**
- b. How much risk is involved in our current programs? Can we reduce the risk?**

Following are ways to address these key questions.

a. Ministry (job) descriptions

Your congregation may already have developed ministry (job) descriptions for each of the ministries you described in 10 (c). If you do not have ministry (job) descriptions, you need to develop them. Samples of some ministries (jobs) can be found on pp. 25-29 in *Section 3: Resources*. **You will need to adapt these samples** so that they reflect *your* ministry in *your* congregation.

Ministry (job) descriptions are vitally important. They communicate to teachers/leaders, whether paid or unpaid, what is expected of them, what skills or experience may be needed, how the congregation will provide orientation and training for the task, and what support they can expect. A ministry (job) description is like a road map. You can start a trip without a map, but your trip will be much more direct, intentional and enjoyable if you have a map to guide you on your way.

b. Risk assessment

It is necessary, in many aspects of life, to assess risk and, if possible, try to reduce risk. Just as we would want to check the safety of our car's tires before setting out on a road trip, so, too, we need to look at each of the congregation's current ministries (from 10 c) and explore the risk for each program. Pages 14-15 give you a way to do this. Here are some methods that reduce risk:

- follow a two-person policy—during any program, have at least two adults working in teams
- add a window in the door of each classroom
- notify a parent before a proposed one-to-one contact with a child/youth (e.g. in a mentoring relationship) and ask permission to meet
- require two volunteers/staff to transport children/youth/vulnerable adults in a church vehicle or in a volunteers vehicle
- visit frail seniors with a partner

- require that one-to-one contacts between a volunteer/staff and child/youth/vulnerable adult take place in a public area either inside or outside the church where both people can be seen by others.

Adopting these risk-reducing strategies will often make what would otherwise be a high risk program into a medium or low risk program.

Nearly all programs run in a typical Presbyterian congregation are low or medium risk.

What happens, though, if you discover that one or more of your programs are **high risk**?

First, look at ideas on p. 16 for options on how to modify a program in order to reduce the risk. It may be quite simple and easy to do. Several examples are provided for how you might go about turning a high risk program into a low or medium risk program. If, however, you discover that some of your programs are high risk and cannot be adapted, but are nevertheless an important part of your ministry, all involved in the ministry must have a police records check (see pp. 22 & 45). One example of a high risk ministry that may be deemed too important to give up is a one-on-one visitation program to frail elderly seniors.

Risk assessment is performed in the following cases:

1. The *Leading with Care* committee must determine the level of risk of a specific ministry position as the final step of an ministry (job) description. Such an assessment is performed by reviewing the ministry (job) description and considering the most common circumstances under which a teacher/leader in that position is likely to carry out his or her ministry. Thus, when determining the level of risk of a ministry position, the *Leading with Care* committee is essentially determining the level of risk of a program/ministry.
2. Should a teacher/leader decide to introduce an activity into a program/ministry, he/she must determine the level of risk for that particular activity and submit the risk assessment in writing to the *Leading with Care* committee and/or session for review prior to the activity. For example, the youth group always meets weekly in the church hall, but the leaders would like to take the youth group members to help at an overnight homeless shelter once a month. The youth leaders should provide a risk assessment for this particular activity and submit it in advance to the *Leading with Care* committee for approval.

Risk assessment first involves evaluating a program/ministry or activity with the Risk Assessment Tool (pp. 14-15). If the ministry is in the medium range, consider ways to make the program/activity safer and, thus, move it into the low range. If the risk is high, you may make changes in the program/activity to move it into the medium or low range *or* you may choose to eliminate the program *or*, if it is essential program, you may choose to continue it with care. (See p. 16 for ways to reduce risk.)

Note that it may be possible to group certain programs/ministries. For instance, if you have a graded church school, you might do a risk assessment for four groupings: nursery and toddlers; 3-5 year olds; grades 1-6; and teens.

Risk Assessment Tool

Determine the level of occurrence of each risk factor listed below using the following scale:

1=does not occur

2=occurs in some situations

3=occurs in all or most situations

Risk Category	Risk Factor	Level of Occurrence		
		1	2	3
Degree of Supervision	1. Teachers/leaders have unsupervised contact with persons served.			
	2. Teachers/leaders do not receive feedback on their performance.			
	3. The activities of teachers/leaders are not observed or monitored.			
Degree of Isolation	4. Teacher/leader is alone with persons served.			
	5. Activities involving the ministry position are off site.			
Access to Property	6. Teacher/leader has access to personal property or money of persons served.			
	7. Teacher/leader has access to confidential information.			
	8. Teacher/leader handles funds of the organization or persons served.			
	9. Teacher/leader have access to property of the organization.			
Degree of Physical Contact	10. The ministry position involves demonstrating a skill to persons served.			
	11. The ministry position involves touching persons served.			
	12. The ministry position provides a personal service (e.g. grooming, toileting) to persons served.			
Vulnerability of Persons Served	13. The age level of persons served impacts on their ability to protect themselves.			
	14. Persons served have language or literacy barriers.			
	15. Persons served are immobile.			
	16. Persons served have challenges that contribute to their vulnerability (e.g. physical, psychological, situational).			
Degree of Physical Demands	17. The ministry position requires extreme physical exertion, strength or endurance.			
	18. Specialized physical ability(ies) or skill(s) is/are required of the position (e.g. transfer persons served from wheelchairs).			
	19. The ministry position subjects volunteers to extremes in temperature (e.g. camping)			
	20. The ministry position predisposes teachers/leaders to stress or burnout.			
Degree of Trust	21. The ministry position develops close, personal relationships with persons served.			

Degree of Trust	22. The ministry position involves transportation of persons served.			
	23. The ministry position involves one or more of the following: one to one supervision of persons served (e.g. overnight or out-of-town activities), befriending or spending a lot of time with persons served.			
	24. The ministry position contributes to making career or other important decisions of persons served.			
Degree of Inherent Risk	25. The ministry position heightens potential for the teacher/leader to be in contact with bodily fluids or disease.			
	26. The ministry position requires operation or handling of potentially dangerous equipment (e.g. lawnmower)			
	27. The ministry position involves handling toxic substances or results in exposure to poor air quality, noise, etc. (e.g. demolition work in an inner city mission)			
	TOTAL			

Place scores below under Risk Management.

***Risk Management**

Each ministry position requires the completion of a risk assessment. Each position will have a low, moderate or high-risk level. This will be indicated on the ministry position description.

To determine the level of risk associated with a volunteer position, complete the following steps:
Step 1: Determine the cumulative level of occurrence of risk factors as follows:

Add the total of:

Column 1 _____

Column 2 _____

Column 3 _____

Total = _____ cumulative level of occurrence: this becomes your level of risk.

Step 2: Identify the ministry position on the Occurrence Continuum to determine the level of risk (low, moderate, or high) associated with the position

Occurrence Continuum



How you can reduce risk by modifying programs

Once a risk assessment has been performed for the program/ministry or activity, there are several options to consider.

Sometimes for the sake of the effectiveness of the ministry, it is not feasible to eliminate risks, but, in other cases, risks can be lowered without jeopardizing the effect of the ministry.

a. Minimize the risk you assume

If you opt to continue to offer programs/ministries or activities/events with high risk, you should consider the appropriateness of measures to reduce the risks. *Example: You might provide two nursery caregivers instead of one. Or, you might purchase additional insurance for volunteers' vehicles.*⁴

b. Transfer the liability

You may choose to have the service or program offered by someone with professional expertise. *Examples: You may hire a bus to transport children to the park or hire professional child care in the nursery.*

c. Modify the program/ministry or activity

You may make changes as to how the activity is carried out. *Examples: you may continue to cook but use a microwave instead of an oven. Or, you may do hospital visiting with two visitors instead of one.*

If the above methods cannot be used, you have two choices: proceed with your high risk ministry with care and caution *or* eliminate the program/activity.

12. Forming your plan; planning for the future

Now that you have listed the various ministries in your congregation and assessed the risk of each, it is time to put together a plan of what needs to happen to put “legs” under this policy.

This raises more key questions.

- **Do we need to recruit new teachers/leaders?**
- **What do we need to include in an orientation session for both new and experienced teachers/leaders?**
- **What can we plan for teacher/leader training?**
- **What needs to be in our congregation's covenant of care/code of conduct?**
- **Who will support our teachers/leaders and congregation in prayer?**

⁴ Check with your insurance company. Some companies offer full coverage for occasional passengers of private vehicle owners provided the owner is not being reimbursed for the service.

To help you in your planning, make a chart similar to this.

Program	Risk Assessment	Leadership needs	Special considerations	Plans
Nursery and kindergarten	Medium	Have 4 people from last year—need to speak with each about whether they are able to continue	Need to recruit 2 more leaders for this program	-need to plan and do an all-church orientation session -need to get these leaders to a Presbytery training event for pre-school programs
Church school for ages 6-12	Low	Have 3 teachers—need to speak with each about whether they are able to continue	Need 3 more teachers	-need to plan and do an all-church orientation session -can we ask our regional staff for a training session with this program?
Youth program	Medium	Have 2 teachers; need to speak with each about whether they can continue	Need 1 more leader; can we use an older youth?	-need to plan and do an all-church orientation session -can we borrow a youth training video from church offices?
Etc.				

a. Recruiting new teachers/leaders

The *Leading with care* committee supervises the recruiting of new teachers/leaders but may or may not be the people who customarily recruit in your congregation. Regardless of who does the recruiting, the process includes a personal interview, and checking of interviews using the following process.

Someone new may move into your community and offer to be a teacher/leader. Or, you may decide that you do not have enough teachers/leaders for a particular program. A personal interview is an essential way to discover if the recruit is a good fit with a ministry position. In addition, a conversation with a recruit helps him/her to determine whether or not the timing is right for them to assume a ministry position. Begin the interview with prayer, asking for God's guidance in leading everyone to a decision that is for the well being of all. The interview may be informal or more formal, using questions like these:

- Tell us a bit about yourself. How did you come to our church?
- What activities help you grow and mature in your faith?
- Tell us a bit about your experience in working with [children and/or youth or vulnerable adults].
- This position requires...[list requirements.] Will you be able to meet these requirements?⁵

As you visit, tell about *Leading with Care*, the orientation and training you offer to all leaders and the support they can expect. Explain that, as part of our denomination's commitment to

⁵ Check with your provincial government about questions which you may or may not ask in interviews.

ensure that all churches are safe and nurturing, you would like to ask them for two references who they have known for at least a year.

Thank the recruit for seriously considering leadership in your church and promise another visit or a phone call in the near future. After the visit, call the references provided and ask questions such as the ones suggested on p. 31.

If your *Leading with Care* committee believes that the new recruit is a suitable candidate for a teacher/leader position, call and tell him/her that, explain again the orientation and training times.

What happens if the *Leading with Care* committee does not believe that the recruit is a good fit with the ministry program? You might say something like this: “We have very carefully considered your desire to be a teacher (or leader) in our congregation. However, our *Leading with Care* committee members believe that your skills and abilities lie more in the area of [name another viable ministry]. Would you consider serving there this year?” It is hard to say no to a volunteer teacher/leader, but it can be very damaging to have the wrong person in a teaching/leading position. It is easier to say no in the beginning than to have to ask them to leave after they have begun.

b. Orientation session

Orientation is the process that gives people general information to prepare them for their ministry (job). All teachers/leaders—whether experience or new—must attend your orientation session. Orientation is best done in late August or early September when the functional church year starts but should be repeated whenever new leaders/teachers begin. The orientation session will also include important information about safety practices.

Orientation includes the following:

- A review of ministry (job) position descriptions. Does everyone know what their job entails?
- What to do in the case of a sudden illness. People should be given instruction about who to inform and how to find a replacement teacher/leader for their program.
- How to access supplies and equipment
- How to access buildings, cupboards, rooms
- Overview of training sessions that will be available in the year ahead. (These may be done with other churches in the presbytery, through video or book resources or by leaders in your congregation. See p. 19, below, for suggestions.)
- Watch the video *Leading with Care in your congregation*, available from church offices (800-619-7301)
- All teachers/leaders must fill out a Teacher/Leader Form (see pp. 32-33). This form includes important contact information. Even in small congregations, you may not know a person’s work number or who they would like you to contact if there is an emergency. In addition, filling in a teacher/leader form is an act of commitment to their ministry task.
- Safety issues such as fire procedures, transportation (if necessary), washroom practices and other safety issues which are specific to your situation (see pp. 36-37).
- All teachers/leaders must be given a print form of the abuse information (see pp. 40-43).
- Teachers/leaders must be given a record book to record attendance carefully in case parents need to be advised about a health or safety concern. Attendance should be recorded at the beginning of each program and the attendance book taken to a central place.

c. Teacher/leader training

There are several ways that your teachers and leaders may be trained for their ministry. All are effective, so choose one or more that best suits your congregation.

- For youth leaders, contact your regional staff for training events or borrow *Volunteer Youth Worker Training Course* (video and work books) and *Peer Ministry Video* from church offices.
- Watch for conference opportunities for your church leaders/teachers. APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) offers an excellent yearly conference with a wide variety of workshops. Canada Youth conferences offer a strong leader training component for youth leaders every three years. Other special Canadian Presbyterian conferences emerge from time to time and are listed on the church web site (www.presbyterian.ca). Lay people may apply for one third of the cost of these programs through the national church's Lay Bursary Program (800-619-7301).
- The national church offers a program called TLC (Teacher/Leader Courses). Contact the Education in the Faith department (800-619-7301) for a list of courses and how to arrange a TLC event for your presbytery.
- Buy and use the book *Equipping the Saints* by Sara Coven Juengst (Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). This book has 39 do-it-yourself workshops for teachers and leaders. The author has arranged the workshops in three general categories—Basic biblical background, Foundations for faith (basic Christian belief), Timely teaching tips (practical help).
- Knox College offers several distance education courses for lay people (knox.college@utoronto.ca).
- New teachers/leaders may be paired with more experienced teachers/leaders in a mentoring relationship.
- If the leaders are elders, contact the Elder's Institute for training options (www.standrews.edu/elders; 866-794-8888, toll free). Every PCPak and the church website has an issue of *For Elders* which contains helpful articles and procedures for training elders. Back copies of this resource are available from the Book Room at church offices (800-619-7301).

As you plan for teacher/leader training remember that your regional staff can be a valuable help. (For a list of Regional Staff consult The Presbyterian Church in Canada national website www.presbyterian.ca.)

d. Designing and using a covenant of care/code of conduct form

At orientation, teachers/leaders will be asked to sign a covenant of care/code of conduct and promise to adhere to the safety standards as presented in the orientation. A covenant of care/code of conduct makes clear the expectations of behaviour. A sample covenant of care/code of conduct form can be found on p. 30. Explain how this code of conduct fits with the entire denomination's commitment to the safety and well being of all children/youth and vulnerable adults.

e. Prayer support

As you work, year after year, to ensure that your congregation is safe and nurturing, invite people in the congregation to uphold the process in their prayers. Ask people to pray for the *Leading with Care* committee as they plan for orientation and equipping of the church's leaders and teachers. Pray for the teachers and leaders as they faithfully and regularly carry out their ministries. Pray for community groups who regularly use your facilities.

13. Putting your plan into action

a. Checklist

By now your *Leading with Care* committee has written ministry/job descriptions (11a), done risk assessments (11b), done some preliminary overall planning, recruited new teachers/leaders if necessary (12a), planned an orientation (12b), planned teacher/leader training (12c), designed a covenant of care (12d), done an orientation session (12b), and asked for prayer support (12e).

The following checklist will help you keep track of the changes done as a result of this work. These are things that *must be done* in compliance with the policy.

- Form a *Leading with Care* Committee (10.a, p. 11) _____
- Review the purpose of the congregation (10.b, p. 11) _____
- Make list of all present ministries in the congregation (10.c, p. 11) _____
- Make job descriptions for each of these ministries (11.a, p. 12) _____
- Assess the risk of each of these ministries (11.b, p. 12) _____
- Lower the risk of these ministries, if possible (p. 16) _____
- Obtain Police Records Checks for all high-risk ministries (p. 22) _____
- Be accountable: report to session and/or governing body (p. 21) _____
- Put your plan into action by filling in the following chart:

Task	Date	Who is responsible
1. Do all teachers/leaders have a ministry (job) description?		
2. Have all teachers/leaders had the <i>Leading with Care</i> policy explained to them?		
3. Have all teachers/leaders filled out a teacher/leader form?		
4. Do all teachers/leaders have a written copy of important safety procedures?		
5. Have all teachers/leaders been informed about teacher/leader training events scheduled for the year ahead?		
6. Have all teachers/leaders read and returned a signed copy of the covenant of care/code of conduct?		
7. Have all teachers/leaders been informed about the support that will be offered to them on an on-going basis?		

On-going support

After orientation and training, supervision/support and evaluation will be provided as promised. Supervision/support and evaluation

- ensures a standard level of practice
- creates an opportunity for new teachers/leaders to reflect on what they have learned so they can improve their ministry
- protects all participants
- protects teachers/leaders against false allegations of wrongdoing

The ministry (job) description is used as a reference point. For instance, in the description, a Sunday school superintendent/coordinator may tell new teachers that he/she should know to expect a visit from the superintendent about once a month when lessons are in progress. Youth group leaders can expect an occasional friendly visit from a session member during a Friday night event. The level of risk of the program/ministry or activity determines the amount and frequency of supervision/support and evaluation: the higher the risk in the program, the more frequent and intense the support and supervision.

Comments and feedback from participants and their families/caregivers are most helpful for a new teacher/leader. Supervisors need to ask new teachers/leaders to maintain open, frequent communication with program/ministry participants and their families/caregivers. Supervisors may assure new teachers/leaders that, if negative feedback is received, the supervisor will honour confidentiality but will work with the teacher/leader to make necessary changes.

Note, however, that complaints of abuse must be passed on to the appropriate child/youth/vulnerable adult protection authorities.

14. Taking Stock of your plan

a. Evaluating how things are going

At least 2 or 3 times in the year the *Leading with Care* committee should meet to evaluate how things are going in your congregation. These key questions will guide the evaluation:

- **What positive things have we noticed as a result of introducing *Leading with Care*?**
- **Are there special problems that have emerged that need attention?**
- **Are there things that we need to plan for in the future?**

If the *Leading with Care* committee is not the session, it is very important that the committee ask to report on these evaluations to the session 2 or 3 times a year. The session of a congregation has ultimate responsibility for the spiritual, moral, and physical well being of the congregation.

b. Being accountable

At each of the four levels (courts) of our Church—congregations, presbyteries, synods and national (General Assembly)—there are ways to be accountable. **There are two ways to be accountable for *Leading with Care*:**

- i. **Reporting to others**
- ii. **Obtaining a police records check if the ministry is high-risk**

i. To whom should you report?

This policy is not about us as individuals. It is about us as a body of people trying to ensure the highest quality of ministry by offering our best to Christ and working to make sure that the worst does not happen. Therefore, some check and balances are helpful.

Congregations

A congregational *Leading with Care* committee is responsible to the session of the congregation and must report to them 2 or 3 times a year. When the policy is approved by General Assembly, each congregation must report to the presbytery once a year about their implementation progress. Each congregation and the congregation's minister(s) must explain to presbytery their congregation's *Leading with Care* implementation at the time of the presbytery visitation to the congregation. Additionally, each active minister—ordained or diaconal—must show the clerk of presbytery his/her police record check. This must be done when the policy is approved, at the time of a call or change or appointment, and/or every three years.

Presbyteries

If a ministry is under the jurisdiction of a presbytery (for instance, a presbytery parish nurse), the presbytery should establish a presbytery *Leading with Care* committee to oversee the implementation of the policy for ministers and ministries within presbytery bounds. This committee should report to the presbytery or its executive twice a year.

It is the responsibility of the presbytery to make sure that all congregations and ministries within its bounds have a copy of *Leading with Care*. Further, it is the responsibility of the presbytery to offer a *Leading with Care* workshop at least once a year. If a presbytery is unable to do so, they must point the congregations in their bounds to another locale where such a workshop is being held, such as at a synod meeting or a local conference. (*Leading with Care* workshop outlines are available on the church's website www.presbyterian.ca under **Church Documents**).

Synods

It is the responsibility of synod to establish a synod *Leading with Care* committee or ensure that *Leading with Care* concerns are carried out by an existing committee. It is the responsibility of all synods to make sure that all programs and ministries who are directly responsible to synod (such as synod regional staff and synod camps) have a copy of *Leading with Care* and attend or conduct a *Leading with Care* workshop once a year. It is the responsibility of each synod to see that all synod staff and programs put the policy into practice. When synod staff, camps and other synod ministries make their annual report to synod, they must include a description of their involvement with *Leading with Care*.

National (General Assembly) level

It is the responsibility of all executive national staff to have a copy of the *Leading with Care* policy and attend or conduct a *Leading with Care* workshop once a year. In their annual report to the agency for whom they work, executive national staff must make reference to their involvement that year with *Leading with Care*. The executive national staff must also report, yearly, to the management team of their involvement with *Leading with Care*. The national management team is responsible to General Assembly through the Assembly Council and must make yearly mention of their involvement with *Leading with Care*.

In all of the above ministries, some areas may not be directly affected by *Leading with Care*. Here is an example: the executive staff person in Canada Ministries may not be directly involved with children/youth/vulnerable peoples. However, that person has oversight of ministers who do, and it is, therefore, the responsibility of each executive at the national level to understand how *Leading with Care* works in all levels of the church.

ii. Police Records Checks

One of the ten steps in Volunteer Canada's Safe Steps screening program is the Police Records Check (PRC). PRCs have become a standard and accepted part of institutional and organizational procedures for those working with children, youth and vulnerable persons in schools, hospitals, community and religious groups. However, PRCs do have limitations, and that is why they are only one part of the larger screening process. (Additional information on PRCs is found on pp. 45-47 in this policy.)

As indicated earlier, if you discover that some of your programs are high risk and cannot be adapted to make them lower risk and are an important part of your ministry, teachers/leaders (including clergy, elders, and paid staff) who are involved in the ministry must have a police records check.

Police records checks are **mandatory for all high risk ministries** in The Presbyterian Church in Canada for all ministry positions where there is direct interaction with children, youth or vulnerable adults. Since the work/ministry of active clergy always includes times of one-on-one counselling/visiting, all active clergy must have a police records check when the policy is approved, at the time of a new call or change of position and/or every three years. The responsibilities of elders vary from congregation to congregation. But, if an elder routinely visits people one-on-one, she/he should also have a police records check at the time of the implementation of this policy and every three years following.

What type of police records check do you ask for?

There is a variety of types of police records checks available in Canada, and they vary from region to region. When applying for a police records check in your region, ask for the most comprehensive check.

Who pays for the check?

Since most police records checks require payment, your congregation may decide to pay these fees in one group, or you may ask each individual to pay for it themselves. Many people may already have a police record check from another volunteer position. (Even to make a class presentation, most people are required to present a police records check at a public school). Because teachers/leaders have to obtain a police records check for other community responsibilities, this process may be less costly than anticipated.

Handling the information

In a similar way that an offering envelope secretary knows how much money you give to the church but holds this in confidence, so, too, the *Leading with care* committee must handle some information with great care and maintain confidence. The individual who obtains a police records check hands it to the designated person—a member of the *Leading with Care* committee. This person reviews the document and gives it back to the individual to whom it belongs. **It is important for the *Leading with Care* committee to handle this information with strict confidentiality.**

What happens if something shows on the police records check?

To this question, there is no black-and-white answer. We are, after all, a community of grace and forgiveness. Some of our members may have things on their police records check for which they may or may not have atoned. Others may have on their police record check some results of youthful indiscretions. The *Leading with Care* committee and/or session must deal with these matters in the same way that they need to deal with other confidential matters. Sometimes it will be deemed wise to deny the individual a leadership position with children/youth/vulnerable adults. Sometimes it will be deemed wise to urge the person to accept a position that indirectly supports children/youth/vulnerable adults. Sometimes it will be deemed wise to always have an individual working with another adult.

Are there limits to police records checks?

There are some limits, but the fact still remains: police records checks can be a positive deterrent in discouraging nefarious individuals from applying for leadership positions with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Here are some of the limitations of police records checks:

- They are only good up to the day of checking.
- A person may use a false name or birth date, so there are no matches found in their record.
- If a conviction occurred when the person was a youth, the information is protected under the Young Offenders Act. You will not have access to this information.
- Some sex offenders and abusers have never been convicted of a crime, so there will be no record to review.
- Not all police forces check the same data sources for records.

15. Community groups using your church facilities for regular, ongoing programs

Up to this point we have focused on programs that are run by the congregation. **What about community groups who use church facilities?**

Hosting community groups (like Scouts, AA, and so on) is part of the outreach and hospitality plan of many congregations. However, you, as the host, have some responsibilities.

- a. Appropriate church representatives such as the session or the *Leading with Care* committee must meet with the community group to explain our policy for those working with children, youth and vulnerable adults. The community group may have their own policy under which they operate. If they have no policy, however, they must be asked to take a copy of *Leading with Care* to the hierarchy of their organization and ask for implementation of a similar policy of care.
- b. Even when your congregation is a willing host, you must ensure that all regular on-going community groups who use your facilities have some insurance coverage. Request a letter from their insurance broker confirming their coverage. Some community groups using church facilities may have no insurance. Such groups must be provided with The Presbyterian Church in Canada policy and compliance requested. In other words, on-going, regular community groups would be asked by the congregation to write a job description for their leaders, join the congregation's teachers and leaders in an orientation session and provide some documentation about training or equipping for their specific leadership role in the community group.

Occasional users of your church facilities

In addition to on-going, regular community groups, other groups may occasionally use your church facilities. Here are some examples: the church hall may be used for a wedding shower or a community choir may use the sanctuary for a practice. As host, it is the congregation's responsibility to see if these occasional uses are covered by the congregation's insurance policy.

Section 3: Resources

16. Sample forms

a. Sample ministry (job) descriptions

A ministry (job) position provides a teacher/leader (whether paid or unpaid) with a clear delineation of the specifications and requirements of a particular ministry position as well as the expectations of the *Leading with Care* committee.

Here are examples of some ministry positions:

- Pre-school programs
- Sunday school for ages 6-12
- Youth programs for ages 12-18
- Programs for adults with developmental or physical challenges
- Programs for frail seniors
- Counseling or tutoring programs for children/youth/vulnerable adults
- Out of the cold programs

A ministry (job) position will contain information like this:

- Title of the ministry position
- Goals of the ministry
- Responsibilities
- Limitations for the position
- Length of appointment
- Personal traits and gifts required
- Training to be provided
- Orientation available
- Support and supervision provided
- Mandatory activities
- Screening process used in the selection
- Level of risk (See pp. 14-15.)

i. Ministry (Job) Description for Preschool Teachers/Leaders
(Insert your church/ministry name here)

Title of the Ministry Position: Preschool teacher

Responsible to: Sunday School Superintendent/Coordinator

Responsible for: 10 children, ages 0-5

Main Goal: (put your church's mission statement here) or something more general like, "To help children experience the love of Christ through the love of the extended church family (preschool teachers).

General summary: The preschool teacher will oversee and facilitate the teaching and care of children from birth to age 5. This will include arriving early before class time, preparing classroom activities, stories and songs and ensuring all necessary supplies are available. The teacher will be responsible for recording attendance, caring for the children and nurturing faith in children by being a trustworthy adult.

Roles, Responsibilities and Tasks: (list the expectations of this position)

It is the responsibility of the preschool teacher to:

- maintain a vital spiritual life
- plan age appropriate Bible stories and activities
- maintain assuring and friendly relationships with the child's parent(s)
- participate in events and activities that develop leadership skills
- maintain accurate records of attendance
- attend teacher's meetings
- advise the Sunday school superintendent of his/her absence and find a suitable replacement
- ensure that the safety issues presented in orientation are followed

Gifts, Skills, Experience and Qualities: (list all that are necessary for this task)

- gift of teaching, time management and organizational skills
- love for small children and some experience working with them
- patience and sensitivity to the needs of children
- creativity in sharing stories

Screening Procedure:

In accordance with the *Leading with Care* policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, screening of adults involved in ministry with children and youth includes completing a teacher/leader form, and, in the case of new applicants, an interview by two people, phoning references, and a police records check for high risk ministries.

Orientation and Training: (list all training courses)

- mandatory fall orientation program
- fire, safety and emergency procedures
- bimonthly teachers meetings (or whatever your training will be)

Support, Supervision and Evaluation

As a support to all adults/youth engaged in children/youth/vulnerable adult ministry, (insert name of church) will provide monthly visits by the Sunday school superintendent, self-evaluation opportunities at training events and regular prayer support.

Schedule and commitment:

Team teaching with a rotation of every second month from September to June

Risk Assessment: Low/Medium/High (Underline risk level)

ii. Ministry (Job) Position for Primary School Age (ages 6-12) Church School Teacher/Leader

(Insert your church/ministry name here)

Title of the Ministry Position: Church School Teacher

Responsible to: Church School Superintendent/Coordinator

Responsible for: 7 children in a grade 4-6 class

Main Goal: (put your church's mission statement here) or something more general like, "To encourage children to follow Christ and serve faithfully in his church."

General summary: The Church School Teacher will oversee and facilitate the teaching of the curriculum in such a way that lives are changed and growth is seen in the youth. This will include preparation of classroom activities and ensuring all necessary supplies are available for classroom time. The teacher will be responsible for record keeping, care of the children and encouraging children in their walk with Christ.

Roles, Responsibilities and Tasks: (list the expectations of this position)

It is the responsibility of the Sunday school teacher to:

- maintain a vital spiritual life
- plan and teach a weekly lesson
- maintain confidentiality
- participate in events and activities that develop leadership skills
- maintain accurate records of attendance
- attend bimonthly teacher's meetings
- advise the Sunday school superintendent of his/her absence and find a suitable replacement
- ensure that the safety issues presented in orientation are followed

Gifts, Skills, Experience and Qualities: (list all that are necessary for this task)

- gift of teaching, time management and organizational skills
- love for children and experience working with them
- patience and sensitivity to the needs of children
- creativity in sharing stories and personal experiences

Screening Procedure:

In accordance with the *Leading with Care* policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, screening of all adults involved in ministry with children and youth includes completing a teacher/leader application form, and, in the case of new applicants, an interview by two people, phoning references, and a police records check for high risk ministries.

Orientation and Training: (list all training courses)

- mandatory fall orientation program
- fire, safety and emergency procedures
- bimonthly teachers meetings (or whatever your training will be)

Support, Supervision and Evaluation

As a support to all adults/youth engaged in children/youth/vulnerable adult ministry, (insert name of church) will provide monthly visits by the Sunday school superintendent, self-evaluation opportunities at training events and regular prayer support.

Schedule and commitment:

Team teaching with a rotation of every fourth Sunday off from September to June

Risk Assessment: Low/Medium/High (Underline risk level)

iii. Ministry (Job) Description for Youth Teacher/Leader
(Insert your church/ministry name here)

Title of the Ministry Position: Youth leader

Responsible to: Sunday School Superintendent/Coordinator

Responsible for: 12 youth between the ages of 12 and 18

Main Goal: (put your church's mission statement here) or something more general like, "To encourage youth to follow Christ and serve faithfully in his church."

General summary: The youth leader will oversee and facilitate the teaching of the curriculum in such a way that lives are changed and growth is seen in the youth. This will include preparation of classroom and social activities and ensuring all necessary supplies and arrangements are made for learning, social and service opportunities. The leader will record attendance, care for the youth and encourage them in their walk with Christ.

Roles, Responsibilities and Tasks: (list the expectations of this position)

It is the responsibility of the youth group leader to:

- maintain a vital spiritual life
- plan and teach a lesson and/or social activity and/or service and mission opportunity
- maintain confidentiality, unless a youth is in danger
- participate in events and activities that develop leadership skills
- maintain accurate records of attendance
- attend teacher's meetings
- advise the Sunday school superintendent of his/her absence and find a suitable replacement
- ensure that the safety issues presented in orientation are followed

Gifts, Skills, Experience and Qualities: (list all that are necessary for this task)

- gift of teaching, time management and organizational skills
- love for youth and some experience working with them
- patience and sensitivity to the needs of youth
- creativity in sharing stories and personal experiences

Screening Procedure:

In accordance with the *Leading with Care* policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, screening of adults involved in ministry with children and youth includes completing a teacher/leader form, and, in the case of new applicants, an interview by two people, phoning references, and a police records check for high risk ministries.

Orientation and Training: (list all training courses)

- mandatory fall orientation program
- awareness of fire, safety and emergency procedures
- attendance at bimonthly teachers meetings

Support, Supervision and Evaluation

As a support to all adults/youth engaged in children/youth/vulnerable adult ministry, (insert name of church) will provide monthly visits by the Sunday school superintendent, self-evaluation opportunities at training events and regular prayer support.

Schedule and commitment:

Team teaching with a rotation of every second month

Risk Assessment: Low/Medium/High (Underline appropriate risk level)

iv. Ministry (Job) Description for Elder's Visitation Program for Frail Seniors
(Insert your church/ministry name here)

Title of the Ministry Position: Elder's Visitation Program for Frail Seniors

Responsible to: session of (name church)

Responsible for: 22 frail elderly people who are members and adherents of (name church)

Main Goal: (put your church's mission statement here) or something more general like, "To walk faithfully with the frail seniors of our congregation, offering comfort, hope, and encouragement."

General summary: The visiting elders will regularly visit frail elderly people, offering conversation, Bible reading and prayer as requested, and bring news from the church. The visiting elders may gather and bring articles of interest to the elderly person. The elders will keep a record log of visits, and treat conversation with confidential care.

Roles, Responsibilities and Tasks: (list the expectations of this position)

It is the responsibility of the visiting elder to:

- maintain a vital spiritual life
- plan a visiting schedule that fits with the needs of the elderly person
- maintain confidentiality, unless an elderly person is in danger
- participate in events and activities that develop geriatric leadership skills
- maintain accurate records of visits
- advise the team leader of an expected absence and find a suitable replacement
- ensure that the safety issues presented in orientation are followed

Gifts, Skills, Experience and Qualities: (list all that are necessary for this task)

- gift of time management and organizational skills
- love for seniors and some experience working with them
- patience and sensitivity to the needs of seniors
- good listening skills
- willing to share stories and personal experiences

Screening Procedure:

In accordance with the *Leading with Care* policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, screening of adults involved in ministry with children and youth includes completing a teacher/leader form, and, in the case of new applicants, an interview by two people, phoning references, and a police records check for high risk ministries.

Orientation and Training: (list all training courses)

- mandatory fall orientation program
- awareness of fire, safety and emergency procedures
- additional training specifically for seniors

Support, Supervision and Evaluation

As a support to all adults/youth engaged in children/youth/vulnerable adult ministry, (insert name of church) will provide regular check-ins at session meeting, self-evaluation opportunities at training events and regular prayer support.

Schedule and commitment:

Two elders will share responsibility for 22 seniors on a month-about schedule.

Risk Assessment: Low/Medium/High (Underline appropriate risk level)

b. Sample covenant of care/code of conduct

This is a sample covenant of care/code of conduct. Adapt to your congregation.

(The Code of Conduct for *insert name of congregation or ministry here*)

The church is Christ, together with his people, called both to worship and to serve him in all of life.⁶ The Lord continues his ministry in and through the church. All Christians are called to participate in the ministry of Christ. As his body on earth, we all have gifts to use in the church and in the world to the glory of Christ, our King and Head. Through the church, God orders this ministry by calling some to special tasks in the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of God.⁷

As an expression of this high and holy duty that Christ has offered to me as a leader/teacher/guide to children/youth/adults:

I promise, in all my relationships with children/youth/vulnerable adults, to follow appropriate action as defined by my training orientation;

I promise to use only the physical contact that is deemed appropriate by the document *Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in the Presbyterian Church in Canada*.

I promise to use appropriate language;

I promise to show no discrimination based on gender, ethnic background, skin colour, intelligence, age, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status;

I promise that I won't harass others;

I promise to respect confidentiality and privacy, as described in the document *Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in The Presbyterian Church in Canada*;

I have read and agree with the covenant of care/code of conduct.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witnessed by: _____

Date: _____

(Minister/Clerk of Session or authorized person)

⁶ *Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Faith*, 7.1.1, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Wood Lake Books, 1994

⁷ *Ibid.* 7.2.1, 7.2.2

c. Guide for interviewing and sample reference check form

Guidance to the *Leading with Care* committee doing the interview

References are extremely helpful and must be requested with all new recruits and in all new ministries. Even if members of the *Leading with Care* committee know a person well, they may not have seen the recruit interact with others at work, with children at play or in a teaching/leading capacity, or visiting with an elderly, mentally ill or homeless person. Even if written references are provided, follow up with a phone call. Inform the reference of the nature of the ministry position. Ask his/her opinion about the recruit's suitability in this situation, e.g., "John may be co-leading a Junior High group on Friday nights at our church. Would you be comfortable with John having this type of responsibility?" "Sukdiv has applied to be coordinator of our *In from the Cold* program which feeds and sleeps homeless folk during the winter. Tell us what you know about her abilities to recruit volunteers and to relate to the overnight guests." Listen to tone, attitude and hesitancy as well as to the words the reference speaks. Contact at least two references.

Sample reference check form

Person's name for which references are checked _____

Person contacted _____ Phone _____

Date _____

Introduce yourself and state the purpose of your call. Ask if they have a few minutes to answer some questions.

1. How long have you known the applicant?
2. In what capacity do you know him/her?
3. How well do you feel you know the applicant?
4. Could you briefly describe the character and personality of the applicant?
5. Have you ever been in a position to work with him/her? If so, what was your impression?
6. What gifts, talents and abilities would this person offer to (your church name)?
7. Are you aware of any facts or circumstances involving this person that would call into question his or her ability to do this ministry?
8. Would you, without reservation, recommend this person as a leader in _____ ministry?

 Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions for us. We are working hard to provide a safe environment for all who participate and all who offer leadership in our church.

What is your area of interest in children's/youth/vulnerable adult ministry in this congregation?

Nursery (birth-2) Preschool/kindergarten (3-5) School age (6-12)
 Youth (13-18) Frail Seniors Mentally challenged Out of the Cold Program

Do you have any barriers that would affect your ability to carry out this ministry?

no yes/please explain: _____

References:

Please provide the names of two people, excluding relatives, who will provide a reference for you. Provide one reference from a church member. **Please note: All references will be called.**

1. Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Relationship to Applicant _____

2. Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Relationship to Applicant _____

e. Sample general incident report form

(Insert your church/ministry name here)

CONFIDENTIAL

Report date: _____

Time of report: _____

Name of child/youth/adult: _____ Age/Grade: _____
(not necessary for adult)

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Family (household) name: _____
(If different from above)

Address: _____
(If different from above)

Phone number: _____
(If different from above)

Date and time of incident: _____

Description of injury, incident, behavioural changes, and/or allegations of abuse:

Direct quotes from child/youth/adult: (Note: Do not interview the child/youth but report only the comments they share with you.)

Signature: _____
(Name and position of person making report)

If faxed to child/youth/adult protection agency, date of fax transmission:

Signature of person faxing report: _____

f. Sample youth activity program waiver and medical release

(Insert your church name/ministry name here)

Activity: _____ Date: _____

Name of participant: _____

First Last

Birth date (N/A for adult): _____

Address: _____

Parent/guardian/caregiver name(s): _____

Home/residence phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Does child/youth/adult have any severe allergies or other medical condition that leaders should be aware of? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, please list and explain _____

All reasonable precautions for the safety and health of your child/youth/adult will be taken. He/she will be properly supervised in activities. In the event of accident or sickness, (insert your church/ministry name here), its staff and volunteers are released from any liability.

In the event of injury requiring medical attention, I authorize treatment for my child/youth or adult and understand that reasonable attempts will be made to contact me, (or a residential staff) should such a situation occur.

In the event that travel or activities take place outside this province, I understand that any medical costs incurred involving my child/youth or vulnerable adult are my/caregiver's responsibility. Your child/youth/adult must be covered by provincial health insurance or equivalent medical coverage.

Health card number: _____

Family Physician: _____ Phone: _____

Contact person in case of emergency and parents/guardians/caregivers can't be reached:

1. Name: _____ Phone: _____
2. Name: _____ Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (PRINT): _____

17. Safety

a. Facilities

Congregations/ministries can ensure the physical safety and welfare of children/youth/vulnerable people by answering questions like these:

- Are railings at the right height for children?
- What precautions are taken for children using steps/stairs?
- Are bathrooms easily accessible?
- Are toilets accessible for children and people in wheelchairs?
- Are exits clearly marked?
- Can exits, especially basement exits, be released from the inside?
- Are floors, especially around entrances, resistant to slipping?
- Is the nursery vacuumed after each use?
- Are there windows in doors or split doors?
- Are nursery toys washed regularly in a solution of one tablespoon household bleach to one gallon warm water?
- Are used diapers disposed of immediately after each nursery use?
- Are signs posted reminding people to wash hands?
- Is there a well-stocked first aid kit? Is it easily accessible?

Consider additional questions related to your facility. Other facilities, such as church camps, should be guided by the facility requirements of their supervisory committee or, in the case of camps, by their provincial accreditation body.

b. Fire procedures

In congregations, consult with regional fire prevention agents for safety standards and practices. Post a fire escape map in each room. Inform children, youth and vulnerable adults and teachers/leaders of escape routes. Practice the escape drill once a year or as often as directed by your local fire marshal.

c. Transportation

A teacher/leader who drives children/youth/vulnerable adults must have a valid driver's license and insurance and one seatbelt and/or car seat per person in the vehicle. All adults responsible for the transportation of children, youth and vulnerable adults should avoid driving them when alone. If transportation with personal cars is considered high risk by your insurance company, the liability might be transferred by opting for a professional bus service to transport children/youth/vulnerable adults.

d. Staff/children-youth ratios

The activity and age of children/youth affects the ratio of young people to adults. If there are not enough teachers/leaders and adult volunteers, the program/ministry or activity must be cancelled.

Here are the maximum child/youth/vulnerable adult ratios to teachers/leaders in a regular program:

0-18 months	1 adult to 3 children
18 months-2 years	1 adult to 5 children
2 – 5 years	1 adult to 8 children ⁸
Ages 5-14	1 adult to 24 children
Ages 15-18	1 adult to 22 children ⁹
Vulnerable adults	1 adult to 8 vulnerable adults

e. Off-site activities and overnight events

Special outings, day trips, service projects and weekend camps are an important part of children/youth/vulnerable adult ministry. They help people grow physically, emotionally, and spiritually, give youth a chance to learn social and leadership skills, and provide socialization for vulnerable adults. The following guidelines need to be taken with these activities/events.

Child/youth/vulnerable adult to adult ratios

Here are the participant ratios to teachers/leaders/volunteers on day excursions and overnight outings.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Day excursions</u>	<u>Overnight excursions</u>
5 or under	3 adults per group of 30	overnight excursions not recommended
Ages 6-8	2 adults per group of 30;	not recommended for age 6; 4 adults for 30 children for ages 7 & 8
Ages 10-14	2 adults for every 30 children	2 adults for every 30 children
Ages 15-18	2 adults for every 30 youth	2 adults for every 30 children ¹⁰
Vulnerable adults	2 adults per 30 vulnerable adults	4 adults per 30 vulnerable adults

Daytime Activities/Events

- A teacher/leader must assess the risk of the activity and submit that assessment in writing to the *Leading with Care* or other appropriate committee for approval prior to the activity.
- Parents/guardians/caregivers must be notified prior to the outing.
- Written consent and medical release forms are required for each child/youth participating in activities/events (see p. 34).
- At least one teacher/leader should have a cell phone and the phone numbers of where the parents of the children/youth can be contacted.
- All day time activities/events must be supervised by a minimum of two teachers/leaders. Additional support workers might be necessary to accompany vulnerable adults.
- When transportation of children/youth/vulnerable adults is needed for an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license, current automobile insurance and must be screened volunteers or paid staff. The number of persons per vehicle must never exceed the number of seat belts or car seats.

⁸ Source: Child Care Canada

⁹ Source: Government of Ontario

¹⁰ Toronto District School Board, 2003

Overnight Activities/Events

Follow all requirements listed in daytime activities/events plus the following:

- Each children/youth is required to follow pre-established codes of conduct signed by the parent/guardian/caregiver and the child/youth/vulnerable adult.
- If the group is comprised of children/youth/vulnerable adults of one gender, the teacher/leader must be the same gender. If the group is comprised of children/youth/vulnerable adults of both genders, teachers/leaders of both genders must also be present.
- Each leader should have an assigned group of children/youth/vulnerable adults for whom they will be responsible during the overnight event.
- All facilities in which an overnight function is housed must be equipped with smoke detectors and inside release doors. All members of the group should be made aware of fire exits and fire procedures as required by provincial/regional standards.

Billeting youth in private homes

Billeting reduces costs and allows youth to meet new people. Here are some things to keep in mind when billeting youth:

- Children under 12 years of age should not be billeted
- Billet youth in groups of two
- The contact information (telephone number, address) of the individual with whom the youth will be billeted must be obtained by the group leader.

18. Health

While congregations/ministries cannot always avoid having ill children/youth/vulnerable adults in their programs/ministries, several measures can be taken to promote good health and reduce infection.

a. Allergies

When children/youth/vulnerable adults register for a program, inquire about allergies. Post this information so that it will not be overlooked. If your program serves meals or snacks, post the menu so the parent/caretaker can see it. Avoid foods identified as serious allergens such as peanut butter, chocolate and nuts of any kind. Popcorn can be dangerous for young children.

b. Injury

If a participant is injured while participating in a program/ministry or activity, the teacher/leader must arrange to get the person to medical care. If necessary, call 9-1-1. If the child/youth/vulnerable adult is bleeding, the teacher/leader should protect himself/herself and all others from the blood. For all serious injuries, even if the person does not need medical attention, a leader must complete a general incident report (see p. 34) and report the incident to the injured person's parent/guardian/caretaker. General incident reports should be stored in a locked metal cabinet.

c. Infectious diseases

Teachers/leaders must ask parents/guardians to not let their children and youth attend church programs if they have symptoms and diseases which are known to be infectious, among which are the following: diarrhea, vomiting, fever, rash, open sores, skin or eye infection, scarlet fever, measles, mumps, chicken pox, whooping cough, head lice.

19. Personal contact

It is essential to be careful regarding behaviour, language and touch when working with children/youth/vulnerable adults.

- Do not show favouritism in dealing with children/youth/vulnerable adults. Show a similar level of affection and kindness to all.
- Do not engage in or allow the telling of sexual jokes or behave in a way that promotes sexual exploitation of others.
- Provide clearly stated consequences for inappropriate behaviour. Stop inappropriate behaviour early. Be fair, consistent and reasonable, matching consequences to the age and ability of the child/youth.
- Do not use corporal punishment (hitting or spanking.)

a. 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 touch. It is also important to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in interpretation to touch: sexually, culturally, because of family history, individual personality or special needs.

Some Examples of Appropriate Touch

Love and care can usually be expressed in the following ways:

- 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 him/her 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
- Anointing a person with oil on the head
- Holding hands in a circle prayer or song
- Providing comfort with a wet, warm cloth

Some Examples of Inappropriate Touch

Avoid the following:

- Kissing a child/youth/vulnerable adult or coaxing them into kissing you
- Extended cuddling
- Tickling
- Piggy-back rides
- Having others sit on your lap (except for babies/young toddlers)
- Touching anyone in any area covered by a bathing suit (except changing infant's diapers)
- Hand holding, except for the examples listed above
- Running hands through hair

b. Discipline of children/youth

The best approach to discipline of children and youth is thoughtful prevention. If a teacher/leader has prepared for teaching/leading youth, makes clear statements about expectations and provides an engaging program, discipline problems will be avoided or lessened. If, however, a child/youth's behaviour is unacceptable, these practices must be followed:

- Tell or remind the child/youth what is expected.
- If it is necessary to speak to a child or youth in private, move to a quiet place in view of others. Seek supervisory help if needed and if available.
- Keep children/youth from harming themselves or others.
- If necessary, remove the child/youth from the situation to calm down.
- Provide a 'time-out' space for younger children to one side of the room until they are ready to rejoin the group. The 'time-out' should be no longer than one minute for each year of the child's age.
- Inform the parent/guardian of the problem and work cooperatively with them. They may have good ideas of how to deal with this type of situation.
- Verbal correction must not become verbal abuse.

Do not use corporal punishment (hitting or spanking) under any circumstances.

c. Washroom procedures

Every group in The Presbyterian Church in Canada providing a program/ministry for children/youth/vulnerable adults must determine the washroom procedure that will be followed in that program/ministry at the time of determining the risk. This is particularly critical with pre-school children who must have help to use the washroom. Here are guidelines:

- Ask parents of pre-school children to take their child to the washroom before class.
- If possible, two adults should accompany a pre-school child to the washroom. If this is not possible and only one adult is available, the main bathroom door must be propped open. No adult or teen helper is ever to be in a closed washroom cubicle with a child. A volunteer or teen helper may stay behind with the remaining children.
- Children under 6 who need to go to the washroom should be accompanied by a teacher/leader who escorts the child to the washroom, checks the bathroom for safety and then waits in the hall for the child to finish. A volunteer or teen helper may stay behind with the remaining children.
- Children 6 and over may go to the washroom unaccompanied.
- If there is an emergency bathroom situation, the parent or supervisor should be notified immediately.
- Vulnerable adults may need special bathroom aids: assist bars, and so on. It may be necessary to ensure that cleanliness follows use.

20. Information on Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Abuse

a. Understanding Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Abuse

This policy has zero tolerance for abuse in any form. This includes abuse that happens to a child/youth/adult by a church staff member or volunteer. There is also a need for adults in the church to be sensitive to incidents of abuse that may be happening in the home or social life

of a child/youth/vulnerable adult. All suspected abuse or reported abuse must be reported to a child/youth/vulnerable adult to the police and/or proper protection agency.

In order to understand and recognize child abuse, the following definitions and indications of emotional, physical and sexual abuse or neglect are listed. Some of the following also applies to vulnerable adults. All congregations/ministries are asked to supplement this information from a provincial/territorial child protection agency.

What is child/vulnerable adult abuse?

Child abuse is generally described as any non-accidental injury, any physical or emotional maltreatment, or the refusal to provide or consent to medical treatment of a child or teenager under the age of 18¹¹. Vulnerable adult abuse includes mistreatment and neglect of a physical, financial, psychological, sexual or spiritual nature. All abuse involves the misuse of power by the caregiver, parent or those in positions of authority. Most abuse falls into four broad categories: emotional, physical, sexual and neglect.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse includes activities that result in the failure to provide a nurturing environment for the child or vulnerable adult. It occurs when an adult continually treats a child in such a damaging way that the child's concept of self is seriously impaired. Emotionally abusive behaviour by the caregiver can include constant yelling, criticizing, belittling, rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child, or terrorizing the child and providing no love, support, or guidance. Vulnerable adult abuse is similar. Emotional abuse can be the most difficult to identify and prove.

Behavioural Symptoms

- severe depression or anxiety
- extreme attention-seeking
- extreme withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive activities
- overly compliant; too well mannered
- too neat, too clean or dirty and unkempt
- extreme inhibition to play or communicate

Physical Symptoms

- bed-wetting that is non-medical in origin
- frequent complaints of headaches, nausea, abdominal pain, illness
- failure to thrive and develop physically relative to peers

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any non-accidental injury to a child or adult, which may include beatings, shaking, poisoning or burning. An action or failure to take action by the child or adult's caregiver might result in abuse. Abuse is unacceptable discipline for a child, youth or vulnerable adult. Injuries may include unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, broken bones, burns or internal injuries. Physical abuse can be a one-time isolated incident, or it can happen over a prolonged period of time.

¹¹ The United Nations Convention on the Child established the age of children as 0-18. For the majority of provinces and territories in Canada, this is the definition of "child", with the exception of Ontario, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador where child is defined as 0-16. This document defines a child/youth as a person under eighteen (18) years of age (see Part I, Section 1.5).

Behavioural Symptoms

- a child's recall of how injuries occurred is evasive or inconsistent; lack of trust in authority figures
- if touched unexpectedly may flee or cringe or appear frightened
- small children may display a vacant stare and lack of interest in what is going on; adults may appear anxious.
- extreme aggression or extreme withdrawal
- inappropriate affection-seeking from others
- extremely compliant and/or eager to please

Physical Symptoms

Children/adults may exhibit:

- injuries that are not consistent with explanation
- several injuries that are in various stages of healing
- various injuries unexplained over a period of time
- injuries and bruises on a regular basis

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any interaction between a child and another child, teen, or adult where the child/adult is being used for a sexual purpose. The Criminal Code identifies a number of types of sexual abuse including: sexual interference, pornography, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, procuring sexual activity from a child or a vulnerable adult, permitting sexual activity, exhibitionism, sexual assault and incest. The Presbyterian Church in Canada's official policy on sexual abuse can be found in the *Policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for Dealing with Sexual Abuse and/or Harassment, 1998*.

Behavioural Symptoms of a child

- age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self or others displaying explicit sexual acts
- age-inappropriate, sexually explicit drawings and/or description
- unusual sexual knowledge for age
- prostitution
- seductive behaviours

Physical Symptoms

- unusual or excessive scratching or touching in genital or anal areas
- torn, stained or bloody underwear
- pregnancy
- bruising, swelling or infection in the genital or anal areas
- venereal disease

Neglect

Neglect is chronic failure, either passive or aggressive, to provide the necessities of life. This includes chronic dirtiness, lack of food, withholding of affection or a general disinterest in the child or vulnerable adult's well being.

Behavioural Symptoms

- lack of interest in activities
- withdrawal

- constant seeking of food and attention

Physical Symptoms

- chronic dirtiness or chronic tiredness
- noticeably underweight
- wearing inappropriate clothing for season

In Canada, each province and territory has been given responsibility for the welfare of children, youth and vulnerable adults. Check with local government services regarding the definitions in your region.

b. Dealing with reports of abuse

When a child or youth is upset or distressed about a situation, he/she is most likely to turn to a trusted adult for support and advice. Often, though, a child or youth may be hesitant and shy about discussing what has happened. Feelings of guilt or shame are common. The teacher/leader should help the child/youth/vulnerable adult feel safe and understand that they can talk about what happened. A vulnerable adult, disabled or confined, may not be able to tell anyone, so visiting teachers/leaders need to be sensitive and aware of any change of appearance/emotion. In the church community, teachers/leaders need to be aware (through training) of the proper channels to follow when dealing with abuse allegations. If the allegation is of sexual abuse and/or harassment, the process of investigation and action will be in accordance with the Church's policy for dealing with sexual abuse and/or harassment (1998).

A listening adult should be supportive and pay attention to what is said. Be cautious about asking questions. Accept the person's story; do not dispute it. Investigating the incident and determining the alleged abuse is the responsibility of the child or adult protection agency. Although it is difficult, be calm, supportive and hopeful.

It is important not to make promises that you cannot keep, such as promising to stop the abuse, punish or remove the offender. Do not promise not to report the incident to the authorities. If you have inadvertently promised to keep what the child/youth/adult says confidential, tell him/her that you must tell someone who can help you both.

c. Reporting to a protection agency

All persons have a legal and moral obligation to report abuse.

Legal Obligation: Every person who believes on reasonable ground that a child or youth is, or may be, in need of protection, must provide this information to the appropriate protection branch of the province or territory. In some provinces, legal obligation also applies to vulnerable adults.

Moral Obligation: God has given us the responsibility to protect and care for children/youth and vulnerable adults. It is the responsibility of adults to develop and maintain a safe church environment for all. Reporting an incident of abuse involving a child, youth or vulnerable adult demonstrates this care and concern. A sample general incident report can be found on p. 34.

d. Procedure if contacted by a protection agency

1. Any request from a child protection worker (see photo ID or badge to verify identity) should normally be made in person. The worker will want to speak with the person filing the suspected abuse report and, if a different person, to the person to whom the child/youth spoke.
2. If the matter is urgent and those investigating cannot do a personal interview, the investigator may telephone you from his/her office.
 - The child protection agent should identify him/herself and give his/her work contact phone number.
 - Do not give any information at this time. The investigator will explain the process to follow and what information he/she is seeking.
 - It is your responsibility to verify that this is indeed a child protection agent. Simply say, "I need to move to another phone. May I phone you back in 30 seconds?" Move to a phone where you can ensure confidentiality.
 - When you return the call, provide the necessary information.
 - Ask what is to happen next. This is critical as a court order may be warranted and a restraining order put in place. The church/ministry should be aware of this. Details do not need to be given. Ask when the church/ministry can expect a final report on the case and if further information will be required.
 - Make written notes about what you reported, date, time, phone number and name of investigator. Place in a confidential, locked, metal file cabinet.

e. Pastoral response to a report of abuse

A disclosure of an incident of alleged abuse of a child/youth or vulnerable adult is an emotionally charged experience. When an individual discloses that he/she is a victim of an alleged abuse, it is important to:

- assure him/her that he/she will be listened to and provided with support throughout the process
- take the allegations seriously
- keep emotions in check; when disbelief or horror is shown, this may result in the person becoming withdrawn or unwilling to share the experience with you
- "listen more, talk less"
- remind the child/youth that he/she is in no way at fault for this abuse
- affirm that it is always appropriate to tell someone that he/she has been abused
- remind the person that your first priority is his or her protection
- ask them if it is okay to pray with them
- reassure them that ongoing care will be provided for them and their family
- provide pastoral support to the person who reported the abuse; give reassurance that they have done the right thing in reporting this incident

Do not:

- promise the person that you will not tell anyone; some secrets should not be kept secret; assure the person that this information is to be restricted to those who need to be advised
- prejudge the situation
- defend the alleged perpetrator or make comments like, "I can't believe they did that"

f. Response to the Media

If it is deemed essential to respond to media, a designated church leader—the minister, clerk of session, or head of the *Leading with Care* committee—will be the spokesperson for the church. No facts should be disclosed and the spokesperson may say something like this:

All allegations of abuse or harassment are taken seriously. The protection of children/youth/vulnerable adults is a priority of (your church/ministry name) and The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In accordance with civil law an allegation of abuse has been reported to (insert the name of the child protection agency).

21. Storing confidential documents

Records that are of a personal, confidential or personnel nature are kept for 75 years, according to the policy of our national church. Each congregation must have a locked, metal file cabinet for this purpose. The session will decide which one or two individuals in the congregation have a key to this cabinet.

Assistance in storing and managing confidential records may be found on the church's web page (www.presbyterian.ca) under Archives and Record Resources. The section under "Records Management" is helpful. The national archives also produces a newsletter entitled, "Step into your archives." This can be found in both the PCPak sent to all congregations and on the church web page. In addition, the staff at our national archives (800-619-7301) are willing and able to help in addressing concerns and questions around management of confidential materials.

22. The video *Leading with Care in your congregation* will be available in September, 2004.

23. Sample poster to post in your church facility

This church/facility and all the programs held in this building support Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

It is the policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that all person, in particular children, youth and vulnerable adults, who participate in the programs/ministries and use the facilities of the denomination will be cared for with Christian compassion and will be safe.

24. Understanding Police Records Checks

Organizations that provide programs to children and other vulnerable people must take reasonable measures to protect them. This is why many organizations have screening policies for staff and volunteers who have, or will have, contact with children or other vulnerable people.

What is screening?

Screening is a process, performed by an organization, to ensure that the right match is made between the work to be done and the person who will do it. The screening process includes steps such as job design, recruitment and orientation. The steps that are most important in determining the suitability of a candidate are interviews, reference checks and, when dealing with vulnerable participants, a Police Records Check (PRC).

What is a Police Records Check (PRC)?

A Police Records Check (PRC) is a Criminal Records Check, as well as a search of the records held in the information database of a local police agency. The Police Records Check is one of the steps in Volunteer Canada's Safe Steps screening program.

Does screening guarantee the safety of vulnerable people?

Unfortunately, no. An organization can never eliminate all risks. Screening helps an organization create a safe environment by selecting the right people for each position. A Police Records Check may be one element in the screening process; however, the PRC will only identify the person who already has a criminal or other police record. Organizations must carry out a range of screening activities to properly assess staff and volunteers.

How does an organization decide who to screen?

In fact, the organization does not decide who to screen, it decides how to screen. Based solely on the risk involved in the position, the organization determines which screening steps are needed. For example, candidates for the job of a mentor, who works alone with a child, will need to be screened thoroughly for the safety of the child. On the other hand, the position where there is no access to children, confidential records, or money will likely involve fewer screening steps.

The request that you consent to a Police Records Check does not mean that the organization does not trust you or has concerns about you. It means the position you are applying for is considered to have a heightened risk and the organization is managing that risk appropriately.

How is a Police Records Check carried out?

To conduct a Police Records Check, the local police do several things. First, they query the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database, operated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), to search for relevant criminal record information and/or the existence of a CPIC record. Second, they search their own database for information about the individual. Lastly, they may contact other police detachments for information about the person. The CPIC database is a compilation of police information and court decisions. Information collected in the CPIC database includes individuals who:

- have a criminal record for any Criminal Code or other Federal Statute offence and/or
- have been judged not criminally responsible for an offence because of mental disorder and/or
- have federal and/or provincial charges pending and/or
- are on probation or subject to a Prohibition Order.

In addition, local police agencies compile information, in their own databases, about every complaint they receive. Examples of complaints include:

- offences contrary to provincial statutes (such as traffic violations or liquor-related violations)
- abuse of children
- allegations of offences where charges were not laid.

The voluntary organization must have your written permission to request a PRC.

Since 2001, as a result of amendments to the Criminal Records Act, criminal records of pardoned sex offenders can be made available to organizations that work with vulnerable people.

Your written consent is required to search the CPIC database for pardoned sexual offences.

What if you have a criminal record?

If the information obtained by the police indicates that you have a criminal record, does that mean you cannot volunteer? Not necessarily; organizations may look at the following factors when considering your application:

- the nature of the organization and its work
- the nature of the offence
- the relevance of the criminal record to the position you are applying for.

If the CPIC query produces a name and date of birth similar to yours, you can provide your fingerprints to confirm your identity. As fingerprints are the best personal identifier, your fingerprints will determine whether or not the information in the CPIC database pertains to you.

For more information on the Safe Steps process, visit www.volunteer.ca or contact Volunteer Canada at 1-800-670-0401.