



Leading with Care

A Policy for Ensuring
a Climate of Safety
for Children, Youth
and Vulnerable Adults
in The Presbyterian
Church in Canada

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Policy Overview

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is committed to providing safe environments within its ministries. The *Leading with Care Policy* gives direction to the denomination as it seeks to fulfill this commitment.

The *Leading with Care Policy* applies to all ministries, programs and activities that fall under the jurisdiction of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. All volunteers, paid staff, clergy and professional church workers are required to comply with this policy.

The *Leading with Care Policy* focuses the church's attention in two different, yet complementary, areas:

- examining and improving the safety of all activities, programs and ministries
- selecting, training and supporting the individuals who teach and lead

Implementing the *Leading with Care Policy* begins with a ministry position description (or job description) for each of the teaching and leading positions required to offer the programs. What will the teacher/leader do, and when, how, where, why and with whom will they carry out this work?

Each ministry position description is then evaluated using a risk assessment guide. What risks of harm may arise as the activities are carried out? The goal is to find ways to reduce or otherwise manage these risks to the fullest extent possible. After any such changes are made, ministries that remain high risk require the teachers/leaders serving in them to present a Police Records Check.

The focus on improving safety also involves creating, reviewing and revising safety standards and procedures for a wide range of issues.

The safety-audit aspect of the *Leading with Care Policy* goes hand in hand with its second focus: the selection, training and support of teachers and leaders. The ministry position description forms the basis for these tasks. It gives clarity to teachers/leaders about the work they have been asked to do, and guides the recruiter and the prospective teacher/leader in deciding if the position is a good match for the person. Screening of new teachers/leaders requires a personal interview and at least two references. All teachers/leaders, both new and experienced, who serve in high-risk ministry must present a police records check. This requirement is understood to apply to all active clergy.

Training and support of teachers/leaders begins with orientation to the role, responsibilities and tasks of the ministry position. The established safety standards and procedures are discussed to ensure that teachers/leaders understand them and are prepared to follow them consistently. Teachers/leaders are asked to sign a Covenant of Care Form indicating their intention to do so.

Training of teachers/leaders may also involve opportunities for developing their knowledge and skills. Supervision of teachers/leaders and evaluation of their work, again using the ministry position description as a reference document, facilitate monitoring of program safety, while at the same time offering teachers/leaders further learning opportunities.

With its dual focus on safety measures and on selecting, training and supporting teachers/leaders, the *Leading with Care Policy* is directed primarily towards prevention. Careful steps in these areas are intended to diminish significantly the risks that an incident of harm might occur.



SECTION 1

Introduction

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is committed to providing safe environments within its ministries. In 2005, the General Assembly adopted the *Leading with Care Policy*, which states the denomination's intention in these terms:

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

The *Leading with Care Policy* gives direction to the denomination as it seeks to fulfill this commitment.

1.1 | The Nature and Scope of the *Leading with Care Policy*

The *Leading with Care Policy* applies to all ministries, programs and activities that fall under the jurisdiction of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. These include times of worship, service, study and play in contexts such as congregations, camps, colleges and church courts.

All volunteers, paid staff, clergy and professional church workers are required to comply with this policy. For the sake of simplicity, the *Leading with Care Policy* refers to all such persons as *teachers/leaders*. Examples include church school teachers, youth group leaders, pastoral care visitors and leaders of a group for developmentally challenged adults.

In congregations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Sessions have the responsibility to ensure compliance with the *Leading with Care Policy*. In non-congregational ministries, this responsibility rests with the governing board of the ministry.

For the sake of simplicity, the *Leading with Care Policy* uses the word *congregation* to refer to the ministry setting and the word *Session* to refer to the body that oversees the ministry. Nevertheless, these words are understood to encompass all ministry contexts (congregational and non-congregational) and all oversight bodies (Sessions and governing boards).

The *Leading with Care Policy* supports the church's pastoral work by focusing on two areas:

- ***Keeping people safe and preventing harm in ministry settings:***

This goal pertains to a wide range of issues, including the following: food handling and allergies; hygiene; injury; infectious diseases; accessibility for disabled persons; compliance with building and fire codes; transportation; teacher/leader and participant ratios; off-site activities and overnight events; the kinds of interactions required by the ministry, such as whether the teacher/leader is alone with the person served or whether the ministry requires touching the person served.

- ***Selecting, training and supporting teachers/leaders:***

This goal pertains to issues such as recruitment and screening of teachers/leaders, provision of opportunities for teachers/leaders to develop their knowledge and skills, and supervision and evaluation of teachers/leaders as they carry out their assigned roles.

One element that is central to both goals of the *Leading with Care Policy* is the ministry position description (or job description). These documents outline a general summary of the ministry, program or activity, as well as the role, responsibilities and tasks of each teacher/leader serving within it. Ministry position descriptions detail what the teacher/leader will do, when, how, where, why and with whom. The discipline of putting these expectations into a document on paper helps to accomplish important objectives intended by the *Leading with Care Policy*:

- to identify all ministries, programs and activities
- to provide information needed to assess the risks of harm that are present in the ministry, so that risks can be reduced or otherwise managed
- to give teachers/leaders clarity about the work they have been asked to do
- to provide a reference document for supervision and evaluation of the work of the teacher/leader

With its dual focus on safety measures and on selecting, training and supporting teachers/leaders, the *Leading with Care Policy* is directed primarily towards prevention. Careful steps in these areas are intended to diminish significantly the risks that an incident of harm might occur.

Nevertheless, despite good prevention practices, allegations of abuse or harassment might arise. To deal with such allegations, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has established various policies, including:

- *Policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for Dealing with Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment*
- *Policy and Procedures for Addressing Harassment in the Church*, which includes racial harassment and workplace harassment

Visit presbyterian.ca/resources/resources-od/safety-policies for these policies and other resources.

1.2 | Biblical and Theological Foundation

The intention of The Presbyterian Church in Canada to exercise care in all its ministries begins with responses of awe and gratitude for the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ:

We bow before the mystery of God's love. From it came our creation. By it we are daily nurtured. Through it we find salvation. A consuming fire of purity, God's love is yet warm and gentle compassion.

We respond to the God who is love by loving in return (Living Faith 8.3.1).

Christians seek to model the example of Christ and to stay rooted in his love in all their relationships. The gospels abound with stories of Jesus' compassion and healing love. Jesus met and healed children (Matthew 9:18–19, 23–25; Mark 5:22–24, 35–42). He blessed them and portrayed them as bearers of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:13–14).

On many occasions, Jesus healed adults. Some were individuals who called out to Jesus for healing (Mark 1:40–42). Others were carried into Jesus' presence by their friends (Mark 2:2–12; Luke 5:17–25). Yet another was healed sight-unseen by Jesus at the request of a Roman centurion (Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10).

Sometimes, Jesus' compassion took the form of food for the crowds of people who had come to listen to him (Mark 8:1–9). In his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1–11; Luke 6:20–22), Jesus urges care and love for strangers, prisoners, and the naked, hungry, thirsty and sick of the world. These words of Christ himself constitute “a call to help people in need and to permeate all of life with the compassion of God” (Living Faith, 9.1.3).

The Presbyterian Church in Canada affirms that the call to stay rooted in the love and compassion of Christ is to be obeyed within the denomination's ministries, programs and activities. As 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 (Living Faith, 8.2.6).

The gospel mandate to love is entwined inextricably with the call to justice. God calls the church to seek and establish a climate of justice because it reflects the divine righteousness revealed in the bible. The Presbyterian Church in Canada affirms that the church is called to deal fairly with people, to protect the rights of others, and to protest against things that destroy human dignity. The church's commitment to justice requires upholding rights and fulfilling responsibilities (Living Faith, 8.4.2–8.4.4).

This biblical and theological framework demonstrates that concern for the protection and care of children, youth and vulnerable adults is firmly grounded in scripture and in Presbyterian/Reformed teaching. It is on this basis that The Presbyterian Church in Canada has affirmed its commitment to ensuring safety in these terms:

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

1.3 | Guiding Principles

- Protection of all children, youth and vulnerable adults is a spiritual, ethical and legal imperative. The Presbyterian Church in Canada commits to protect all persons under its care.
- Prevention of harm necessitates having good processes in place to eliminate opportunities for all forms of abuse, neglect and harm.
- Incidents of abuse, neglect and harm will be reported immediately to the appropriate agencies in accordance with local civil law requirements and the policies of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- Training and support of teachers and leaders are a priority. To ensure that these individuals are well equipped for their ministry tasks, the church must have procedures for recruiting, training, supervising and evaluating the work of teachers and leaders.

1.4 | Definitions

Child/youth: a person who is under 18 years of age. Some Canadian provinces/territories classify children/youth as 16 years of age and younger. However, for the purpose of this policy, child/youth means a person under eighteen anywhere in Canada or in a ministry under the purview of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Event: an occasional or one-time event run by a congregation. Examples: a yearly concert, tea or picnic.

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.

Ministry position: a leadership role in which there is expected to be direct interaction with children, youth or vulnerable adults. Examples: the positions of church school teacher, youth group leader, elder, pastoral care worker, camp counsellor.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada: for the purposes of this policy, this shall include The Presbyterian Church in Canada and all related courts—Sessions, presbyteries, synods and General Assembly—and the programs/ministries they oversee and sponsor.

Program/ministry: a structured series of similar activities or events governed and run by The Presbyterian Church in Canada that spans a period of weeks or months and in which the level of risk is expected to remain constant. Examples: church school; the routine pastoral visitation by ministers and elders in people's homes; youth meeting at the church; operation of the Sunday morning nursery; an out-of-the-cold program.

Risk assessment: the process by which programs/ministries are rated according to risk factors. High-risk ministries require special attention.

Teacher/leader: a lay person of at least 18 years of age who devotes significant portions of their time and energy in faithful church service and who has gone through a time of orientation and training, in order to hold a ministry position. Examples: church school teacher, youth leader, pastoral care visitor. Paid staff, clergy and other professional church workers are also considered teachers/leaders.

Note: It is common practice in many congregations to use volunteer helpers who are between the ages of 12 and 18. Youthful leadership is to be encouraged and supported. However, it should be noted that, in this policy, mention of leaders and teachers refers to people of at least 18 years of age. Nevertheless, individuals under the age of 18 are expected to follow the policy when acting as leaders or volunteer helpers.

Vulnerable adult: a person who, because of their age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, is in a position of dependence on others or is otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by persons in positions of authority or trust relative to them. (Definition used in Bill C-7, proclaimed by the Government of Canada, August 1, 2000.)

Volunteer helper: a lay person who is 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 homeless people at a shelter, or someone who collects and distributes food bank items to families.

1.5 | Relationship of this Policy to the Church's Policy on Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment

In 1993, the General Assembly approved the *Policy for Dealing with Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment*. The policy affirms zero tolerance for sexual abuse or sexual harassment and commitment to use the procedures outlined in the policy to address all allegations of such abuse when they arise within The Presbyterian Church in Canada. All Sessions, presbyteries, synods, the General Assembly offices, colleges and other institutions with The Presbyterian Church in Canada are required to follow the policy or an equivalent policy if they have different governing structures.

With its dual focus on safety measures and on selecting, training and supporting teachers/leaders, the *Leading with Care Policy* is directed primarily towards prevention. Careful steps in these areas are intended to diminish significantly the risks that an incident of harm might occur.

If, however, despite good prevention practices, an allegation of sexual abuse or sexual harassment is made, the *Policy for Dealing with Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment* must be followed.

Visit presbyterian.ca/resources/resources-od/safety-policies for this policy and other resources.



SECTION 2

Overview of Procedures

The *Leading with Care Policy* is implemented in three phases: preparation, working with teachers/leaders, and evaluation of implementation and reporting.

First Phase: Preparation

1. The Session establishes a Leading with Care Committee, which carries out the congregation's implementation of the policy under the direction of the Session.
2. All ministries, programs and activities currently being offered by the congregation are listed.
3. Ministry position (job) descriptions are written or adapted for each ministry position.
4. The risk factors for each ministry position are evaluated, using the risk assessment guide.
5. Strategies to reduce or otherwise manage risk are discussed, and appropriate changes to the ministry are made, with Session approval as needed.
6. The Leading with Care Committee works with other committees and groups within the congregation, such as the Board of Managers or Finance and Property Committee, to examine areas important for safety and harm prevention.

Second Phase: Working with Teachers/Leaders

7. The Leading with Care Committee or another designated group recruits new teachers/leaders and conducts a group interview with the congregation's former, experienced teachers/leaders. New recruits provide at least two references.
8. All teachers/leaders participate in an orientation session, at which they complete a Teacher/Leader Form and sign a Covenant of Care Form.
9. Teachers/leaders in high-risk ministries must provide a Police Records Check.
10. Teachers/leaders are provided with training opportunities for knowledge and skill development.
11. The Leading with Care Committee or a designated person provides ongoing supervision of teachers/leaders.

Third Phase: Evaluation of Implementation and Reporting

12. The congregation's progress in implementing the *Leading with Care Policy* is reported to the Session at least twice yearly.
13. All necessary documents are collected and stored securely.



SECTION 3

Putting the Policy into Practice

First Phase: Preparation



3.1 | Read the Policy and Make a Presentation to the Session

A presentation can begin by giving a summary of the policy. Implementing the policy makes sense for several reasons:

- It is what we believe Jesus would have us do—protect the young and vulnerable.
- Newcomers and visitors feel more comfortable when they know a policy of safety is in place.
- Teachers/leaders feel more supported and confident when they receive orientation, training and supervision.
- Insurance companies have more confidence that the congregation is a good client.

3.2 | Establish a Leading with Care Committee

The Session appoints a Leading with Care Committee to guide the congregation in putting this policy into action. The committee is responsible for making sure that all groups in the congregation know about the policy and follow the implementation steps with integrity and consistency.

The Leading with Care Committee may be the Session, part of the Session, or a group of respected individuals in the congregation who are named by the Session. Where no Leading with Care Committee is appointed, the committee is the Session.

3.3 | List all Current Ministries

The Leading with Care Committee will ask: What ministries with children/youth/vulnerable adults does the congregation offer currently?

List all types of current ministries, such as

- ministry with preschoolers
- ministry with grades 1–6
- ministry with teens
- ministry with adults

If the congregation offers other programs, such as an after-school program, these should be listed separately from church-school programs.

After listing the ministries that the congregation offers, pause and celebrate the things the congregation is doing. Pray for these programs and their leaders.

3.4 | Write or Adapt Ministry Position (Job) Descriptions

The congregation may already have developed ministry position (job) descriptions for each of the ministries listed. If ministry position (job) descriptions have not been developed, this work will need to be done. Samples of ministry position (job) descriptions can be found in section 4.1 of this policy. These samples will need to be adapted so they accurately reflect the congregation's ministry.

Ministry position (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 position (job) description is like a road map. You can start a trip without a map, but your trip will be more direct, intentional and enjoyable with a map to guide you on your way.

3.5 | Evaluate Risk Factors and Reduce Risk

It is necessary, in many aspects of life, to assess risk and work to reduce it. Just as you check the safety of your car before setting out on a road trip, so too, it is important to look at each of the congregation's current ministries and explore the risks of each program. For example, the congregation needs to evaluate risk factors in visiting vulnerable people or in transporting children and youth in the vehicles of church members. Even though a ministry is deemed high risk, the congregation may still want to offer it. This means, however, that the congregation will need to manage the risk carefully.

The Leading with Care Committee will determine how much risk there is in current programs, as well as whether and how risk can be reduced. Each ministry position requires the completion of a risk assessment. This work is ongoing and must be revisited with each new program year, each change in adult leadership, and after a change in the environment.

Risk assessment for each ministry position must be done annually as responsibilities associated with positions often change over time. The completed risk assessments should be kept in a locked, metal file cabinet or in a secure computer file.

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

Risk assessment is performed for general programs/ministries and for specific or special events.

General programs/ministries

The Leading with Care Committee must determine the elements of risk in each ministry position. Such an assessment is performed by reviewing the ministry position (job) description and considering the most common circumstances under which a person in that position is likely to carry out their ministry.

Specific or special events

Should teachers/leaders introduce new elements into a program or ministry, they must determine the risk for that specific event and submit the risk assessment in writing to the Leading with Care Committee for review prior to the event. As in other aspects of putting the policy into action, common sense should be used. For instance, if the youth group leader invites the youth to walk down the block for an ice cream cone after their regular meeting, this should be seen as a spontaneous, creative thing. However, if the leader invites the youth to travel by car to do rock climbing, the risk of the event should be evaluated and approved by the Leading with Care Committee.

A ministry is classified as high risk automatically if any of these conditions apply:

- Teacher/leader is alone with persons served.
- Teachers/leaders have limited or no supervision in role.
- The activities of teachers/leaders are in a place where activities are not observed or monitored.
- Teacher/leader has access to personal property or money of the persons served.
- The ministry position involves touching persons served.

If a ministry is high risk, you must ask for a Police Records Check. In addition, if you place any additional checks in the “Yes, this is true” column, you must work to reduce the risks.

3.5.1 – Risk assessment guide

If number 1, 2, 3, 4 or 6 are checked to indicate that “Yes, this is true,” the ministry is automatically high risk and a Police Records Check is necessary. However, if any of the other categories (not bolded) are also checked to indicate that “Yes, this is true,” it is imperative that church leaders work to reduce this risk so the “No, this is not true” column may be checked off honestly. See suggestions for reducing risk, section 3.5.2 of this policy. In all cases, work is done to reduce risks in all areas.

Risk category	Risk factor	Yes, this is true	No, this is not true
Degree of Isolation	1. Teacher/leader may be alone with person served.		
Degree of Supervision	2. Teachers/leaders have limited or no supervision in role.		
	3. The activities of teachers/leaders are in a place where activities are not observed or monitored.		
Access to Property	4. Teacher/leader has access to personal property or money of persons served.		
	5. Teacher/leader has access to confidential information related to the person served.		
Degree of Physical Contact	6. The ministry position (job) description includes touching persons served.		
Vulnerability of Persons Served	7. Persons served have language or literacy barriers.		
	8. Persons served are immobile.		
	9. Persons served have challenges that contribute to their vulnerability (e.g., physical, psychological, situational).		
Degree of Physical Demands	10. The activity involves potential danger to person served (e.g., rock climbing, using a stove).		
	11. Activity involves potential stress (e.g., children upset by visit to nursing homes, support group activities).		
Degree of Trust	12. The teacher/leader develops close, personal relationships with persons served.		
	13. The ministry position involves transportation of persons served.		
	14. The teacher/leader contributes to making career or other important decisions of persons served.		
Degree of Inherent Risk	15. The activity heightens potential for the teacher/leader to be in contact with bodily fluids or disease of the person served.		
	16. The activity exposes the person served to operation or handling of potentially dangerous equipment (e.g., lawnmower).		
	17. The activity exposes the person served to handling toxic substances or results in exposure to poor air quality, noise, etc. (e.g., demolition work in an inner-city mission).		

3.5.2 — How to reduce risk by modifying programs

Sometimes it is not feasible to eliminate risks while maintaining the effectiveness of the program/ministry. In other cases, however, risks can be lowered without jeopardizing the effect of the program/ministry. Lowering the risk can even improve the ministry being offered.

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

Minimize the risk the congregation assumes

Even though some ministries are high risk, the congregation may opt to continue them because they are important. However, the congregation may minimize the risk it assumes.

Examples: You might provide two nursery caregivers instead of one. Or you might purchase additional insurance for volunteers' vehicles. (Check with the insurance company: some companies offer full coverage for occasional passengers of private vehicle owners provided the owner is not being reimbursed for the service.)

Transfer the liability

The congregation 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.

Modify the program/ministry or event

The congregation may change the way the activity is carried out.

Examples: You may continue to cook but use a microwave instead of an oven. Or you may do hospital visits with two visitors instead of one. Or you may continue to bring vulnerable people to a yearly concert but hire a bus to do so rather than use private cars.

If the above strategies cannot be used, the congregation has two choices: proceed with the high-risk program/ministry with care and caution or eliminate the program/ministry.

Here are some suggestions for reducing risk:

- Follow a two-person policy whenever possible—during any program, have at least two adults present who are not related or from the same household.
- Require two volunteers/staff to transport children/youth/vulnerable adults in a church vehicle or in a volunteer's vehicle.
- Visit vulnerable people with a partner.
- When the two-person policy cannot be used, 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.
- Where the two-person policy cannot be used, 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 others can see both people.
- Add a large window in the door of each classroom, or always leave the classroom door open.

3.6 | Design a Covenant of Care Form

At orientation, teachers/leaders will be asked to sign a Covenant of Care Form and promise to adhere to the safety standards as presented in the orientation. A covenant of care makes clear the expectations of behaviour. A sample Covenant of Care Form is found at section 4.2 of this policy. Explain how this code of conduct fits with the denomination's commitment to the safety and well-being of all children/youth and vulnerable adults.

3.7 | Examine Safety and Prevention Areas

In preparation for the orientation of teachers/leaders, examine safety and prevention areas: facilities, fire procedures, earthquakes, transportation issues, requirements of staff/user ratios, off-site activities and overnight events, and health issues.

Facilities

Congregations can protect children/youth/vulnerable people by answering questions about facilities. See Facilities Checklist, section 4.3 of this policy.

Consider items specifically related to the interior and exterior of your property. Bodies, such as camps, may be guided by provincial standards in addition to the *Leading with Care Policy*.

Fire procedures

Consult with your regional fire prevention agents for safety standards and practices. Post a fire-escape map in each room and ensure that fire extinguishers are properly placed. Inform everyone of escape routes. An evacuation plan should be defined clearly. Practice the escape drill once a year or as often as directed by your local fire marshal. Prepare a list of individuals who may need assistance in the event of an emergency.

At the beginning of each church-school class, attendance should be recorded and the attendance book should be picked up and taken to a central location. In the event of a fire, this helps ensure that all children are accounted for. Inform parents that, in the unlikely event of a fire during worship/church-school time, they are not to go in search of their child/youth. All the children/youth will be taken outside as a group to a designated gathering place.

Earthquakes

In some parts of the country, emergency procedures for earthquakes should be put in place. Consult with local agents to learn the best standard safety practices.

Transportation

A teacher/leader who drives children/youth/vulnerable adults must have a valid driver's license and valid 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 or by scheduling a time for parents/guardians/caregivers to pick up their children/youth/vulnerable adults.

Teacher/leader and participant ratios

The activity and age of children/youth affect the ratio of children/youth to staff. Factors to consider when establishing adequate ratios include the management of the program as well as concern for safety, care and social interaction. If there are not enough teachers/leaders and adult volunteers, the program/ministry or activity should not be held. (Volunteer helpers who work under the supervision of a screened, trained volunteer are welcome additions.)

For suggested ratios of teachers/leaders to participants, see section 4.4 of this policy.

Off-site activities and overnight events

Special outings, day trips, service projects and weekend camps are an important part of ministry with children/youth/vulnerable adults. These activities help people grow physically, emotionally and spiritually; give youth a chance to learn social and leadership skills; and provide social opportunities for vulnerable adults. The following guidelines for these activities/events must be followed and an Activity Permission and Medical Form must be signed. See section 4.5 of this policy.

Day excursions

- 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.
- Activity Permission and Medical Forms are required for each child/youth/vulnerable adult participating in activities/events. See section 4.5 of this policy.
- At least one teacher/leader must have a cell phone and the phone numbers where the parents of the children/youth can be contacted during the excursion. The teacher/leader must have a copy of the completed Activity Permission and Medical Forms with them.
- All daytime excursions must be supervised by a minimum of two non-related teachers/leaders who are not in the same household. 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 and valid 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.
- At least one teacher/leader should have current First Aid training.
- If an event includes trips to a pool, lake or hot tub, all municipal/provincial/federal regulations regarding safety and supervision must be adhered to.

Overnight activities/events

Follow all requirements listed in daytime excursions plus the following:

- Each child/youth/vulnerable adult is required to follow pre-established codes of conduct signed by the parent/guardian/caregiver and the child/youth/vulnerable adult.
- If more than one gender is represented among the event participants, the group of teachers/leaders must reflect the group's diversity.
- Each teacher/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.
- No adult should be alone with a single child/youth/vulnerable adult.
- If an event includes trips to a pool, lake or hot tub, all municipal/provincial/federal regulations regarding safety and supervision must be adhered to.

Health

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

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 allergens (e.g., nuts of any kind). Avoid foods that are known choking hazards.

Injury

If a participant is injured during a program/ministry/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 themselves and all others from the blood. For all injuries, even if the person does not need medical attention, a teacher/leader must complete a General Incident Report Form (see section 4.6 of this policy) and report the incident to the injured person's parent/guardian/caretaker. General Incident Report Forms should be stored in a locked, metal cabinet or a secure computer file.

Infectious and contagious diseases

Teachers/leaders must ask parents/guardians to not let their children and youth attend church programs if they have symptoms and diseases that are known to be infectious and/or contagious.

Checklist for First Phase

Task	Date	Who is responsible
3.1 Has a presentation been made to the Session or the governing body of the ministry?		
3.2 Has a Leading with Care Committee been established?		
3.3 Has the Leading with Care Committee listed all the ministries currently offered?		
3.4 Has the Leading with Care Committee written or adapted ministry position (job) descriptions for each ministry in the congregation?		
3.5 Has risk been assessed for each ministry position? Has someone taken steps to reduce some risk?		
3.6 Has a Covenant of Care Form been produced?		
3.7 Have safety and prevention areas been inspected and changed if necessary?		

Second Phase: Working with Teachers/Leaders



3.8 | Recruit New Teachers/Leaders and Support Experienced Teachers/Leaders

The importance of interviewing a potential new teacher/leader can be understood in several ways. Such an interview is a way of supporting the recruit, telling them that the congregation cares deeply about participants in the church's programs as well as the leaders of those programs. It is a way for the congregation to make sure that teachers/leaders are well-matched to the position in which they will be working. It also provides a way for church leaders to carry out their responsibility to ensure that the wrong people are not placed in positions where they can do harm in the church.

The Leading with Care Committee supervises the recruiting of new teachers/leaders, but may or may not be the people who customarily recruit in the congregation. Regardless of who does the recruiting, the process must include a personal interview and a reference check of the prospective teacher/leader.

Recruiting process

A personal interview is an essential way to discover if the applicant is a good fit for a ministry position. In addition, a conversation with an applicant helps determine whether the timing is right for them to assume a ministry position. See section 4.7 of this policy for suggestions for the interviewing process.

Experienced teachers

As congregations have implemented the *Leading with Care Policy*, a practical problem has arisen. Do long-time, experienced and trusted teachers need to go through the same recruiting and screening procedures as new recruits? One congregation used an imaginative approach. They held a *group interview* that had the feel of a supportive coffee hour. They used some of the questions in section 4.7 of this policy.

3.9 | Provide Orientation for all Teachers/Leaders

Orientation for all teachers/leaders—new and experienced—is very important. Orientation gives people general information to prepare them for their ministry position (job). Stress that all teachers/leaders—whether new or experienced—must attend the orientation session. Orientation is best done in late August or early September when the functional church year starts, but must be repeated whenever new teachers/leaders begin.

The orientation session should include important information about safety practices. All teachers/leaders will be asked to sign a Covenant of Care Form (section 4.2 of this policy) and promise to adhere to the safety standards as presented in the orientation. In addition, all teachers/leaders will be asked to complete a Teacher/Leader Form found in section 4.11 of this policy (unless this form was completed earlier in the recruitment process along with the personal interview and reference checks.) A list of what would normally be covered in an orientation session can be found in section 4.8 of this policy.

3.10 | Obtain a Police Record Check/ Volunteer Screening Check for High-Risk Ministry

Screening happens before a Police Records Check

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 the position requires engaging in a high-risk ministry, a Police Records Check.

NOTE: The term *Police Records Check* is a general term. In your region, the check may be called a *Volunteer Screening Check* or another term. In addition, both the process and the fee schedules vary greatly across Canada. Ask your regional police agency for the most comprehensive type of check.

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, communities and religious groups. However, PRCs do have limitations, and that is why they are only one part of the larger screening process.

PRCs are mandatory for all high-risk ministries in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. When important programs in the congregation's ministry are high risk and cannot be adapted to make them lower risk, the teachers/leaders (including clergy, elders and paid staff) must have a PRC.

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 at the time of a new call or change of position and/or every five years. The responsibilities of elders vary from congregation to congregation. However, elders who routinely visit people one-on-one should also have a PRC.

Handling the information

In a similar way that an offering-envelope secretary knows how much money a person gives to the church but holds this in confidence, so too the Leading with Care Committee must handle some information with great care and maintain confidentiality. The individual who obtains a PRC presents 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. The person who is seeking to be a teacher/leader owns their PRC and should keep the original. However, a copy may be given to the congregation or the congregation will file a record of having seen the PRC. It is important for the Leading with Care Committee to handle this information with strict confidentiality.

Under what circumstances must a Police Records Check be done?

A PRC must be done at all of the following points:

- at the time of a new call (for clergy)
- at the time of a change of position
- at a time when the ministry position (job) changes
- every five years

Who pays for the Police Records Check?

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

Are there limits to Police Records Checks?

There are some limits, but the fact still remains: PRCs 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 PRCs:

- They are good only up to the day of checking and based on the information provided.
- A person may use a false name, driver's license, 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 Youth Criminal Justice Act; therefore, access to this information will not be possible after a certain time period.
- Some sex offenders and abusers have never been charged or convicted of a crime, so there will be no record to review.

Additional information on Police Records Checks may be found in section 4.9 of this policy.

3.11 | Provide Some Form of Teacher/Leader Training

It is important that all teachers/leaders meet for a time of orientation and training. Individuals who become a Scout or Brownie leader, a minor sports coach, or a Big Brother or Big Sister are required to do some training on the content of the program. Knowing the content of the program contributes to safety and the good management of the program. Confident, trained teachers/leaders are more alert to safety and prevention procedures. An outline of what should be included in orientation is found in section 4.8 of this policy.

There are several ways that the teachers/leaders may be trained for their ministry. All are effective, so choose one or more that best suits the congregation. This training should include three elements: understanding the Presbyterian/Reformed tradition, some biblical knowledge, and some teaching/leading skills. There is a list in section 4.10 of this policy.

Orientation and training may be done in individual congregations or in a cluster of congregations. You may choose to provide an intensive first-time orientation for new teachers/leaders and a yearly refresher for returning teachers/leaders.

3.12 | Provide Supervision of and Support for Teachers/Leaders

Prayer support

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

Ongoing support

After orientation and training, supervision/support and evaluation will be provided. Supervision/support and evaluation provide the following:

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

The ministry position (job) description is used as a reference point. For instance, in the description, a church-school superintendent/coordinator may tell new teachers that they should expect a quick 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 event 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 also 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.

Checklist for Second Phase

Task	Date	Who is responsible
3.8 Have new teachers/leaders been recruited in a satisfactory way? Have experienced teachers/leaders been involved in a group interview?		
3.9 Have all teachers/leaders (new and experienced) been part of an orientation session? Have all teachers/leaders signed a Covenant of Care Form?		
3.10 Have all teachers/leaders in high-risk ministry obtained and presented a Police Records Check?		
3.11 Have all teachers/leaders participated in some form of teacher/leader training?		
3.12 Is someone providing ongoing supervision of and support for teachers/leaders?		

Third Phase: Evaluation of Implementation and Reporting



3.13 | Evaluate Implementation of the *Leading with Care Policy* and Report to the Supervising Body

At least twice a year, the Leading with Care Committee should meet to evaluate the implementation of the policy. Keep in mind that if the Leading with Care Committee is the Session or a subcommittee of the Session, this evaluation process simply becomes part of the ongoing work of Session meetings.

These key questions will guide the evaluation:

- What positive things have been noticed as a result of introducing the *Leading with Care Policy*?
- What special problems requiring attention have emerged?
- What things need to be planned for in the future?

It is important, on an annual basis, to do an evaluation of ministry position (job) descriptions and risk assessments. As programs and ministries change and evolve, the ministry position (job) descriptions and risk assessments will also change.

If the Leading with Care Committee is not the Session, it is important that the committee report these evaluations to the Session at least twice a year. The Session of a congregation has ultimate responsibility for the spiritual, moral and physical well-being of the congregation.

Reporting to the supervisory body

This policy is not about individuals. It is about the congregation as a community of people trying to ensure the highest quality of ministry by offering their best to Christ and working to make sure that the worst does not happen. In this context, some checks and balances are helpful. At each of the four levels (courts) of The Presbyterian Church in Canada—Sessions, presbyteries, synods and national (General Assembly)—there are ways to be accountable.

To whom should you report?

Congregations

A congregational Leading with Care Committee is responsible to the Session of the congregation and must report to them at least twice a year.

Each congregation must report to the presbytery once a year about the congregation's progress implementing this policy. Also, at the time of a presbytery visitation to a congregation, the congregation must explain its progress in implementing the *Leading with Care Policy*.

Presbyteries

The presbytery must establish a presbytery Leading with Care Committee to oversee the implementation and support of this policy; alternatively, this work may be assigned to an existing committee. This committee must report to the presbytery or its executive twice a year.

A presbytery has oversight of all congregations and ministers within its bounds and any special ministries initiated and supported by the presbytery. Therefore, the presbytery has responsibility for the implementation of the *Leading with Care Policy* within the presbytery.

The clerk of presbytery, under the direction of the Leading with Care Committee, will maintain a list of Police Records Checks for all active clergy within the presbytery bounds. Each active minister—ordained or diaconal—must present their PRC at all of the following points:

- at the time of a new call (for clergy)
- at the time of a change of position
- at a time when the ministry position (job) changes
- every five years

It is the responsibility of the presbytery to make sure that all congregations and ministries within its bounds have a copy of the *Leading with Care Policy*. The presbytery will add to its congregational visitation list a question concerning the congregation's implementation of the policy. Further, it is the responsibility of the presbytery to offer a *Leading with Care Policy* workshop at least every second 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 Policy* workshop outlines are available on the church's website presbyterian.ca.

Synods

It is the responsibility of the synod to establish a synod Leading with Care Committee or to ensure that implementation of the *Leading with Care Policy* is looked after by an existing committee. It is the responsibility of the synod to ensure that all programs/ministries under the jurisdiction of the synod (such as synod regional staff and synod camps) have a copy of the *Leading with Care Policy* and attend or conduct a *Leading with Care Policy* workshop at least every second year. It is the responsibility of the synod

to ensure that all synod staff and programs/ministries abide by this policy. When synod staff, camps and other synod ministries make their annual report to the synod, they must include a description of their implementation of the *Leading with Care Policy*.

National (General Assembly) level

It is the responsibility of all executive national staff to have a copy of the *Leading with Care Policy* and to attend or conduct a *Leading with Care Policy* workshop at least every second year. In their annual report to the agency that oversees their work, executive national staff must refer to the ways they have implemented aspects of the *Leading with Care Policy* within the scope of their duties. In addition, the executive national staff must report this same information annually to the Management Team of Church Offices. In the annual report of the Management Team to the Assembly Council, through whom the Management Team is responsible to the General Assembly, the Management Team must refer to the ways within the scope of their duties that the *Leading with Care Policy* has been implemented.

It is the responsibility of each executive at the national level to understand how the *Leading with Care Policy* works at all levels of the church.

3.14 | Collect and Store Necessary Documents

The purpose of collecting personal information is to ensure that the policy is properly administered. Records that are of a personal, confidential or personnel nature must be kept in accordance with the policy of the national church. Information about the collected data is confidential and will be used only for the purpose for which it was collected, that is, for implementing and monitoring this policy. Information will be stored safely and accessed only by those who need to access it for the purpose of the policy, such as the person engaging the teachers/leaders, the minister and/or the clerk of Session.

Assistance in storing and managing confidential records may be found on the church's website (presbyterian.ca) under Archives and Record Resources. In addition, the staff at the Presbyterian Church national archives (800-619-7301) can help in addressing concerns and questions around the management of confidential materials.

How to manage confidential information

The Leading with Care Committee will collect and store completed documents in a locked, metal file cabinet—Covenant of Care Forms, Teacher/Leader Forms, documentation of having seen individual Police Records Checks, and completed Incident Report Forms. See sections 4.2, 4.6 and 4.11 of this policy for sample documents.

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.

Congregations may choose to microfilm their records as a safeguard. However, paper documents must still be kept. Local archives or history societies may provide storage for paper documents and if this option is taken, it is important to follow the procedure outlined by the archives of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Checklist for Third Phase

Task	Date	Details
3.13 Report to the supervising body		
3.14 Collect and store necessary documents		



SECTION 4

Resources

4.1 | Sample Forms for Ministry Position (Job) Descriptions

4.1.1 — Sample general ministry position (job) descriptions

A ministry position (job) description provides a teacher/leader (whether paid or unpaid) with a clear explanation 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 program teacher/leader
- church-school teacher/leader for ages 6–12
- youth program leader for ages 12–18
- program leader for adults with developmental or physical challenges
- program leader for vulnerable people
- counsellor/tutor for children/youth/vulnerable adults
- Out-of-the-Cold program volunteers

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

- title of the ministry position
- goals of the ministry
- responsibilities
- 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

Note: Various sample ministry position (job) descriptions are included on the following pages. Adapt as needed.

4.1.2 – Sample ministry position (job) description for pre-school teacher/leader

(Insert the name of the congregation here and adapt as needed)

Title of the Ministry Position: Pre-school Teacher

Responsible to: Church-School Superintendent/Coordinator

Responsible for: 10 children, ages 0–5

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

General Summary: The Pre-school 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)

- maintain a vital spiritual life
- plan age-appropriate Bible stories and activities
- maintain assuring and friendly relationships with the children's parents/guardians
- maintain confidentiality, unless a child is in danger
- participate in events and activities that develop leadership skills
- maintain accurate records of attendance
- attend teachers' meetings
- advise the Church-School Superintendent if you will be absent, 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
- compassion for small children and 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 and a reference check. A Police Records Check is required for adults serving in high-risk ministries.

Orientation and Training:

- mandatory orientation program
- fire, safety and emergency procedures
- teachers' meetings (or other training that will be offered)

Support, Supervision and Evaluation: As a support to all adults/youth engaged in children's ministry, (insert name of congregation) will provide monthly visits by the Church-School Superintendent, self-evaluation opportunities at training events and regular prayer support.

Schedule and Commitment: Team teaching with a rotation every second month from September to June

4.1.3 – Sample ministry position (job) description for primary-school-age (ages 6–12) church-school teacher/leader

(Insert the name of the congregation here and adapt as needed)

Title of the Ministry Position: Church-School Teacher for ages 6–12

Responsible to: Church-School Superintendent/Coordinator

Responsible for: Six (6) children in a grade 4–6 class

Main Goal: (Insert the congregation’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 children. 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)

- maintain a vital spiritual life
- plan and teach a weekly lesson
- maintain confidentiality, unless a child is in danger
- participate in events and activities that develop leadership skills
- maintain accurate records of attendance
- attend teachers’ meetings
- advise the Church-School Superintendent if you will be absent, 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
- compassion 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 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 and a reference check. A Police Records Check is required for adults serving in high-risk ministries.

Orientation and Training:

- mandatory orientation program
- fire, safety and emergency procedures
- teachers’ meetings (or other training that will be offered)

Support, Supervision and Evaluation: As a support to all adults/youth engaged in children’s ministry, (insert name of congregation) will provide monthly visits by the Church-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

4.1.4 – Sample ministry position (job) description for youth teacher/leader

(Insert the name of the congregation here and adapt as needed)

Title of the Ministry Position: Youth Teacher/Leader

Responsible to: Church-School Superintendent/Coordinator

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

Main Goal: (Insert the congregation'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 Teacher/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 teacher/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)

- 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 teachers' meetings
- advise the Church-School Superintendent if you will be absent, 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
- compassion for youth and 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 and a reference check. A Police Records Check is required for adults serving in high-risk ministries.

Orientation and Training:

- mandatory orientation program
- fire, safety and emergency procedures
- teachers' meetings (or other training that will be offered)

Support, Supervision and Evaluation: As a support to all adults/youth engaged in youth ministry, (insert name of congregation) will provide monthly visits by the Church-School Superintendent, self-evaluation opportunities at training events and regular prayer support.

Schedule and Commitment: Team teaching with a rotation of every second month

4.1.5 – Sample ministry position (job) description for pastoral visitation program

(Insert the name of the congregation here and adapt as needed)

Title of the Ministry Position: Pastoral Visitor

Responsible to: Pastoral Visitation Committee

Responsible for: 22 people who are members and adherents of (name of congregation)

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

General Summary: The Pastoral Visitor will visit people regularly, offering conversation, Bible reading and prayer as requested, and bringing news from the church. The Pastoral Visitor may gather and bring articles of interest to the people they visit. The Pastoral Visitor will keep a record of visits and treat conversations with confidential care.

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

- maintain a vital spiritual life
- plan a visiting schedule that fits with the needs of the vulnerable person
- maintain confidentiality, unless a person being visited is in danger
- participate in events and activities that develop leadership skills
- maintain accurate records of visits
- advise the Pastoral Visitation Committee if you will be absent, 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
- compassion for vulnerable people and experience working with them
- patience and sensitivity to people's needs
- good listening skills
- willingness to share stories and personal experiences

Screening Procedure: In accordance with the *Leading with Care Policy* of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, screening of Pastoral Visitors includes completing a Teacher/Leader Form and, in the case of new applicants, an interview by two people and a reference check. A Police Records Check is required for Pastoral Visitors serving in high-risk ministries.

Orientation and Training:

- mandatory orientation program
- fire, safety and emergency procedures
- additional training specifically for vulnerable people

Support, Supervision and Evaluation: As a support to all Pastoral Visitors, (insert name of congregation) will provide regular check-ins by members of the Pastoral Visitation Committee, self-evaluation opportunities at training events and regular prayer support.

Schedule and Commitment: Two non-related Pastoral Visitors who are not in the same household will share responsibility for 22 people on a month-about schedule.

4.2 | Sample Covenant of Care Form

(This is a sample Covenant of Care Form. Adapt as needed.)

The Covenant of Care for (insert the name of the congregation here)

The church is Christ, together with his people, called both to worship and to serve him in all of life (*Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Faith*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1984, section 7.1.1). 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 (*Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Faith*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1984, sections 7.2.1–2).

As an expression of this high and holy duty that Christ has offered to me as a teacher/leader to children/youth/vulnerable 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 for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults in The Presbyterian Church in Canada*, which I have read and understand;

I promise to use appropriate language;

I promise to show no bias based on gender, race, ethnic background, ability, age, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic status;

I promise that I will not harass others;

I promise to respect confidentiality and privacy, unless a child, youth or vulnerable adult is in danger; then I will report to a child protection agency or to the police.

I have read and agree with the covenant of care.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witnessed by: _____ Date: _____

(Minister/Clerk of Session or authorized person)

4.3 | Facilities Checklist

	Adequate	Plan for improvement
Are railings at the right height for children?		
Are stairs/steps safe?		
Are bathrooms easily accessible?		
Are toilets accessible for children and people with disabilities?		
Are exits clearly marked?		
Are exit doors unlocked from the inside?		
Can exits, especially basement exits, be released from the inside?		
Are floors, especially around entrances, resistant to slipping?		
Is the nursery cleaned and vacuumed after each use?		
Are used diapers disposed of immediately after each nursery use?		
Are there large-sized windows in doors or Dutch doors? If this is not feasible for a nursery, are safety gates used in open doorways?		
Are nursery toys washed regularly in a solution of one tablespoon of household bleach to one-gallon warm water?		
Are signs posted reminding people to wash hands?		
Is there a well-stocked first aid kit? Is it easily accessible?		
Have you consulted with an appropriate healthcare worker about a first aid kit?		
Are fire extinguishers in proper locations?		
Are there fire/emergency-escape maps in each room?		
Is there regular practice for fire/emergency escapes?		
Are there smoke detectors?		
Is there a locked, metal file cabinet?		

4.4 Ratios of Children/Youth/ Vulnerable Adults to Teachers/Leaders

While the rule of having two adults at all times in a group is encouraged, there are occasions when only one teacher/leader is present. From the orientation session, the teacher/leader should know what to do if they are alone with a child. In the feedback that came from small churches, several congregations pointed out that this is a regular occurrence in their congregation: there is one teacher/leader, and only one child comes to church. The orientation session held at the beginning of the year should make clear that provision must be made for such an occurrence. For instance, the teacher/leader might provide pencil and crayon activities for the child, and the two of them may rejoin the congregation. Or the teacher/leader may find another adult or youth from the congregation to join them in their church-school area.

Here are the suggested ratios of children/youth/vulnerable adults to teachers/leaders in a regular program, but additional adults can be helpful if one adult needs to leave the program temporarily because of illness or a family problem.

0–1 8 months	2 adults to 6 children
18 months–2 years	2 adults to 10 children
2–5 years	2 adults to 12 children
Ages 5–14	2 adults to 15 children
Ages 15–18	2 adults to 15 children
Vulnerable adults	2 adults to 10 vulnerable adults

Day excursions and overnight outings

Here are the recommended ratios of children/youth/vulnerable adults to teachers/leaders/volunteers on day excursions and overnight outings:

Age	Day excursions	Overnight excursions/activities
5 or under	2 adults per group of 10	overnight excursions not recommended
Ages 6–8	2 adults per group of 12	not recommended for age 6; 4 adults for 20 children for ages 7 & 8
Ages 9–10	2 adults for every 15 children	2 adults for every 10 children
Ages 10–14	2 adults for every 15 children	2 adults for every 10 children
Ages 15–18	2 adults for every 15 youth	2 adults for every 10 youth
Vulnerable adults	2 adults per 10 vulnerable adults	2 adults per 10 vulnerable adults

4.5 | Sample Activity Permission and Medical Form

Note: Before an activity, the teacher/leader stores the original, signed version of this form in a safe storage area and takes another copy on the outing.

(Insert the name of the congregation here)

Description and location of activity: _____

Departure date: _____ Returning date: _____

Full name of participant: _____

Birth date: _____

Full address: _____

Parent/guardian/caregiver name(s): _____

Circle the number where parent/guardian may be reached when trip is taking place.

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

Does the participant 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 the participant will be taken. They will be properly supervised in activities. In the event of accident or sickness, (insert name of congregation here), its staff and volunteers are released from any liability.

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

In the event that travel or activity takes place outside this province, I understand that any medical costs incurred involving the participant are my responsibility.

The participant must be covered by provincial health insurance or equivalent medical coverage. If the trip is out of province, please give insurance provider and policy number:

Participant's health card number: _____

Participant's family physician: _____ Phone: _____

Contact person (not parent) in case of emergency and parents/guardians/caregivers cannot be reached:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (PRINT): _____

4.6 | Sample General Incident Report Form

(Insert the name of the congregation here)

CONFIDENTIAL

Report date: _____ Time of report: _____

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

Date of birth: _____

Full address: _____

Phone number: _____

Name of parent/guardian (for child/youth) or caregiver (for adult): _____

Notified: Y N If yes, date/time of notification: _____

Address: _____
(If different from above)

Phone number: _____
(If different from above)

Date/time and location of incident: _____

Description of incident: _____

Names/contact information of witnesses: _____

Description of injuries sustained: _____

Description of action taken: _____

Additional information you think is relevant: _____

Direct quotes from child/youth/adult: (Note: If this is an abuse allegation, do not interview the child/youth but report only the comments they share with you.)

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

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

Name of person making report (please print): _____

Phone/Address: _____

Signature of person making report: _____ Date: _____

The person filing this report must give a copy to the Leading with Care Committee and/or the Session of the congregation.

Note: If this is an allegation of abuse, it must be reported to a protection agency or to the police. (See section 4.13 of this policy for reporting procedure.)

4.7 | Guide for Interviewing

Interviewing a new recruit

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 about yourself. How did you come to this congregation?
- What activities help you grow and mature in your faith?
- Tell us about your experience in working with [children, youth or vulnerable adults].
- Why do you want to assume this position?
- This position requires ... [list requirements]. Will you be able to meet these requirements?
(Interviewers should check for provincial government regulations about questions that are permitted or prohibited in interviews.)

During the interview, discuss the *Leading with Care Policy*, the orientation session and training to be offered to all teachers/leaders and the support they can expect. Explain that, as part of the denomination's commitment to ensure that all congregations are safe and nurturing, the interviewers would like to talk to two references who have known the applicant for at least one year.

Thank the applicant for seriously considering leadership in the congregation and promise another visit or a phone call in the near future. After the interview, call the references provided and ask questions such as the ones suggested under the heading "Following up on references" in section 4.7 (below).

If the Leading with Care Committee believes that the new recruit is a suitable candidate for a teacher/leader position, call them with the good news and explain the orientation and training times.

What happens if the Leading with Care Committee does not think the applicant 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 the congregation. However, we believe that your skills and abilities lie more in the area of [name another possible ministry]. Would you consider serving there this year?" Or it may be that the committee feels strongly that it cannot offer a leadership position of any kind to a specific volunteer. 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.

Group interview with experienced teachers/leaders

Teachers/leaders who have been involved in program leadership for many years can be invited to participate in a group interview. This can take the form of coffee and a snack and should be framed as a way for the congregation to support the teacher/leader in their ministry. Each person should be asked to respond to questions like these:

- What originally motivated you to become a teacher/leader?
- What motivates you to continue in your role as teacher/leader?
- In the years that you have been a teacher/leader, what has given you most satisfaction?
- What do you consider to be the most challenging or difficult thing about being a teacher/leader?
- Finish this sentence: I wish the church would....
- What are your hopes and dreams for the people you teach/lead?

Following up on references

It is important to speak to at least two references provided by the applicant.

References are extremely helpful and must be requested with all new recruits and in all new ministries. Even if a new recruit is well known within the congregation from participating in worship and congregational activities, it is important to contact references who have observed and interacted with the new recruit in other contexts.

When written references are provided, follow-up with a phone call is required. Inform the reference of the nature of the ministry position. Ask their opinion about the person's suitability in this situation, as illustrated in the following examples:

"John may be co-leading a Junior High group on Friday nights at the church. How comfortable would you be with John having this type of responsibility?"

"Sukdiv has applied to be coordinator of the 'In from the Cold' program that feeds and shelters homeless people during the winter. Tell us what you know about her abilities to volunteer and to relate to the overnight guests."

Listen to tone, attitude and hesitancy as well as to the words the reference uses. Contact at least two references.

Sample reference-check form

Person's name for whom references are checked: _____

Person contacted: _____

Phone: _____

Contacted by: _____

Date: _____

Signature of person who contacted reference: _____

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 [person's name]?
2. In what capacity do you know them?
3. How well do you feel you know [person's name]?
4. Could you briefly describe the character and personality of [person's name]?
5. Have you ever been in a position to work with them? If so, what was your impression?
6. What gifts, talents and abilities would this person offer to (name of congregation)?
7. Are you aware of any facts or circumstances involving this person that would call into question their 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 for all who offer leadership in our church."

4.8 | Orientation

Orientation includes items like these:

- A review of ministry position (job) position descriptions. Does everyone know what their job entails?
- What to do in the case of a sudden illness of either themselves or someone in the program. Teachers/leaders should be given instruction about whom to inform if they must be absent and how to find a replacement teacher/leader for their ministry/program.
- In small churches where there is only one teacher, a plan must be made if only one child comes to a program on a particular day. To avoid a one-on-one situation, teachers should agree to have pencil and crayon activities prepared and the child/youth/vulnerable adult and the teacher/leader could rejoin the congregation. Or the teacher/leader may agree to find a third person to join the class.
- 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 congregations in the presbytery, through book resources or by leaders in the congregation. See section 4.10 of this policy for suggestions.)
- All teachers/leaders must fill out a Teacher/Leader Form (section 4.11 of this policy). This form includes important contact information. Even in small congregations, you may not know a person's work number or the name of their emergency contact. 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 that are specific to the situation (sections 3.7 and 4.3 of this policy).
- All teachers/leaders must be given a print form about physical contact, washroom procedures and information on abuse (section 4.12 of this policy).
- 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.
- All teachers/leaders must read, agree to and sign a Covenant of Care Form.

The Covenant of Care Form

At orientation, teachers/leaders will be asked to sign a Covenant of Care Form and promise to adhere to the safety standards as presented in the orientation. A covenant of care makes clear the expectations of behaviour. A sample Covenant of Care Form can be found in section 4.2 of this policy. Explain how this code of conduct fits with the denomination's commitment to the safety and well-being of all children, youth and vulnerable adults.

4.9 | Additional Information on Police Records Checks

A Police Records Check (PRC) is a criminal records check, as well as a search of the records in a national database. The PRC can reveal if an individual has been investigated for an incident or incidents. This may or may not be revealed by the police. For instance, an adult may have been investigated many times but never charged because parents do not want their child to go through a court process.

The processing of a PRC varies from region to region, so consult your local police agency. Some write individual letters to the person who requests the check while others welcome a group list from an organization. They then respond to the organization that 10 out of 10 are “clear.” Sometimes, though, through human error or erroneous information, perhaps only 9 out of 10 are “clear.” When this happens the police notify the affected individual for clarifications and/or permission to pass on a report that has not been cleared.

What type of PRC do you ask for?

There are a variety of types of PRCs 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.

How does an organization decide whom to screen?

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

The request that a person consent to a PRC does not mean that the organization does not trust the person or has concerns about them. It means the position in which the person will be working is considered to have a heightened risk and the organization is managing that risk appropriately.

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 PRC may be one element in the screening process; however, a PRC will identify only the person who already has a criminal or other police record. Organizations must carry out a range of screening activities to assess staff and volunteers properly.

How is a Police Records Check carried out?

To conduct a PRC, the local police query the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database. CPIC was an initiative of the RCMP, who maintain the network. Individual policing regions maintain their own information within the system and have access to the entire database. From this database, police can determine if a person has outstanding charges or convictions. 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, police agencies compile information, when warranted, about all complaints they receive.

Examples of complaints include:

- abuse of children
- allegations of offences where charges were not laid

These may or may not be revealed by police in a PRC. Traffic violations and liquor-related violations are not revealed in a PRC. If a volunteer position requires driving a vehicle, that person must be required to obtain and present an Abstract or Statement of Driving Record, which can be obtained by contacting any provincial ministry of transportation or department of motor vehicles.

Note that a PRC cannot be conducted without the individual's written consent. In some cases, the PRC must be obtained in person.

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. A search of the CPIC database for pardoned sexual offences cannot be conducted without the individual's consent.

What if a person has a criminal record?

If the information obtained by the police indicates that a person has a criminal record, does that mean that the person cannot volunteer? To this question, there is no black-and-white answer. The church is, after all, a community of grace and forgiveness. The Leading with Care Committee and/or the 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 require the person to work with another adult present at all times.

Organizations may look at the following factors when considering an individual's application:

- the nature of the organization and its work
- the nature of the offence
- the relevance of the criminal record to the position the person is applying for

4.10 | Resources for Teacher/Leader Training

- *32 Ways to Become a Great Sunday School Teacher* by Delia Halverson (Abingdon Press, 1997) and *Equipping the Saints* by Sara Coven Juengst (Westminster John Knox Press, 1998) provide helpful tips and practices.
- There are training modules on The Presbyterian Church in Canada webpage (presbyterian.ca).
- In-person and online *Leading with Care Policy* presentations are available for presbyteries upon request of the national office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- The Presbyterian Church in Canada offers conferences from time to time and are listed on the church website (presbyterian.ca).
- Watch for conference opportunities for teachers/leaders. APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) offers an excellent yearly conference with a wide variety of workshops.
- New teachers/leaders may be paired with more experienced teachers/leaders in a mentoring relationship.

Also, for advice about specific teacher/leader training, contact the national office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (800-619-7301).

4.11 | Sample Teacher/Leader Form

(Adapt as needed)

Personal information

Full name: _____
Last First Initial

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Occupation and Employer: _____

Hobbies/Interests/Skills: _____

First aid qualifications: _____

List activities or volunteer service in which you are/have been involved outside of (insert the name of the congregation here): _____

List any special courses or training sessions you have completed that would assist you in your ministry role at (insert the name of the congregation here): _____

How long have you been attending (insert the name of the congregation here): _____

Are you a member? Yes No

What do you most value about your church/faith? _____

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

Nursery (birth–2 years) Pre-school/kindergarten (3–5 years) School age (6–12 years)

Youth (13–18 years) Adults (Specify: _____)

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: _____ Occupation: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Relationship to Applicant: _____

2. Name: _____ Occupation: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Relationship to Applicant: _____

4.12 | Information Sheets for Teachers/Leaders

4.12.1 – Physical contact

It is essential to be careful regarding behaviour, language and physical contact when working with children/youth/vulnerable adults:

- Do not show favouritism when 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 such as hitting, spanking or strapping.

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 touching. It is also important to be aware of and sensitive to differences in interpretation of touching based on sex, culture or personal experience.

Examples of **appropriate touch**:

Love and care can usually be expressed in the following common-sense 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 them to an activity
- holding hands for safety when changing locations
- shaking a person's hand in greeting
- holding a child gently by the hand or shoulder to keep their attention as you redirect their behaviour
- anointing a person with oil on the head
- holding hands in a circle prayer or song
- providing comfort with a wet, warm cloth

Examples of **inappropriate touch**:

- 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 diapers)
- hand-holding, except for the examples listed above
- stroking a child/youth's hair
- hugging, where an adult knows or ought to have known that hugging is inappropriate

b. Dealing with a participant's inappropriate behaviour

The best approach to dealing with inappropriate behaviour is thoughtful prevention. If a teacher/leader has prepared for teaching/leading, makes clear statements about expectations and provides an engaging program, inappropriate behaviour will be avoided or reduced. However, if a child/youth/vulnerable adult's behaviour is unacceptable, these practices must be followed:

- Tell or remind the child/youth/vulnerable adult what is expected.
- If it is necessary to speak to a child/youth/vulnerable adult discreetly, move to a quiet place in view of others. Seek supervisory help if needed and if available.
- Keep children/youth/vulnerable adults from harming themselves or others.
- If necessary, engage another adult to help you remove the child/youth/vulnerable adult from the situation to calm down.
- Discipline of children and youth must be limited to talking and time-out. Correction of a vulnerable adult must be limited to talking to the vulnerable adult or their guardian.
- Provide a time-out space for younger children on 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 co-operatively with them. They may have good ideas of how to deal with particular situations.

Do not use corporal punishment (such as hitting, spanking or strapping) under any circumstances.

4.12.2 – Washroom procedures

At the time of assessing the risk of a program, 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. This is particularly critical with pre-school children and some vulnerable adults 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.
- Children under the age of 6 who need to go to the washroom should be accompanied by a teacher/leader who escorts the child to the washroom and checks the bathroom for safety. No adult or teen helper is ever to be in a closed washroom or cubicle with a child. If another adult is not available, the adult who accompanies the child should position themselves in plain view at the open door of the washroom. A volunteer or teen helper may stay behind with the remaining children.
- Children 6 years of age and over may go to the washroom with a "buddy."
- 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.

4.12.3 – Understanding child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse

This policy has zero tolerance for abuse in any form. This includes abuse of a child/youth/vulnerable 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.

Any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child/youth is or may be in need of protection must report the suspicion to the appropriate protective agency or to the police. Clergy and other professionals have special responsibility to report allegations of abuse. A teacher/leader who hears an allegation of abuse should speak with the minister of the congregation, so that the minister knows what is happening in the congregation. If the allegation is against the minister of the congregation, however, the person who heard the allegation should consult the clerk of presbytery about the allegation.

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 apply to vulnerable adults. A more complete description of the abuse of vulnerable adults is found below. All congregations are asked to supplement this material with information from a provincial/territorial child protection agency.

What is child/youth abuse?

(Source: website of the Department of Justice of the Government of Canada)

The term *child abuse* refers to the violence, mistreatment or neglect that a child or adolescent may experience while in the care of someone they either trust or depend on, such as a parent, sibling, other relative, caregiver or guardian. Abuse may take place anywhere and may occur, for example, within the child's home or that of someone known to the child.

There are many different forms of abuse and a child may be subjected to more than one form:

- **Physical abuse** may consist of just one incident or it may happen repeatedly. It involves deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at risk of being injured. Physical abuse includes beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking or assaulting a child with a weapon. It also includes holding a child under water, or any other dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint. Female genital mutilation is another form of physical abuse.
- **Sexual abuse** and exploitation involve using a child for sexual purposes. Examples of child sexual abuse include fondling, inviting a child to touch or be touched sexually, intercourse, rape, incest, sodomy, exhibitionism, or involving a child in prostitution or pornography.
- **Neglect** is often chronic and it usually involves repeated incidents. It involves failing to provide what a child needs for their physical, psychological or emotional development and well-being. For example, neglect includes failing to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care or protection from harm. Emotional neglect includes failing to provide a child with love, safety and a sense of worth.
- **Emotional abuse** involves harming a child's sense of self. It includes acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk of, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental health problems. For example, emotional abuse may include aggressive verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation, exploitation, or routinely making unreasonable demands. It also includes terrorizing a child or exposing them to family violence.

An abuser may use a number of different tactics to gain access to a child, to exert power and control over them, and to prevent them from telling anyone about the abuse or seeking support. A child who is being abused is usually in a position of dependence on the person who is abusing them. Abuse is a misuse of power and a violation of trust. The abuse may happen once or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over a period of months or years. The abuse may change form over time.

Abuse of vulnerable adults

The most extensive body of literature on abuse of vulnerable adults can be found under *abuse of the elderly*. While some factors may not apply to all vulnerable adults, most characteristics are equally applicable to all vulnerable adults. A thorough explanation of older-adult abuse can be found on the website of the Department of Justice of the Government of Canada. Although individuals may be abused at virtually any life stage—childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age or old age—the nature and consequences of abuse may differ depending on an individual’s situation. Older adults’ experiences of abuse, for example, may be related to their living arrangement (they may be living alone, with family members or others, or in an institution). Their experiences may also be linked to their level of reliance on others, including family members or other care providers, for assistance and support in daily living.

Abuse of older adults is sometimes described as a misuse of power and a violation of trust. Abusers may use a number of different tactics to exert power and control over their victims. Abuse may happen once or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over months or years. The abuse may take many different forms, which may change over time.

Types of abuse

Psychological abuse includes attempts to dehumanize or intimidate older adults. Any verbal or non-verbal act that reduces their sense of self-worth or dignity and threatens their psychological and emotional integrity is abuse. This type of abuse may include, for example:

- threatening to use violence
- threatening to abandon them
- intentionally frightening them
- making them fear that they will not receive the food or care they need
- lying to them
- failing to check allegations of abuse against them

Financial abuse encompasses financial manipulation or exploitation including theft, fraud, forgery or extortion. It includes using older adults’ money or property in a dishonest manner, or failing to use older adults’ assets for their welfare. Anytime someone acts without consent in a way that financially or personally benefits one person at the expense of another, it is abuse. This type of abuse against an older adult may include, for example:

- stealing their money, pension cheques or other possessions
- selling their homes or other property without their permission
- wrongfully using a Power of Attorney
- not allowing them to move into long-term care facilities, so that the abuser can preserve access to the older adult’s pension income
- failing to pay back borrowed money when asked

Physical abuse includes any act of violence—whether or not it results in physical injury. Intentionally inflicting pain or injury that results in either bodily harm or mental distress is abuse. Physical abuse may include, for example:

- beating
- burning or scalding
- pushing or shoving
- hitting or slapping
- rough handling
- tripping
- spitting

There may also be sexual and spiritual abuse.

How widespread is abuse of older adults in Canada?

Approximately 7% of the sample of more than 4,000 adults 65 years of age and older who responded to the 1999 General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS) reported that they had experienced some form of emotional or financial abuse by an adult child, spouse or caregiver in the five years prior to the survey, with the vast majority committed by spouses. Emotional abuse was more frequently reported (7%) than financial abuse (1%). The two most common forms of emotional abuse reported were being put down or called names, or having contact with family and friends limited. Only a small proportion of older adults (1%) reported experiencing physical or sexual abuse. Almost 2% of older Canadians indicated that they had experienced more than one type of abuse.

What are some potential warning signs of abuse?

Some of the signs that may indicate an older adult is being abused include:

- depression, fear, anxiety, passivity
- unexplained physical injuries
- dehydration, malnutrition or lack of food
- poor hygiene, rashes, pressure sores
- over-sedation

4.13 | Dealing with Reports of Abuse

When a child, youth or vulnerable adult is upset or distressed about a situation, they may turn to a trusted adult for support and advice. Often, though, they 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 teachers/leaders or visitors need to be sensitive and aware of any change in appearance/emotion.

A listening adult should be supportive and pay attention to what is said. Be cautious about asking questions. Asking questions can invalidate future statements to the police or to child welfare authorities and can cause a case to be dismissed in court. Accept the child/youth/vulnerable adult's story; do not dispute it. Investigating the incident is the responsibility of the protection agency or the police. 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, or to punish or remove the offender. Do not promise that you will not report the incident to the authorities. If inadvertently you have promised to keep what the child/youth/vulnerable adult says confidential, tell them that you must tell someone who can help you both.

Note: Any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child/youth/vulnerable adult is or may be in need of protection must report the suspicion to a protective agency or to the police. Clergy and other professionals have special responsibility to report allegations of abuse. A teacher/leader who hears an allegation of abuse should speak with the minister of the congregation, so that the minister knows what is happening in the congregation. If the allegation is against the minister, however, the person who heard the allegation should consult the clerk of presbytery about the allegation.

If the allegation is of sexual abuse or sexual harassment, the process of investigation and action will be in accordance with the *Policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for Dealing with Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment*.

4.13.1 – Reporting to a protection agency

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 Form can be found in section 4.6 of this policy.

Some people, especially clergy, may hesitate to report a suspicion or allegation of abuse because of the confidential relationship they have with parishioners. However, it is important to distinguish between *confidentiality* and *secrets*. Confidentiality refers to being entrusted with important private information. However, if an activity is harmful to others and is kept secret, the situation will continue to be harmful and will likely worsen. In the case of abuse, secrets should not be kept. Confidentiality can still be honoured by reassuring a victim that only a person or restricted persons who need to know, will know. Reassure the victim that the purpose of *telling* is to obtain help. Reassure the victim of your support throughout the process.

Legal obligation

If a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child/youth/vulnerable adult is or may be in need of protection, the person must promptly report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a children's aid society or other appropriate protection agency.

Professional persons, such as clergy, and officials have the same duty as any member of the public to report a suspicion that children/youth/vulnerable adults are in need of protection.

Church professionals or officials must report directly and immediately a suspicion that a child is or has been in need of protection, where the information on which that suspicion is based has been obtained in the course of their professional or official duties.

Information needed by a protection agency

A person who calls a protection agency should prepare notes on why they are calling.

- Ask for an intake screener.
- Give your name and location, or you may remain anonymous.
- State that you are making a report about a person you believe to be in need of protection.
- Give your relationship to the person and/or family.
- Indicate what you heard from the child/youth/vulnerable adult or what you observed.
- Offer facts such as dates, descriptions of the child/youth/vulnerable adult and identifying facts about people who were involved.
- Share knowledge of other agency or community involvement if known.
- Provide any relevant background information.

4.13.2 – Procedure if contacted by a child 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, with the person to whom the child/youth spoke. If the matter is urgent and those investigating cannot do a personal interview, the investigator may telephone you from their office.
2. The child protection agent should identify themselves and give their work contact phone number. Record the child protection agent's first and last name.
 - Do not give any information at this time. The investigator will explain the process to follow and what information they are 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 Session should be aware of this. Details do not need to be given. Ask when the Session can expect a final report on the case and if further information will be required.
 - Make clear written notes about what you reported, as well as details of your conversation with the investigator (date, time, phone number and name of investigator). Place in a confidential, locked, metal file cabinet.

4.13.3 – Pastoral response to a report of abuse

Disclosure of an incident of alleged abuse is an emotionally charged experience. When an individual discloses that they are a victim of alleged abuse, it is important to respond in the following ways:

- Assure them that they will be listened to and that they will be 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 individual becoming withdrawn or unwilling to share the experience with you.
- Listen more, talk less.

- Remind them that they are in no way at fault for the abuse.
- Affirm that it is always appropriate to tell someone that they have been abused.
- Remind them that your first priority is their protection.
- Ask them if it is okay to pray with them.
- Reassure them that ongoing care will be provided.
- Provide pastoral support to them; give reassurance that they have done the right thing in reporting this incident.

Responses to avoid

- Do not promise them that you will not tell anyone. Some information should not be kept secret; assure the individual that this information is to be restricted to those who need to be advised.
- Do not prejudge the situation.
- Do not defend the alleged perpetrator or make comments like, “I can’t believe they did that.”

4.13.4 – Response to the media

If it is deemed essential to respond to the media, a designated church leader—the minister, clerk of Session, or convenor of the Leading with Care Committee—will be the spokesperson for the congregation. 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 (the name of the congregation) and The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In accordance with civil law, an allegation of abuse has been reported to (insert the name of the appropriate governmental protection agency).

4.14 | Community Groups using Church Facilities

This policy document has focused, to this point, on programs that are run by congregations, presbyteries, synods or the national offices. What about community groups who use church facilities? The church is assumed to be a safe place, even when used by others.

Hosting community groups (such as Scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous) is part of the outreach and hospitality plan of many congregations. However, as the host, the congregation has the following responsibilities.

4.14.1 – Regular ongoing programs

Policy

Appropriate church representatives such as the Session or the Leading with Care Committee must meet with each community group using the church facilities to explain this policy. The community group may have its own safety/protection policy. The community group will take a copy of the *Leading with Care Policy* to the hierarchy of their organization and ask for implementation of a similar policy of care.

Insurance

Even when the congregation is a willing host, the congregation must ensure that all regular ongoing community groups who use the congregation's facilities have insurance coverage. Ask the community group to provide a letter from their insurance broker confirming their coverage. If they do not have insurance, check with the congregation's insurance company to see if the community group falls under the congregation's insurance. Wherever any congregational members are involved in a community group using church facilities, it is important to make sure that the congregational members fall under the care of the congregational insurance.

Terms-of-use contract

It is prudent to draw up a terms-of-use contract with regular, ongoing groups who use church premises.

4.14.2 – Occasional users of congregational facilities

In addition to community groups who use congregational facilities on a regular, ongoing basis, other groups may use congregational facilities occasionally. 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 the congregation's insurance policy covers these occasional uses or if they are covered by the insurance of the community group.

4.15 | Communicating about the *Leading with Care Policy*

Training

Training and advice and the *Leading with Care Policy* can be accessed through Church Offices (800-619-7301 or presbyterian.ca).

Poster

Hang a poster with words like this in a prominent place in the church building:

This church supports *Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults in The Presbyterian Church in Canada*.

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

Copies of this poster may be obtained from Presbyterian Church Offices (800-619-7301).

4.16 | Communicating about the *Leading with Care Policy* in the Courts of the Church

This policy and its procedures must be communicated clearly to all ministers, church leaders and teachers, Sessions, 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 section 4.14 of this policy, Community groups using church facilities.) The *Leading with Care Policy* is posted on the national church website (presbyterian.ca). and print copies can be ordered from Presbyterian Church Offices (800-619-7301).

It is important to note that, for clarity in writing, this policy refers to users mainly 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. 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 of how this would work.

Records that are of a personal, confidential or personnel nature must be kept in accordance with the policy of the 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. (See note on microfilming and storage, section 3.14 of this policy.)

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 must be kept in accordance with the policy of the national church. The 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. (See note on microfilming and storage, section 3.14 of this policy.)

4.17 | Small Church Concerns

Small churches may express concern that they do not have the resources—personnel or financial—to put the policy into action. However, being small in fact may be an advantage since the costs and energy for implementation are in direct proportion to the numbers of teachers/leaders and programs in the congregation. If small churches are concerned about personnel assistance, regional and national staff are available to help implement the program. It is also possible that other congregations in the presbytery who have implemented the policy would be available for assistance.

The costs of implementing this program are small compared to other church costs. In many regions in Canada, there is no cost for Police Records Checks if the check is needed for the purpose of volunteering. (This varies from region to region, so check in your area.) If a congregation does not own a metal file cabinet with a lock, one will need to be purchased.

4.18 | Insurance Considerations

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

If an incident of abuse, neglect or harm occurs in an environment within a congregation's purview, the congregation may be faced with certain liabilities. Insurance coverage does not negate the liability; but insurance may provide important financial coverage for defense and/or settlement should the congregation 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 congregation even if the congregation 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 congregation will protect and care for children, so if congregational 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 under the congregation's insurance policy if found criminally responsible, at which point there may be some limited reimbursement of defense costs. It is important to advise the congregation's insurance company immediately if there is an incident of abuse, an allegation of abuse, or if a lawsuit related to abuse is filed.

The following requirements were outlined in a letter from an insurance broker. While policy demands vary from company to company, implementing the following guidelines will increase the likelihood that the congregation's insurer will provide coverage:

- clear definitions for all forms of abuse (in print) so that everyone, including volunteers, understands requirements and boundaries
- recruitment procedures to screen unacceptable candidates for clergy and lay positions
- a clearly defined covenant of care for employees and volunteers
- training and coaching procedures to ensure understanding of what is considered to be abuse and how to prevent occurrences and allegations
- monitoring and evaluation procedures
- communication and feedback procedures
- procedures to screen adult volunteers, such as
 - completion of application forms
 - written statements of commitment to safety and protection procedures
 - interviews conducted by at least two interviewers
 - completed reference checks
 - Police Records Checks/Volunteer Screening Checks
 - approval followed by orientation and probation



SECTION 5

Appendices

Appendix 1:

The Church's Approval of the *Leading with Care Policy*

The process of developing the *Leading with Care Policy* began in 2000 and continued to 2005, under the leadership of the national advisory committee and national staff responsible for children and youth. Extensive research included consultation with the Experimental Fund administrator; the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Lakeshore, Ontario, and other Canadian congregations with comprehensive congregational protection policies; the protection policies of other denominations; legal counsel; the insurance broker that covers many congregations; Sessions and presbyteries who studied and reported back on draft policy documents in 2003 and 2004. In 2005, the General Assembly adopted *Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults*.

The decisions of various General Assemblies pertaining to this policy are noted below. Such decisions are recorded in the Acts and Proceedings, which are the minutes of the General Assembly. References to an Acts and Proceedings use the short form *A&P*, followed by the year.

Permission to circulate 2003 draft version of policy for study and report

The draft *Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable People in The Presbyterian Church in Canada* may be circulated to all presbyteries and Sessions to read and report back to the Education in the Faith department of Life and Mission Agency by January 31, 2004.

(A&P 2003, p. 344–345, 42)

Permission to circulate 2004 draft version of policy for study and report

The draft policy *Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in The Presbyterian Church in Canada* may be circulated to congregations and presbyteries for study and report back to the Education in the Faith department by January 31, 2005.

(A&P 2004, p. 346–349, 16)

Adoption of the *Leading with Care Policy*

Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults in The Presbyterian Church in Canada was adopted.

Congregations are required to expedite the implementation of the policy within one year (by July 1, 2006), and presbyteries are required to oversee the implementation for all congregations and ministries within their bounds.

Congregations and presbyteries are instructed to avail themselves of the services of Mr. David Phillips, the contract worker appointed by the Life and Mission Agency, to assist with the understanding and implementation of the policy.

(A&P 2005, p. 333–369, 18)

Requirements for certified candidates for ministry

When the *Leading with Care Policy* was adopted in 2005, it made no reference to certified candidates for ministry. The requirements for compliance with the *Leading with Care Policy* for certified candidates for ministry were outlined and approved.

(A&P 2007, p. 339–340, 39)

Supervision for the *Leading with Care* program

The information about supervision and reporting in the *Leading with Care Policy* was printed in a separate document entitled *Supervision for the Leading with Care Program*. Congregations, presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly (national church) were instructed to provide this document to the ministries under their care and to ensure that the actions recommended in the document were taken.

(A&P 2007, p. 417–418, 39)

Requirements for camping ministries

All camps and outdoor ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada are required to abide by the *Leading with Care Policy*.

(A&P 2008, p. 304, 41)

Translation into French

In response to an overture, the decision was made to translate the *Leading with Care Policy* into French.

(A&P 2015, p. 214, 24)

Ruling elders and police checks

The General Assembly considered the response to an overture that requested a reduction in the requirements for ruling elders to obtain police records checks. The response recommended that the request should not be granted. This recommendation was adopted, essentially reaffirming the regulations concerning police records checks as outlined in the *Leading with Care Policy*.

(A&P 2019, p. 304–306, 14)

Edits and updates to the *Leading with Care Policy*

The General Assembly approved edits and updates to the *Leading with Care Policy*. The changes proposed by the Life and Mission Agency were needed to correct copyediting errors, to ensure consistent use of terms and to improve clarity of expression. The first chapter of the policy (Section 1: Preamble) was revised to remove information that was outdated or creating confusion, and to strengthen the policy's theological grounding. At the same time, some material originally presented in Section 1 was moved to a new chapter of the policy (Section 5, Appendix 1: The Church's Approval of the *Leading with Care Policy*). None of the proposed changes altered the policy statement or the substance of the policy's implementation, standards, requirements or expectations.

(A&P 2023, p. 111–117, 24)

Permission to make minor edits to the *Leading with Care Policy*

Minor changes in wording of the policy may become necessary for the sake of clarity and ease of reading. In addition, information in the policy may require updating to reflect changes approved by the General Assembly and changes in Canadian law.

To be able to provide the church with the clearest and most current form of the *Leading with Care Policy*, the Life and Mission Agency requested and was granted permission to make minor changes and updates as needed for the purposes outlined above. Any changes will be reported to the General Assembly.

(A&P 2023, p. 117, 24)