

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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Design and layout: Tim Faller Design Inc.

Logo design: Matthew Donnelly

Printing: Reliable Printing

The Presbyterian Church in Canada
50 Wynford Drive
Toronto, Ontario M3C 1J7

PRINTED IN CANADA

Leading with Care:

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Section 1: Preamble

1.1	Reasons for the <i>Leading with Care</i> policy	6
1.2	History of the policy	7
1.3	The pastoral heart of the policy	7
1.4	Biblical and theological foundation	8
1.5	Definition of terms used in the policy and implementation	9
1.6	Relationship of this policy to the church's policy on sexual abuse and/or harassment	11

Section 2: The Policy Statement

2.1	The policy statement	14
2.2	Overview of the three phases in the implementation steps	14

Section 3: Putting the Policy into Practice

Details of First Phase: Preparation

3.1	Read the policy and make a presentation to session	18
3.2	Establish a <i>Leading with Care</i> committee	18
3.3	List all current ministries	18
3.4	Write or adapt ministry (job) descriptions	19
3.5	Evaluate risk factors and reduce risk	19
3.5.1	Risk assessment guide	20
3.5.2	How to reduce risk by modifying programs	22
3.6	Design a Covenant of Care form	23
3.7	Examine safety and prevention areas	23
	Checklist for First Phase	26

Details of Second Phase: Working with Teachers/Leaders

3.8	Recruit new teachers/leaders and support experienced teachers/leaders	27
3.9	Provide orientation for all teachers/leaders	27
3.10	Obtain a Police Records Check/Volunteer Screening Check for high risk ministries	28
3.11	Provide some form of teacher/leader training	29
3.12	Provide supervision of and support for teachers/leaders	29
	Checklist for Second Phase	30

Details of Third Phase: Evaluation and Reporting

3.13	Evaluate <i>Leading with Care</i> and report to supervising body	31
3.14	Collect and store necessary documents	33
	Checklist for Third Phase	33

Section 4: Resources

4.1	Sample forms for job descriptions	36
4.1.1	Sample general ministry (job) descriptions	36
4.1.2	Sample ministry (job) description for preschool teacher/leader	37
4.1.3	Sample ministry (job) description for primary school age (6-12) teacher/leader	38
4.1.4	Sample ministry (job) description for youth teacher/leader	39
4.1.5	Sample ministry (job) description for elder's visitation program for frail seniors	40
4.2	Sample Covenant of Care	41
4.3	Facilities Checklist	42
4.4	Ratios of children/youth/vulnerable adults to teachers/leaders	43
4.5	Sample activity program waiver and medical release	44
4.6	Sample general incident report form	45
4.7	Guide for interviewing	47
4.8	Orientation	49
4.9	Additional Information on Police Records Checks	50
4.10	Resources for teacher/leader training	52
4.11	Sample teacher/leader form	53
4.12	Information sheets for teachers/leaders	54
4.12.1	Physical contact	54
a.	Appropriate and inappropriate touching	54
b.	Dealing with a participant's inappropriate behaviour	55
4.12.2	Washroom procedures	55
4.12.3	Understanding child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse	56
4.13	Dealing with reports of abuse	58
4.13.1	Reporting to a protection agency	59
4.13.2	Procedure if contacted by a protection agency	60
4.13.3	Pastoral response to a report of abuse	60
4.13.4	Response to the media	61
4.14	Community groups using church facilities for regular, ongoing programs	61
4.15	Communicating <i>Leading with Care</i>	62
4.16	Communicating the policy in all the courts of the church	62
4.17	Small church concerns	63
4.18	Insurance considerations	63

Section 1

Preamble

1



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

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

While we believe that religious institutions are supposed to be safe places, public media reminds us that it has not always been so. Despite careful procedures, abuse and unsafe practices have occurred in congregations where no one would expect it by people no one would question. To say “It can’t happen here” is not supported by what some people have heard, seen or experienced.

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

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

The following action statements describe both the reasons for this policy and The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s active commitment to it:

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

1.2

History of the Policy

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

The process of developing a draft protection policy began in 2000 and continued to 2005. The committee and staff for children and youth talked with the Experimental Fund administrator, the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Lakeshore, which was drafting a comprehensive congregational policy and other congregations in Canada which had drafted their own congregational protection policies. In addition, they looked at protection policies of other denominations. In 2002, an insurance concern arose when the insurance broker (Marsh Canada), which covers approximately 200 of our congregations, required more extensive implementation than was anticipated. In 2002, a draft of a policy and implementation was prepared by Education for Discipleship staff at national office and circulated to 100 readers. Further revisions were made and another draft was circulated, by permission of the 129th General Assembly (2003), to all congregations and presbyteries. Throughout 2004 changes were made to the draft policy following legal consultation and after noting some inconsistencies. The latest draft was always available on the church's website (www.presbyterian.ca/documents) and was clearly labelled and dated. Comments were received at church offices by January 31, 2005. Over 100 congregations and presbyteries responded with many suggestions and comments, which caused the policy to move in the direction of its present form, a more pastoral response to the issue of ensuring safe environments.

1.3

The Pastoral Heart of the Policy

This policy is titled *Leading with Care* because:

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

In *Leading with Care* there is a dual focus of safety and prevention, and training and support of teachers/leaders. In creating a safe environment, the church protects people, prevents abuse, and, if necessary, reports abuse. Through training, support and evaluation, ministry is enhanced, enriched and strengthened in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

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

Some smaller congregations may object to this policy because they say, "We know everyone in our congregation." That may be true. But should we know everyone in our congregation? We would not be able to do that if we were constantly reaching out to new people. As new people enter our congregational life and want to get involved, we should have a way of matching their skills and abilities to the ministries we provide. Without some policy in place, there is no way of knowing whether or not we are placing our children in a safe setting.

Those of us who are established and/or long-time leaders in the congregation must model for others our willingness to enter a screening process. We cannot expect new people to go through a screening process that we ourselves are not willing to go through.

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

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

1.4

Biblical and Theological Foundation

Our concern for the protection and care of all children, youth and vulnerable adults is firmly grounded in scripture and in our Presbyterian/Reformed view of justice. God calls the church to seek and establish a climate of justice because it reflects the divine righteousness revealed in the Bible.

*Show, O heavens, from above,
And let the skies rain down righteousness;
Let the earth open, that salvation may spring up,
And let it cause righteousness to sprout up also:
I the Lord have created it. (Isaiah 45:8)*

*By myself I have sworn,
From my mouth has gone forth in righteousness
A word that shall not return:
"To me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear."
Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me,
Are righteousness and strength. (Isaiah 45:23-24a)*

Even as he lay dying, King David describes his role as leader as grounded in justice. “The spirit of the Lord speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue. The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.” (2 Samuel 23:2-4)

Our Church is called to deal fairly with each other, protect the rights of others and protest against things that destroy human dignity. Our church’s sense of justice is about both rights and responsibilities.

In addition to our sense of biblical justice, the second main reason we have as Christians for a policy such as this is the desire to bear witness in our tradition to valuing people in a holistic way in our homes, churches and in the world. The Bible gives us examples of the importance and primacy of family life — the nuclear family and the extended family (Genesis 1:27; Luke 15:11-32; 2 Timothy 1:3-5). In our churches we strive to find a place of significance for all children, youth and vulnerable adults. Children and youth are not seen as “the church of the future,” but are the “church of today”. As adults we acknowledge the valuable gifts they contribute to the community of faith. Concerning this, Living Faith declares, “The church is the family of God. Here all should be valued for themselves. We are one body in Christ: together rejoicing when things go well, supporting one another in sorrow, celebrating the goodness of God and the wonder of our redemption.” (*Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1984, section 8.2.6)

Third, we are called to provide a protective environment and care for the young and vulnerable because we believe this is what Jesus would have us do. As Christians we imitate the example of Christ and aim to stay rooted in his love in all our relationships. The gospels contain many stories of times when Jesus met and healed children (Matthew 9:18-19, 23-25) and portrayed them as examples for others (Matthew 19:10-14; Mark 9:33-37). The gospels have many stories, too, of Jesus’ care for vulnerable adults. In Mark’s gospel we read about Jesus healing a man possessed by evil spirits (Mark 1:21-26), a man with leprosy (Mark 1:40-42), a crippled man (Mark 2:1-12), a dying girl and a sick woman (Mark 5:22-43), sick people in Gennesaret (Mark 6:53-56), and a deaf man (Mark 7:31-35). We read about Jesus feeding the hungry (Mark 8:1-9), healing a blind man (Mark 8:22-26), and commending a poor woman’s generosity (Mark 12:41-44). In his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-11), Jesus exhorts us to care for and love strangers, prisoners, and the naked, hungry, thirsty and sick of the world; these words of Christ himself constitute, as declared in *Living Faith*, “a call to help people in need and to permeate all of life with the compassion of God.” (*Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1984, section 9.1.3)

1.5

Definition of Terms in the Policy and Implementation

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 include: the positions of Sunday 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, synod 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 which spans a period of weeks or months and in which the level of risk is expected to remain constant. Examples: weekly Sunday school; the routine pastoral visitation of an elder in the home of a frail, elderly person; weekly youth meeting at the church; operation of the Sunday morning nursery; an out-of-the-cold program.

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 his/her 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 of teachers/leader includes: Sunday school teacher, youth leader, pastoral care visitor, leader of a group for developmentally challenged adults. Paid staff, clergy and other professional church workers are also considered teachers/leaders.

Note: It is common practice in many of our 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 when leaders and teachers are mentioned in this policy, we are referring to people of at least 18 years of age. Nevertheless, leaders 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 his/her 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 him/her. (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 includes: 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.

Relationship of this Policy to the Church's Policy on Sexual Abuse and/or Harassment

In 1993 the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada approved for use in the denomination a policy for dealing with sexual abuse and/or harassment. All presbyteries, sessions, 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 of safety and prevention, and teacher screening, orientation, training and support, ***Leading with Care* is primarily a prevention document.** If careful steps are taken in leading, teaching and supporting, incidents of harm can be prevented.

If, however, despite good prevention practices, an allegation of sexual abuse and/or harassment is made, the Policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for Dealing with Sexual Abuse and/or Harassment outlines procedures for both sessions and presbyteries. There is a different procedure for criminal or non-criminal allegations. The procedures include discovery, intervention, investigation, adjudication, communication, and aftercare.

Copies of the Sexual Abuse and Harassment Policy may be obtained (\$6) from The Presbyterian Church in Canada national offices (1-800-619-7301). The policy may also be downloaded from The Presbyterian Church in Canada website (www.presbyterian.ca). See the menu on the left side of the home page. Under "Resources," click on "Church Documents." Under "PCC Papers," see "Sexual Abuse and Harassment Policy." Each presbytery and synod clerk also has a copy of the policy.

Section 2

The Policy Statement

2



2.1

The Policy Statement

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.

2.2

Overview of the Three Phases in the Implementation Steps

This policy is implemented in three phases: preparation, work with teachers/leaders, evaluation and reporting.

NOTE: All points in the three phases are described in detail in Section 3.

First Phase: Preparation

1. Somebody or some group needs to **read the policy** and **make a presentation** to the session indicating how the policy will make ministry stronger and safer.
2. The session **establishes a *Leading with Care* committee**. These are the people who are responsible, on behalf of the congregation, for seeing that the policy is put into practice.
3. The *Leading with Care* committee **lists** all types of **ministries** being **currently offered**.
4. The *Leading with Care* committee writes or adapts **ministry (job) descriptions** for each of the ministries described in No. 3, above.
5. The *Leading with Care* committee uses the risk assessment guide, **evaluates the risk factor** in all ministries and determines how the risk can be reduced.
6. **Design or adapt a Covenant of Care** form.
7. The *Leading with Care* committee works with other members of the church (e.g. board) to **examine safety and prevention areas**: safety of facility, fire procedures, transportation, staff/user ratios, off-site activities and overnight events, billeting procedures, health issues.

Second Phase: Work with Teachers/Leaders

8. Someone — the *Leading with Care* committee or another designated group — will actively and intentionally **recruit** new leaders/teachers and do a group interview process with the former, experienced teachers. New recruits provide at least two references.
9. Someone provides all teachers with an **orientation**. At the orientation, teachers/leaders are asked to **fill in a teacher/leader form** (see 4.11) and **sign a Covenant of Care form**.
10. Teachers/leaders in high risk ministry must **agree to a Police Records Check**.
11. Someone — the presbytery, your session, your regional staff, a teacher in your congregation — **provides some teacher/leader training**.
12. Someone — the session, the *Leading with Care* committee, and/or the Sunday school superintendent — **provides on-going supervision and support of teachers and leaders**.

Third Phase: Evaluation and Reporting

13. At least twice a year, **evaluate** the progress of *Leading with Care*. Progress must be **reported to session (or other supervisory body if the ministry is not congregational) twice a year**.
14. **Collect and store necessary documents** — copy of covenant of care, teacher/leaders forms, documentation of having seen individual Police Records Check, completed incident forms — in a locked metal cabinet.

Section 3

Putting the Policy into Practice



Details of First Phase: **Preparation**

3.1

Read the Policy and Make a Presentation to Session

A presentation can begin by giving a summary of the policy and how it came to be, and then showing the video *Leading with Care in Your Congregation*. List some of the advantages of and reasons for putting the policy into place, such as:

- 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

Some people have the unique responsibility of putting this policy into action: the *Leading with Care* committee. Who will be responsible on behalf of the whole congregation to help put this policy into practice? The *Leading with Care* committee may be the session, part of the session, or it may be respected individuals in the congregation who are named by the session. This 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. 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 are we currently offering?

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

- ministry with preschoolers
- ministry with grades 1-6

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

If you offer other programs, such as an after school program, it should be listed separately from church school programs.

After you list the various ministries that your congregation offers for children/youth/vulnerable adults, pause and celebrate the things you are currently doing. Pray for these programs and their leaders.

3.4

Write or Adapt Ministry (Job) Descriptions

Your congregation may already have developed ministry (job) descriptions for each of the ministries you described. If you do not have ministry (job) descriptions, you need to develop them. Samples of some ministries (jobs) can be found in 4.1 of this policy. **You will need to adapt these samples** so they accurately reflect your ministry in your congregation.

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

3.5

Evaluate Risk Factors and Reduce Risk

3

It is necessary, in many aspects of life, to assess risk and work to reduce it. Just as we would want to check the safety of our car before setting out on a road trip, so, too, we need to look at each of the congregation's current ministries and explore the risk for each program. For example, you would want to evaluate risk factors in visiting frail seniors or transporting children and youth in the vehicles of church members. Just because a ministry is deemed high risk, we may still, as churches and as Christians, want to do them. It means, however, that we will want to manage the risk carefully.

The *Leading with Care* committee will determine how much risk there is in your current programs and whether you can reduce the risk. 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 should 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.

Note that it may be possible to group certain programs/ministries together. For instance, if you have 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 in the following cases:

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 (job) description and considering the most common circumstances under which a person in that position is likely to carry out his or her ministry.

Specific or special events

Should a teacher/leader decide to introduce a new element into a program/ministry, he/she 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 automatically classified as high risk if any of these conditions apply:

- **teacher/leader is alone with persons served**
- **teacher/leaders have limited or no supervision in role**
- **the activities of teachers/leaders are in a place where activities are not observed or monitored**
- **teachers/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 check off any additional checks in the “Yes, this is true” column, you must work to reduce the risks.

3

3.5.1 Risk assessment guide

If number 1, 2, 3, 4 or 6 are checked as “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 as “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 honestly checked off. See suggestions for reducing risk, section 3.5.2.

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 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 for the sake of the effectiveness of the program/ministry, it is not feasible to eliminate risks, but in other cases, 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 you assume

Even though some ministries are high risk, you may opt to continue them because they are important. You may, however, minimize the risk you assume.

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

Transfer the liability

You may choose to have the service or program offered by someone with professional expertise.

Examples: You may hire a bus to transport children to the park or hire professional child care in the nursery.

Modify the program/ministry or event

You may make changes as to how the activity is carried out.

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

If the above methods cannot be used, you have two choices: proceed with your 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.
- Require two volunteers/staff to transport children/youth/vulnerable adults in a church vehicle or in a volunteer's vehicle.
- Visit frail seniors 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 both people can be seen by others.
- Add a 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 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 4.2 in 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 orientation of teachers and leaders, **examine safety and prevention areas:** facilities, fire procedures, transportation issues, requirements of staff/user ratios, off-site activities and overnight events, billeting procedures, health issues.

a. Facilities

Congregations/ministries can protect children/youth/vulnerable people by answering questions about facilities (see *Facilities Checklist*, 4.3).

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

b. Fire procedures

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 every one of escape routes. An evacuation plan should be clearly defined. 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 Sunday school class, attendance should be recorded, the attendance book picked up and taken to a central location. In the event of a fire, this helps insure that all children are accounted for. Inform parents that, in the unlikely event of a fire during worship/Sunday school time, they are not to go in search of their child/youth. The children/youth will all be taken outside as a group to a designated gathering place.

c. 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.

d. Teacher/leader and participant ratios

The activity and age of children/youth affects the ratio of children/youth to staff. The management of the program as well as concern for safety, care and social interaction are some of the factors to take into account when establishing adequate ratios. 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 teacher/leader/participants, see 4.4.

e. Off-site activities and overnight events

Special outings, day trips, service projects and weekend camps are an important part of children/youth/vulnerable adult ministry. They help people grow physically, emotionally, and spiritually, give youth a chance to learn social and leadership skills, and provide social opportunities for vulnerable adults. The following guidelines must be taken with these activities/events and an activity waiver signed (see 4.5).

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.
- Written consent and medical release forms are required for each child/youth/vulnerable adult participating in activities/events (see 4.5).
- One teacher/leader should have a cell phone and the phone numbers of where the parents of the children/youth can be contacted during the excursion. The teacher/leader should have a copy of the completed consent forms with them.
- All daytime excursions must be supervised by a minimum of two teachers/leaders. Additional support workers might be necessary to accompany vulnerable adults.
- When transportation of children/youth/vulnerable adults is needed for an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license, 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.
- One teacher/leader should have First Aid training.

Overnight activities/events

Follow all requirements listed in daytime excursions plus the following:

- Each children/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 the group is comprised of children/youth/vulnerable adults of both genders, teachers/leaders of both genders must be present.
- Each leader should have an assigned group of children/youth/vulnerable adults for whom they will be responsible during the overnight event.
- All facilities in which an overnight function is housed must be equipped with smoke detectors and inside release doors. All members of the group should be made aware of fire exits and fire procedures as required by provincial/regional standards.
- No adult should be alone with a single child/youth/vulnerable adult.

- If a day or overnight includes trips to a pool, lake or hot tub, all municipal/provincial/federal regulations regarding safety and supervision must be adhered to.

f. Billeting youth in private homes

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

- Children under 14 years of age should not be billeted.
- The people offering billeting must be known, trusted members of the congregation.
- Billet youth in groups of at least two.
- The contact information (telephone number, address) of the individual with whom the youth will be billeted must be obtained by the group leader.

g. Health

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

i. Allergies

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

ii. Injury

If a participant is injured while participating in a program/ministry or activity, the teacher/leader must arrange to get the person to medical care. If necessary, call 9-1-1. If the child/youth/vulnerable adult is bleeding, the teacher/leader should protect himself/herself and all others from the blood. For all injuries, even if the person does not need medical attention, a leader must complete a general incident report (see 4.6) and report the incident to the injured person's parent/guardian/caretaker. General incident reports should be stored in a locked metal cabinet.

iii. Infectious diseases

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

Checklist for First Phase

Task	Date	Who is responsible
3.1 Has a presentation been made to session or the governing body of the ministry?		
3.2 Has a <i>Leading with Care</i> committee been established?		
3.3 Has the <i>Leading with Care</i> committee listed all the ministries currently offered?		
3.4 Has the <i>Leading with Care</i> committee written or adapted job descriptions for each ministry in your congregation or program?		
3.5 Has risk been assessed for each ministry? 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?		

Details of Second Phase: **Working with Teachers/Leaders**

3.8

Recruit New Teachers/Leaders and Support Experienced Teachers/Leaders

It is important to consider an interview of a potential new Sunday school teacher in several ways. It is a way of supporting the recruit, telling them that you care 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 leaders are well matched to the position in which they will be working. It is also important to remember that the leaders in the church have a responsibility to see that the wrong leaders cannot 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 your 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 with a ministry position. In addition, a conversation with an applicant helps him/her determine whether or not the timing is right for him/her to assume a ministry position. (See 4.7 for suggestions for the interviewing process.)

Experienced teachers

As congregations have begun to implement and use *Leading with Care* 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 4.7.

3.9

Provide Orientation for All Teachers/Leaders

Orientation for all teachers — whether new or experienced — is very important. Orientation gives people general information to prepare them for their ministry (job). Stress that all teachers/leaders — whether experienced or new — must attend your orientation session. Orientation is best done in late August or early September when the functional church year starts but must be repeated whenever new leaders/teachers begin. The orientation session should also include important information about safety practices. A list of what would normally be covered in an orientation session can be found in 4.8.

3

Obtain a Police Records Check/Volunteer Screening Check for High Risk Ministries

Screening comes prior to 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 dealing with vulnerable participants, 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 pay 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.

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

PRCs are mandatory for all high risk ministries in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. 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. But, if an elder routinely visits people one-on-one, she/he should also have a PRC.

Handling the information

In a similar way that an offering envelope secretary knows how much money you give to the church but holds this in confidence, so, too, the *Leading with Care* committee must handle some information with great care and maintain confidence. The individual who obtains a PRC check hands it to the designated person — a member of the *Leading with Care* committee. This person reviews the document and gives it back to the individual to whom it belongs. The person who is seeking to be a teacher/leader “owns” his/her PRC and should keep the original. However, a copy may be given to the organization/church or the organization/church should file a record of having seen the PRC. It is important for the *Leading with Care* committee to handle this information with strict confidentiality.

How often must a check be done?

A PRC must be done at any of these points:

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

Who pays for the check?

Since most PRCs require payment, your congregation may decide to pay these fees in one group, or you may ask each individual to pay for it themselves. Many people may already have a 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 PRCs?

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 only good 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, you will not have access to this information 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.

3.11

Provide Some Form of Teacher/Leader Training

It is important that all teachers/leaders meet for a time of orientation and training. If you were to become a Scout or Brownie leader, a minor sports coach, a Big Brother or Big Sister, you would be 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 for what should be included in orientation is found in section 4.8 of the policy. There are several ways that your teachers and leaders may be trained for their ministry. All are effective, so choose one or more that best suits your congregation. 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.

Orientation and training resources 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 your 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 and leaders as they faithfully and regularly carry out their ministries. Pray for community groups who regularly use your facilities.

On-going 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 (job) description is used as a reference point. For instance, in the description, a Sunday school superintendent/co-ordinator may tell new teachers that he/she should know to 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 leaders/teachers 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?		
3.10 Have all teachers/leaders in high risk ministry obtained a Police Records Check?		
3.11 Have all teachers/leaders participated in some form of leadership training?		
3.12 Is someone providing on-going supervision and support for teachers and leaders?		

Details of Third Phase: Evaluation and Reporting

3.13

Evaluate *Leading with Care* and Report to Supervising Body

At least twice a year the *Leading with Care* committee should meet to evaluate how things are going in your congregation/ministry. Keep in mind that, if the *Leading with Care* committee is the session or a subcommittee of session, this evaluation process simply becomes part of the on-going work of session meetings.

These key questions will guide the evaluation:

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

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

If the *Leading with Care* committee is not the session, it is very 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 a supervisory body

This policy is not about us as individuals. It is about us as a body of people trying to ensure the highest quality of ministry by offering our best to Christ and working to make sure that the worst does not happen. Therefore, some checks and balances are helpful. Therefore, at each of the four levels (courts) of our church — congregations, 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 their progress implementing this policy. Each congregation must also explain to presbytery their congregation's *Leading with Care* implementation at the time of the presbytery visitation to the congregation. Additionally, each active minister — ordained or diaconal — must show the clerk of presbytery his/her Police Records Check. This must be done when the policy is approved, at the time of a call or change of appointment, and/or every five years.

Presbyteries

The presbytery must establish a presbytery *Leading with Care* committee to oversee the implementation and support of this policy or 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 *Leading with Care* 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 with Presbytery bounds. (See 3.10 for circumstances of frequency for obtaining checks.)

It is the responsibility of the presbytery to make sure that all congregations and ministries within its bounds have a copy of *Leading with Care* and the video *Leading with Care in Your Congregation*. 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* 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* workshop outlines are available on the church's website www.presbyterian.ca under Church Documents.)

Synods

It is the responsibility of synod to establish a synod *Leading with Care* committee or ensure that *Leading with Care* concerns are carried out by an existing committee. It is the responsibility of all synods to make sure that all programs/ministries which are under the jurisdiction of the synod (such as synod regional staff and synod camps) have a copy of *Leading with Care* and the video *Leading with Care in Your Congregation*, and attend or conduct a *Leading with Care* workshop at least every second year. It is the responsibility of each synod to see that all synod staff and programs/ministries abide by this policy. When synod staff, camps and other synod ministries make their annual report to synod, they must include a description of their involvement with *Leading with Care*.

National (General Assembly) level

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

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

The purpose of collecting personal information is to insure 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 our national church. Information about the collected data is confidential and will be used only for the purpose for which it was collected, that is, implementing and monitoring this policy. Information will be safely stored and only accessed by those who need to access it for the purpose of the policy, such as the person engaging the teacher/leaders, the minister and/or the clerk of session.

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

How to manage confidential information

Someone on the *Leading with Care* committee will need to collect and store completed documents in a locked metal cabinet — copy of covenant of care (see 4.2), teacher/leaders forms (see 4.11), documentation of having seen individual Police Records Checks, completed incident forms.

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 safe guard. 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.

How does PIPEDA affect this policy?

PIPEDA, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, became effective in Canada in January, 2004. While this Act provides useful and necessary protection for Canadians, our church lawyers assure us that The Presbyterian Church in Canada is not subject to PIPEDA because the Church does not collect, use or dispose of commercial goods.

Checklist for Third Phase

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

Section 4

Resources



4.1

Sample Forms for Job Descriptions

4.1.1 Sample general ministry (job) descriptions

A ministry (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
- Sunday 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 frail seniors
- Counsellor/tutor for children/youth/vulnerable adults
- Out of the Cold program volunteers

A ministry (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 (job) descriptions are included on the following pages.
Adapt as needed.

4.1.2 Sample ministry (job) description for preschool teacher/leader

(Insert your church/ministry name here and adapt as needed)

Title of the Ministry Position: Preschool teacher

Responsible to: Sunday School Superintendent/Coordinator

Responsible for: 10 children, ages 0-5

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

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

- maintain a vital spiritual life
- plan age appropriate Bible stories and activities
- maintain assuring and friendly relationships with the children's parents
- 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 Sunday school superintendent of his/her absence and find a suitable replacement
- ensure that the safety issues presented in orientation are followed

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

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

Screening Procedure: In accordance with the *Leading with Care* policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, screening of adults involved in ministry with children and youth includes completing a teacher/leader form, and, in the case of new applicants, an interview by two people, a reference check, and a Police Records Check for high risk ministries.

Orientation and Training: (list all training courses)

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

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

Schedule and commitment: Team teaching with a rotation of every second month from September to June.

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

(Insert your church/ministry name 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: 6 children in a grade 4-6 class

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

General summary: The Church School Teacher will oversee and facilitate the teaching of the curriculum in such a way that lives are changed and growth is seen in the 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 the child is in danger
- participate in events and activities that develop leadership skills
- maintain accurate records of attendance
- attend bimonthly teachers' meetings
- advise the Sunday school superintendent of his/her absence and find a suitable replacement
- ensure that the safety issues presented in orientation are followed

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

- gift of teaching, time management and organizational skills
- 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 all adults involved in ministry with children and youth includes completing a teacher/leader application form, and, in the case of prospective teachers/leaders, an interview by two people, a reference check, and a Police Records Check for high risk ministries.

Orientation and Training: (list all training courses)

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

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

Schedule and commitment: Team teaching with a rotation of every fourth Sunday off from September to June.

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

(Insert your church/ministry name here and adapt as needed)

Title of the Ministry Position: Youth Teacher/Leader

Responsible to: Sunday School Superintendent/Coordinator

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

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

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

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

- 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 Sunday school superintendent of his/her absence and find a suitable replacement
- ensure that the safety issues presented in orientation are followed

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

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

Screening Procedure: In accordance with the *Leading with Care* policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, screening of adults involved in ministry with children and youth includes completing a teacher/leader form, and, in the case of prospective teachers/leaders, an interview by two people, a reference check, and a Police Records Check for high risk ministries.

Orientation and Training: (list all training courses)

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

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

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

4.1.5 Sample ministry (job) description for elder's visitation program for frail seniors

(Insert your church/ministry name here and adapt as needed)

Title of the Ministry Position: Visitor for Frail Seniors

Responsible to: session of (name church)

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

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

General summary: The Visitor for Frail Seniors will regularly visit frail elderly people, offering conversation, Bible reading and prayer as requested, and bring news from the church. The visiting elders may gather and bring articles of interest to the elderly person. The Visitor for Frail Seniors will keep a record log of visits, and treat conversation 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 elderly person
- maintain confidentiality, unless an elderly person is in danger
- participate in events and activities that develop geriatric leadership skills
- maintain accurate records of visits
- advise the team leader of an expected absence and find a suitable replacement
- ensure that the safety issues presented in orientation are followed

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

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

Screening Procedure: In accordance with the *Leading with Care* policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, screening of adults involved in ministry with vulnerable adults includes completing a teacher/leader form, and, in the case of prospective teachers/leaders, an interview by two people, a reference check, and a Police Records Check for high risk ministries.

Orientation and Training: (list all training courses)

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

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

Schedule and commitment: Two elders will share responsibility for 22 seniors on a month-about schedule.

4.2

Sample Covenant of Care

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

The Covenant of Care for (insert name of congregation or ministry here)

The church is Christ, together with his people, called both to worship and to serve him in all of life (*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 leader/teacher/guide 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, ethnic background, skin colour, intelligence, 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 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 windows in doors or split 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 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 health care 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 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 occasional times when only one leader is present. In the situation, the teacher/leader should, from the orientation session, know what to do if he/she is alone with a child. In the feedback that came from small churches, several congregations pointed out that this is regular occurrence in their congregation — there is one teacher 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 might provide some pencil and crayon activities for the child and the two of them may rejoin the congregation. Or, the teacher may find another adult or youth from the congregation to join them in their Sunday school area.

Here are the suggested child/youth/vulnerable adult ratios 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.

0-18 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 participant ratios 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 Program Waiver and Medical Release

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

(Insert your church name/ministry name here)

Description and Location of Activity: _____

Departure date: _____ Returning date: _____

Full Name of participant: _____
First Last

Birth date (N/A for adult): _____

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 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. He/she will be properly supervised in activities. In the event of accident or sickness, (insert your church/ministry name here), its staff and volunteers are released from any liability.

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

In the event that travel or activities take place outside this province, I understand that any medical costs incurred involving 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 your church/ministry name here)

CONFIDENTIAL

Report date: _____ Time of report: _____

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

Date of Birth: _____ Gender: M F

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: _____

Resources

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 police.
(See section 4.13 on 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 our church?
- What activities help you grow and mature in your faith?
- Tell us about your experience in working with [children and/or 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? (Check with your provincial government about questions which you may or may not ask in interviews.)

During the interview, discuss the *Leading with Care* policy, the orientation session and training you offer to all leaders and the support they can expect. Explain that, as part of our denomination's commitment to ensure that all churches are safe and nurturing, you would like to talk to two references who they have known for at least a year.

Thank the applicant for seriously considering leadership in your church 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 in 4.7 of this policy .

If your *Leading with Care* committee believes that the new recruit is a suitable candidate for a teacher/leader position, call him/her 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 our congregation. However, we believe that your skills and abilities lie more in the area of [name another viable 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 his/her 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 members of the *Leading with Care* committee know a person well, they may not have seen him/her interact with others at work, with children at play or in a teaching/leading capacity, or while visiting with an elderly, mentally ill or homeless person. Even if written references are provided, follow up with a phone call. Inform the reference of the nature of the ministry position. Ask his/her opinion about the person's suitability in this situation, e.g., "John may be co-leading a Junior High group on Friday nights at our church. Would you be comfortable with John having this type of responsibility?" "Sukdiv has applied to be coordinator of our In from the Cold program which feeds and 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 which references are checked: _____

Person contacted: _____ Phone: _____

Contacted by: _____

Date: _____ 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 him/her?
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 him/her? If so, what was your impression?
6. What gifts, talents and abilities would this person offer to (your church name)?
7. Are you aware of any facts or circumstances involving this person that would call into question his or her ability to do this ministry?
8. Would you, without reservation, recommend this person as a leader in _____ ministry?

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

4.8 Orientation

Orientation includes items like these:

- A review of ministry (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. If ill, teachers and leaders should be given instruction about who to inform 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 some 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 video or book resources or by leaders in your congregation. See 4.10 of this policy for suggestions.)
- Watch the video *Leading with Care in Your Congregation*, available from church offices (800-619-7301). These videos were mailed to each congregation in the fall, 2004.
- All teachers/leaders must fill out a Teacher/Leader Form (see 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 who they would like you to contact if there is an emergency. In addition, filling in a teacher/leader form is an act of commitment to their ministry task.
- Safety issues such as fire procedures, transportation (if necessary), washroom practices and other safety issues which are specific to the situation (see 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 (see 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 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 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 check your local police agency. Some write individual letters to the person who request 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 which 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 who to screen?

In fact, the organization does not decide who 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 job of a mentor, who work alone with a child, will need to be screened thoroughly for the safety of the child. On the other hand, the position where there is no access to children, confidential records, or money will likely involve fewer screening steps.

The request that you consent to a PRC does not mean that the organization does not trust you or has concerns about you. It means the position you in which you 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 only identify the person who already has a criminal or other police record. Organizations must carry out a range of screening activities to properly assess staff and volunteers.

How 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 a 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 you have a criminal record?

If the information obtained by the police indicates that you have a criminal record, does that mean you cannot volunteer? To this question, there is no black-and-white answer. We are, after all, a community of grace and forgiveness. The *Leading with Care* committee and/or session must deal with these matters in the same way that they need to deal with other confidential matters. Sometimes it will be deemed wise to deny the individual a leadership position with children/youth/vulnerable adults. Sometimes it will be deemed wise to urge the person to accept a position that indirectly supports children/youth/vulnerable adults. Sometimes it will be deemed wise to always have an individual working with another adult. Organizations may look at the following factors when considering your application:

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

4.10

Resources for Teacher/Leader Training

- Buy, for each teacher, a copy of *32 Ways to Become a Great Sunday School Teacher*, by Delia Halverson (Abingdon Press, 1997). This book contains do-it-yourself instruction but may also be used by a group of teachers who gather for support, encouragement and learning.
- Buy and use the book *Equipping the Saints* by Sara Coven Juengst (Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). This book has 39 do-it-yourself workshops for teachers and leaders. The author has arranged the workshops in three general categories — Basic biblical background, Foundations for faith (basic Christian belief), Timely teaching tips (practical help). All are brief and easy to use.
- For youth leaders, contact your regional staff for training events or borrow Volunteer Youth Worker Training Course (video and work books) and the Peer Ministry Video from church offices.
- Watch for conference opportunities for your church leaders/teachers. APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) offers an excellent yearly conference with a wide variety of workshops. Canada Youth conferences in The Presbyterian Church in Canada offer a strong leader training component for youth leaders every three years. Other special Canadian Presbyterian conferences emerge from time to time and are listed on the church website (www.presbyterian.ca). Lay people may apply for one third of the cost of these programs through the national church's Lay Bursary Program (800-619-7301).
- The national church offers a program called TLC (Teacher/Leader Courses). Contact the Education in the Faith department (800-619-7301) for a list of courses and how to arrange a TLC event for your presbytery.
- Knox College offers distance education courses for lay people (knox.college@utoronto.ca).
- New teachers/leaders may be paired with more experienced teachers/leaders in a mentoring relationship.
- If the leaders are elders, contact the Elder's Institute for training options (www.standrews.edu/elders; 866-794-8888, toll free). Every PCPak and the church website has an issue of *For Elders* which contains helpful articles and procedures for training elders. Back copies of this resource are available from the Book Room at church offices (800-619-7301).

As you plan for teacher/leader training remember that your regional staff can be a valuable help. (For a list of regional staff consult The Presbyterian Church in Canada national website www.presbyterianca). Also, for specific teacher/leader training advice contact the national office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Education in the Faith Department (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 your church name here): _____

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

How long have you been attending (insert your church name 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/vulnerable adult ministry in this congregation?

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

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

No Yes, please explain: _____

References

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

1. Name: _____ 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 to touching based on sex, culture or personal experience.

Some 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 him/her to an activity
- holding hands for safety when changing locations
- shaking a person's hand in greeting
- holding a child gently by the hand or shoulder to keep his/her attention as you redirect behaviour
- anointing a person with oil on the head
- holding hands in a circle prayer or song
- providing comfort with a wet, warm cloth.

Some examples of **inappropriate touch**:

- kissing a child/youth/vulnerable adult or coaxing them into kissing you
- extended cuddling
- tickling
- piggy-back rides
- having others sit on your lap (except for babies/young toddlers)
- touching anyone in any area covered by a bathing suit (except changing infant's diapers)
- hand holding, except for the examples listed above
- 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. If, however, 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 in private, 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 with children and youth must be limited to talking and time out. Correction to a vulnerable adult must be limited to talking to a vulnerable adult or his/her 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

Every group in The Presbyterian Church in Canada providing a program/ministry for children/youth/vulnerable adults must determine the washroom procedure that will be followed in that program/ministry at the time of determining the risk. This is particularly critical with pre-school children 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 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 him/herself in plain view at the open door of the washroom. A volunteer or teen helper may stay behind with the remaining children.
- Children 6 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 that happens to 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 a protective agency or police. Clergy and other professionals have special responsibility to report allegations of abuse. A teacher/leader who hears an allegation of abuse should confide this to a member of the clergy because a minister is the executive of the presbytery in the congregation and, as such, needs to know what is going on in his/her congregation.

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

What is child/youth abuse?

(Source: Department of Justice Canada; <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/fm/childafs.html>)

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 involves 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 his or her 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, exert power and control over them, and 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 (e.g. the developmentally challenged), most characteristics are equally applicable to all vulnerable adults. A thorough explanation of older adult abuse is found at <http://www.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/fm/adultsfs.html>. 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 in order to preserve access to their 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, he/she 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 police or 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 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, punish or remove the offender. Do not promise not to report the incident to the authorities. If you have inadvertently promised to keep what the child/youth/vulnerable adult says confidential, tell him/her 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 police. Clergy and other professionals have special responsibility to report allegations of abuse. A teacher/leader who hears an allegation of abuse should confide this to a member of the clergy because a minister is the executive of the presbytery in the congregation and, as such, needs to know immediately what is going on in his/her congregation. If the complaint is against the minister, however, the person who heard the complaint should consult with the clerk of presbytery about the allegation.

If the allegation is of sexual abuse and/or 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/Or Harassment, 1998. Ministers should consult a clerk of presbytery, synod or General Assembly regarding the two different processes to follow for reporting of non-criminal or criminal activity.

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 can be found in 4.6.

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 through 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.

Professionals or officials must report a suspicion that a child is or has been in need of protection, where the information on which that suspicion is based in the course of his or her professional or official duties. By way of example, in Ontario, professionals who fail to report a suspicion of abuse may be fined up to \$1,000, according to provincial standards.

Information needed by a protection agency

When one calls a protection agency that person should prepare notes on why he/she is calling.

- Ask for an intake screener.
- Give your name and location, or you may remain anonymous.
- State that you are making a report of 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 protection agency

1. Any request from a child protection worker (see photo ID or badge to verify identity) should normally be made in person. The worker will want to speak with the person filing the suspected abuse report and, if a different person, to the person to whom the child/youth spoke. If the matter is urgent and those investigating cannot do a personal interview, the investigator may telephone you from his/her office.

2. The child protection agent should identify him/herself and give his/her work contact phone number. Record the workers first and last name.

- Do not give any information at this time. The investigator will explain the process to follow and what information he/she is seeking.
- It is your responsibility to verify that this is indeed a child protection agent. Simply say, “I need to move to another phone. May I phone you back in 30 seconds?” Move to a phone where you can ensure confidentiality.
- When you return the call, provide the necessary information.
- Ask what is to happen next. This is critical as a court order may be warranted and a restraining order put in place. The church/ministry should be aware of this. Details do not need to be given. Ask when the church/ministry can expect a final report on the case and if further information will be required.
- Make clear written notes about what you reported, 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 he/she is a victim of alleged abuse, it is important to:

- assure him/her that he/she will be listened to and 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 him/her that he/she is in no way at fault for the abuse
- affirm that it is always appropriate to tell someone that he/she has been abused
- remind him/her that your first priority is his or her protection
- ask him/her if it is okay to pray with them
- reassure him/her that ongoing care will be provided for him/her and his/her family
- provide pastoral support to him/her; give reassurance that he/she has done the right thing in reporting this incident.

Do not:

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

4.13.4 Response to the media

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

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

4.14

Community Groups Using Church Facilities for Regular, Ongoing Programs

Up to this point we have focused 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 (like Scouts, AA, and so on) is part of the outreach and hospitality plan of many congregations. However, as the host, your congregation has the following responsibilities.

Policy

Appropriate church representatives such as the session or the *Leading with Care* committee must meet with each community group using your church facilities to explain this policy. The community group may have their own safety/protection policy. If they cannot produce evidence of a policy to the *Leading with Care* committee, ask them to take a copy of *Leading with Care* to the hierarchy of their organization and ask for implementation of a similar policy of care.

Insurance

Even when your congregation is a willing host, you must ensure that all regular on-going community groups who use your facilities have insurance coverage. Ask the group to provide a letter from their insurance broker confirming their coverage. If they do not have insurance, check with your insurance company to see

if the community group falls under the church insurance. Wherever any church members are involved in a community group using church facilities, it is important to make sure that the church 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.

Occasional users of your church facilities

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

4.15 Communicating *Leading with Care*

Video

The 12-minute video *Leading with Care in Your Congregation* is available free of charge from church offices (800-619-7301).

Poster

Hang a poster with words like this in a prominent place in your 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 the Presbyterian church offices (800-619-7301).

4.16 Communicating the Policy in All the Courts of the Church

This policy and its procedures must be clearly communicated to all ministers, church leaders and teachers, sessions, other paid staff, volunteers, and congregations, to all groups governed by and run by The Presbyterian Church in Canada and to all others using church facilities. (See 4.14, Community groups using church facilities for regular ongoing programs). Copies of this document will be delivered free of charge to all clerks of sessions, presbyteries, synods and General Assembly and will be posted on the national church website (www.presbyterian.ca).

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 according to the policy of our national church. Each congregation must have a locked, metal file cabinet for this purpose. The session will decide which one or two individuals in the congregation have a key to this cabinet. (See note on microfilming and storage, 3.14.)

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 according to the policy of our national church. Our synod camp must have a locked, metal file cabinet for this purpose. The camp board will decide which one or two individuals have a key to this cabinet. (See note on microfilming and storage, 3.14.)

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 may, in fact, 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/ministry does not own a metal file cabinet with a lock, one will need to be purchased.

4.18 Insurance Considerations

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

If an incident of abuse, neglect or harm occurs in an environment within a church's purview, the church may be faced with certain liabilities. Insurance coverage does not negate the liability; but may provide important financial coverage for defence and/or settlement should the church be confronted with legal action.

Liability can be of various types:

- **Vicarious liability** is a no-fault liability that can be found against an institution such as a church even if the church did not know about the incident of abuse and even if good prevention policies were followed.
- **Negligence** is a liability that can follow if protocols are not in place or were not followed.
- **Breach of fiduciary duty** is a liability that can follow if it is shown that an implied or direct understanding of trust was broken. For example, it is generally understood that a church will

protect and care for children, so if church policy leads to a child not being cared for, that understanding of trust is broken and this kind of liability may follow.

Generally, an alleged perpetrator will not receive coverage under the church's insurance policy if found criminally responsible, at which point there may be some limited reimbursement of defence costs. It is important to advise your 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 by a letter from an insurance broker, Marsh Canada, in 2002. (Marsh provides coverage for approximately 200 congregations in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.) While policy demands vary from company to company, implementing the following guidelines will increase the likelihood that your insurer will provide coverage:

- clear definitions for all forms of abuse (in print or video) 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.

A copy of *Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults in The Presbyterian Church in Canada* has been sent to every congregation.