



Safe Church  
Operational Guidelines  
Policy and  
Procedures

---

*Approved by the ANiC Board of Directors  
September 8<sup>th</sup> 2009*

## *Table of Contents*

<b>1</b>	<b><u>STATEMENT OF POLICY</u></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b><u>DEFINITIONS</u></b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b><u>VULNERABLE GROUPS</u></b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b><u>CREATING AND MAINTAINING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT</u></b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5</b>	<b><u>GENERAL GUIDELINES</u></b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6</b>	<b><u>IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY</u></b>	<b>5</b>
6.1	SAFE CHURCH COMMITTEE (SCC)	5
6.2	POSITION PROFILES	6
6.3	SCREENING	6
6.4	PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS OF ABUSE	7
6.4.1	IN THE EVENT THE SCC FINDS THAT ABUSE DID OCCUR.	8
6.4.2	APPEAL PROCESS	9
6.5	PROCEDURES FOR SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE	9
6.6	CLERGY	9
	<b><u>APPENDIX I – PROVIDING A REFERRAL WHEN NEEDED</u></b>	<b>I</b>
	<b><u>APPENDIX II – WHEN TO PROVIDE A REFERRAL OR SEEK ADDITIONAL HELP</u></b>	<b>II</b>
	<b><u>APPENDIX III – SPECIFIC GUIDELINES WHEN CONDUCTING IN-HOME VISITS</u></b>	<b>III</b>

# 1 Statement of Policy

## *Purpose*

The Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC) is concerned for the safety of all those who are members and guests in our congregations. We recognize that some groups are more vulnerable than others, and we will ensure that policies and practices are in place to ensure that all reasonable care is taken to ensure their safety during any ANiC activities, including services, meetings, conferences, Synods, small groups, individual ministry or other such activity. This means that all ANiC staff and volunteers are required to be screened and trained to levels appropriate to their ministries. This document outlines the policies and practices to support these requirements.

## *Basis of this Policy*

The church has spiritual, moral, legal and societal obligations to ensure a safe environment for all its members and guests, but particularly for the children and youth participating in church programs.

It is clear that God embraces children with love and places their nurture and care in our hands. As a Church we accept this call, but recognizing the fallen nature of humanity and that we all fall short of the grace of God, we also accept our responsibility to implement clear policies and procedures to minimize the risk of abusing those who are vulnerable.

There are also legal and societal obligations which demand that we protect children and youth. The church, like any secular organization, is called to clarify and enforce procedures to ensure safe environments. Indeed, the church can provide positive testimony to the community by adhering to standards that are equal to or exceed society's requirements.

Christ, himself delighting in children, exhorts us, "whoever" welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." He follows this with a severe warning about how we are to relate to the children entrusted to us. "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be far better for him to be thrown into the sea . . ." (Mark 9: 37, 42).

Beyond these obligations, the faith and practices of the ANiC are also shaped by the following documents which describe the fundamentals of Anglican Christianity:

- i. The Thirty-nine Articles of Faith;
- ii. The Solemn Declaration of 1893;
- iii. The Creeds as contained in the Book of Common Prayer (1662);
- iv. The Montreal Declaration of 1994; and
- v. The GAFCon Jerusalem Statement of 2008.

## 2 Definitions

The ANiC adheres to a policy of zero tolerance of behaviours defined below. Furthermore, the law requires, through the various provincial Child and Family Services Acts (CFSAs) that abuse and neglect of children must be reported to civil authorities.

- 1) *Abuse* – to use wrongly, to maltreat, to injure. It is the misuse of power by a person in a position of trust. Abuse may take various forms:
  - a) *Physical Abuse* – deliberate physical force or action that results, or could result, in non-accidental injury to a child, youth or other venerable individual. It can include punching, slapping, beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a child. It is never considered reasonable discipline.
  - b) *Emotional Abuse* – a pattern of behaviour that attacks a child’s emotional development and sense of self-worth. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond his or her capacity. Examples include constantly criticizing, teasing, r, insulting, rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child.
  - c) *Sexual Abuse* – any sexual exploitation of a child, whether consensual or not, by an adult or older child. Physical, psychological or emotional coercion is intrinsic to sexual abuse. It is against the law to touch a child for a sexual purpose; to encourage or force a child to touch another person in a sexual way; to encourage or force a child to participate in any sexual activity; or tell a child to touch him or herself for an adult’s or older child’s sexual purposes. Sexual abuse can take many forms – for example, sexual intercourse, exposing a child’s private parts, indecent phone calls, fondling for sexual purposes, watching a child undress for sexual pleasure, allowing a child to look at, or perform in, pornographic pictures or videos; or to engage in prostitution.

- 2) *Child Neglect* – the failure to meet a child’s basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, sleep, medical attention, education, and protection from harm. Young children should never be left unattended.
- 3) *Harassment* – repeated subtle or overt action, particularly by a person in a position of authority, which causes the recipient to feel attacked, demeaned, intimidated or manipulated.
- 4) *Improper Touching* – touching which creates feelings of violation, confusion, or isolation. It may include kissing a child, coaxing a child to give a kiss, extended hugging or tickling, touching a child in any area that would be covered by a swim suit, carrying older children or having them sit on an adult’s lap.
- 5) *Improper Discipline* – inappropriate and harmful attempts to control a child. Improper discipline includes yelling or screaming at children, threatening them or physically hurting them. By contrast, proper discipline involves establishing clear boundaries of acceptable behaviour and maintaining such behavioural expectations with firm and kind expressions of authority.
- 6) *Assault* – to cause bodily harm by inappropriately applying force to another person; to attempt or threaten to apply force; or, to accost or impede another person while openly carrying a weapon.

### **3 Vulnerable Groups**

Vulnerable groups in society and therefore also in our church include:

- i. Children – from nursery age to Grade 5 Sunday School
- ii. Pre-Teens – Grades 6 and 7 Sunday School
- iii. Teenagers and Youth – Grades 8 – 12
- iv. Singles – Women from 18 and up
- v. Widows and widowers – of any age
- vi. Seniors
- vii. Special Needs children and adults

### **4 Creating and Maintaining a Safe Environment**

The overall aim of this policy is to establish reasonable measures to provide a safe environment in all ministries and activities within our Church, whether on Church premises or not. We recognize that clergy, parish staff, and volunteers serve in

situations where abuse may potentially occur. We also recognize that children, youth, and vulnerable adults need to be protected from the occurrence of any such abuse, and that those who are ministering in our Church need to be properly selected and trained to avoid abuse or the appearance of abuse to others.

Safety and respect for all members of the Church community is very important to ANiC. We desire to ensure that our churches are safe and holy places for all those whom our ministry affects. Special care for those members of the Church who may be more vulnerable is paramount, particularly for our children, youth and some adults and elderly members.

While these guidelines need to be read and understood by all ministry staff and volunteers, we recognize that it is impossible to make recommendations for all possible situations and circumstances. Therefore we also rely on the discretion and good judgment of the clergy, staff, and volunteer lay ministers to avoid compromising situations.

## **5 General Guidelines**

- i. It is preferable to meet with a group or in pairs rather than be alone with a vulnerable person.
- ii. It is preferable to have more than one adult present when working with vulnerable people (if the other adult cannot be in the same room, it is best to have them close by in the same building.)
- iii. It is preferable to meet in an open, public space rather than a closed, private space. A church hall is better than a secluded room. A church office is better than a person's home.
- iv. When meeting, an open door is better than a closed door; a door with a window is better than a solid door.
- v. It is always wise to make others aware of your activities and your whereabouts, particularly when meeting with vulnerable people.
- vi. It is best to schedule regular meetings with a supervisor to discuss the ongoing nature and actions of the ministry.
- vii. If a person is involved in a situation where a boundary is violated, or something occurs that is out of the ordinary or could be misinterpreted, or where such a

violation or occurrence is alleged, he or she should immediately report it and discuss it with a supervisor. If the supervisor is unwilling, unable, or unavailable for discussion, he or she should seek out another qualified person or colleague with whom to discuss the issue. Such incidents should be immediately reported to the insurer if appropriate.

- viii. Consent forms wherein parents give written permission for their children or youth to participate in off-site group activities will be gathered and kept on file.
- ix. Corporal punishment is prohibited.
- x. Activities that could easily lead to allegations of abuse or harassment, such as allowing unsupervised internet access to children or youth on church computers, vehicle transportation by workers alone with an unrelated child or youth, or improperly supervised sleepovers, are to be prohibited without express written permission of at least one parent of the child or youth.
- xi. All local Health and Safety Standards must be adhered to, particularly with respect to the availability of equipment and training to deal with medical emergencies.
- xii. Fire drills should be held at least twice a year before or after regular church services.

## **6 Implementation of the Policy**

### ***6.1 Safe Church Committee (SCC)***

All ANiC Parishes shall establish and maintain a Safe Church committee with no less than two members, one male and one female. The SCC will be familiar with the terms of this policy, as well as the established procedures of the church for dealing with a complaint and will be responsible for hearing complaints under this policy.

Current ministry leaders and staff should work with the SCC committee to ensure that all current and newly appointed ministry staff and volunteers are familiar with this Safe Church Policy and shall so inform the SCC on a regular basis.

Leaders and staff should also ensure that requirements and training practices are updated as required, and as new ministries are established and staffed.

Leaders should create or review existing position profiles to ensure they are up to date.

## *6.2 Position Profiles*

Every staff and volunteer position shall have a position profile as described below.

- a) Position profiles should include the following sections, as appropriate to the position being described:
  - i. Objectives of Position
  - ii. Responsibilities
  - iii. Skills and Experience Needed
  - iv. Training Needed
  - v. Interactions with other positions
  - vi. Security Requirements
  - vii. Requirements and obligations in relation to vulnerable groups
- b) Be drafted and kept up to date by the responsible ministry leaders, and approved by the parish leadership or Trustees.
- c) Be available for any member of the congregation to review.

## *6.3 Screening*

- a) Every staff member and volunteer shall have appropriate training, including how to deal with vulnerable groups.
- b) Every person who is in any position of authority or leadership, whether elected or appointed, must be familiar with, accept, agree to, and practice the fundamentals of Anglican Christianity. (See Section 1 above). Holders of such positions should have been members of their parish for at least six months, and should be well known to their congregations.
- c) Every person who ministers in any way to the Vulnerable Groups as defined in section 3 above must obtain and keep current a Police Records Check (PRC). PRCs are obtained from local Police departments. This should include a check of the Sexual Offenders Registry. PRCs should be kept current and renewed at least every three years.

- d) ANiC recognizes that many people who currently hold staff and volunteer positions have already been through the necessary screening and training and hold current PRCs.
- e) PRCs remain the property of the employee or volunteer – no copies are held by the ANiC or Parish staff. The Rector or his or her designate should review the person's PRC, and, provided it does not disclose any information which would give rise to concerns, note this in a file maintained for this purpose. Similarly, the Rector or his or her designate should review and record all renewals of the PRC. In the absence of a rector, this task will be performed by the senior clergy or warden in the parish.
- f) In the event the PRC discloses information giving rise to any concerns, such person shall not be hired as a member of staff or volunteer, without consultation and permission from the bishop, with advice of the Chancellor.

#### *6.4 Procedure for Handling Complaints of abuse*

The person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behaviour is directed need not be the complainant. Moreover, neither consent nor acquiescence will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behaviour. At any time the church may initiate or proceed with the formal complaint process.

In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment or abuse, consideration shall be given to the record of the alleged incident as a whole and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.

Any person bringing a sexual harassment or exploitation complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment or church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

When a person suspects abuse or harassment, she/he will follow the procedures set out below.

Several approaches may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:

- a) The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual accused of sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse.

- b) The complainant can report the incident to a Rector, in an effort to resolve the matter informally.
- c) If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, or possible, or does not succeed, the complainant may request that the SCC institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:
  - i. The SCC shall advise the Rector and the wardens of the receipt of all complaints and shall keep them apprised of ongoing steps and actions taken. If either the Rector or a warden is the subject of the complaint; this notice requirement shall not apply as to that person.
  - ii. The SCC, as expeditiously as possible, shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged exploitation or abuse incident and from others who may have pertinent information, such as qualified professional consultants.
  - iii. The SCC shall make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. Where the finding is that sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse did not occur, the file shall be closed. Where a finding that sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse did occur, procedures as outlined in 6.4.1 shall be followed.

#### *6.4.1 In the event the SCC finds that abuse did occur*

In the event the SCC finds that sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse did occur, the parish will comply with any legal duties to report such conduct. In addition, such incidents shall immediately be reported to the insurer if appropriate.

Upon finding that sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse did occur, the Corporation shall take action which may include one or more of the following:

- a) A formal reprimand, with defined expectations for changed behaviour;
- b) Recommending or requiring psychological or psychiatric assessment, counselling and/or treatment;
- c) Probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
- d) Dismissal from employment or authorized volunteer position, and if the seriousness of the offense warrants, end the person's affiliation with, or membership in, the church.

- e) A written summary of the committee proceedings in such cases will be maintained indefinitely

The SCC may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions.

#### *6.4.2 Appeal Process*

If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the process leading to disposition of the matter by the committee, he or she has the right to appeal to the parish Corporation/Trustees.

Any such appeal must be made to the Parish Corporation/Trustees within 10 days of the decision of the SCC. The appeal must be in writing and clearly identify the basis of the appeal.

#### *6.5 Procedures for Suspected Child Abuse*

Apart from any legal requirements, the parish will make a report to appropriate authorities, if at any time the church has reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be an abused or neglected child. Any member of the church staff who becomes aware of facts or circumstances that child abuse or neglect has occurred or that there exists a substantial risk that child abuse or neglect may occur shall immediately report the matter to the Rector so that the church may take appropriate action in a timely manner.

#### *6.6 Clergy*

Apart from any disposition of the matter by the church, all allegations of behaviour which call into question the fitness for ministry of any Authorized Minister will be promptly forwarded to the Bishop.

## **Appendix I – Providing a Referral When Needed**

There are likely to be times in the course of a ministry when clergy or a layperson is not able to help the person to whom he or she is ministering as much as the person wants or needs. These situations are most likely to occur in one-on-one ministries of visiting, pastoral care, or counselling, and may result from a lack of skills or expertise in the special need area of the person being ministered to or from a lack of resources. It is the responsibility of the ministering individual to suggest an appropriate alternative source of care and to assist that person in contacting that source of care if necessary.

If the person would be better served through a government agency, a support group, a professional counsellor or a therapist, it is incumbent on the ministering individual to seek out an appropriate person or agency that is in a better position to help, and make this choice available to the person receiving care.

## **Appendix II – When to Provide a Referral or Seek Additional Help**

- 1) Always provide the person with a referral if the person asks to see someone else, or if he or she expresses a desire for additional help that you are unable to provide.
- 2) Always provide the person with a referral when a person shows signs of mental illness, psychosis, incoherence, severe depression, violent behaviour, alcohol or drug addiction, when a person makes suicidal or homicidal threats, or when a person shows suicidal tendencies.
- 3) Provide the person with a referral in situations involving physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.
- 4) Provide the person with a referral if you are unable to devote the necessary time to help the person, if you feel out of your depth in terms of experience or expertise, if you feel you don't properly understand the situation or the issues involved, or if you feel overwhelmed by the situation and unable to cope.
- 5) If you are unaware of or unable to determine an appropriate referral, contact ANiC administration for assistance.

## **Appendix III – Specific Guidelines When Conducting In-Home Visits**

There are a variety of reasons and circumstances that make meeting people in their own homes a necessary part of the church's ministry. When visiting shut-ins, preparing people for baptism, welcoming newcomers, conducting stewardship or planned giving campaigns, or responding to pastoral crises, it is often necessary and desirable to go to someone's home.

However, visiting people in their own homes presents its own set of challenges. Homes, by their nature, are private environments. Because a person tends to be more comfortable and relaxed in his or her own environment, this increased degree of relaxation may, in fact, make him or her more vulnerable. Also, because the person being visited is better able to control the situation in his or her own environment, he or she may hold a higher degree of power than the visitor. Visitors should be aware that they are potential victims of abuse when visiting someone's home and should take the necessary steps to protect themselves.

The following guidelines are meant to protect both parties in these situations - the visitor and the visited.

- 1) Always arrange the visit in advance. Establish a starting time and approximate ending time, as well as a clear purpose for the visit so that the individual knows exactly what to expect.
- 2) Make another person (secretary, spouse, colleague) aware of where you are going and when you can be expected to return.
- 3) Be respectful of people's time and do not overstay your welcome. When visiting a shut-in or some one who is ill, be particularly conscious of how they are feeling and avoid over-tiring them.
- 4) Keep the pastoral purpose of your visit in mind at all times. Do not attempt to unduly persuade or influence the person, particularly if he or she seems confused. Avoid offering advice about medication or medical treatment, and avoid arguing with, or agitating the person you are visiting.
- 5) Stay in the most public area of the home - the living room, family room, or kitchen. Avoid entering a person's bedroom unless a 3rd party is present in the home, and preferably only when the person is infirm or bed-ridden.

- 6) Choose a seat at a comfortable distance from the person you are talking to, avoid sitting next to them on a couch or sofa. Do not invite or initiate any unwanted or inappropriate physical contact.
- 7) Visitors should never engage in any form of sexual impropriety with those whom they are visiting. Sexual impropriety includes, but is not limited to, all forms of overt or covert seductive speech, gestures and behaviour as well as explicit sexual contact.
- 8) Do not agree to meet anyone in his or her own home if you sense your own personal safety may be compromised, or if you feel that there is the potential that a boundary may be crossed. If a person whom you don't know well asks for a meeting and you are at all suspicious, arrange to meet him or her at a church office, a coffee shop, or a local restaurant until you know him or her better.
- 9) When first arriving at a person's home, assess the situation for anything that may be out of the ordinary. Do not continue if the person is inappropriately dressed, under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or if a person or animal acts in a threatening or aggressive manner and is not properly restrained.
- 10) If the person acts strangely, says or does things that make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, or initiates inappropriate physical contact, tell them to stop, and then, re-establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. If the behaviour continues, excuse yourself, document what happened, and report it to your supervisor. Do not stay in a potentially dangerous or compromising situation.
- 11) If driving a person to appointments or errands is part of the stated ministry, drivers must hold a valid driver's license and insurance. Seat belts must be available for all passengers. Drivers must not have any alcohol or drugs in their system when driving. If possible, driving ministries should be team ministries to avoid being alone in a car with a vulnerable person.
- 12) Visitors must treat all confidential information and communications obtained while visiting as strictly confidential and should not disclose them to anyone except where required by law or where given written consent by the individual(s) involved. When discussing the confidential details of a particular situation with a supervisor, the identity of the people involved must be protected.

- 13) Except where the stated purpose of the visit is stewardship or planned giving, it is best not to accept gifts or donations when making in-home visits. Encourage the person to make his or her donation using the offering plate or by mailing it directly to the church. If the person insists on giving you a financial gift while you are there, provide a temporary written receipt. Duplicate receipts should be retained. All cheques are to be made payable to the church. Explain that the church will issue an official receipt at the appropriate time.
- 14) People should be encouraged to speak with their family and financial and legal advisors before making significant contributions in order to avoid allegations of undue influence or abuse of trust. Such encouragement should be recorded in an appropriate file.
- 15) Be aware of signs that a person may not be caring for him or herself as he or she should, and may require additional resources to assist him or her. Signs of personal neglect include, but are not limited to: a decrease in personal hygiene, wearing the same clothes all the time, particularly if they are stained or soiled, and periods of confusion, disorientation, or loss of memory.
- 16) If you become concerned about the well being of a person whom you are visiting, speak to your supervisor about trying to initiate contact with a family member in order to discuss the situation and recommend possible courses of action.