

# Guidelines for Abuse Prevention

## for GCRC Pastors, Council Members & Leaders

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES - See Green Binder in GCRC Office OR Policies and Guidelines section of the GCRC Council Manual (on church website).

RESPONDING TO ACCUSATION OF ABUSE – See Blue Binder in GCRC Office.

### General Guidelines

- Church leaders are always responsible to safeguard all church related relationships.
- Church leaders should always act and talk in such a way to prevent harm.
- Church leaders are not to act as surrogates; not a father, not a mother, not a spouse, not a child, not a therapist. A church leader must operate in his or her area of expertise, which as a church leader will usually be spiritual in nature.
- Church leaders must take care of themselves: and give adequate attention to their own spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing.
- Scriptures do not justify, minimize or rationalize conduct.
- Church leaders must not spend time alone or frequently with a parishioner as this places them and you at risk.
- **NUMBER ONE RULE according to our insurer, Robertson Hall, is that there be a SIX-month waiting period for new members to be a volunteer working with children/youth/elderly. Newcomers can volunteer in that capacity if they provide a reference from their previous church indicating that they were a member in good standing.**
- **If you hear an allegation of abuse from a child or about a child, it must be reported to the Children's Aid Society or the police– refer to blue binder in church office. If the allegation is from an adult – refer to the blue binder on "how to respond to allegations of abuse".**

### Specific Guidelines

- All pastors, elders, deacons, and pastoral care workers, should exercise good judgement when visiting alone with parishioners especially of the opposite sex in the privacy of their own homes. It is best to visit with another church member or in a public place whenever possible. If home visits are necessary, they should be done with 2 people – visits should be no longer than an hour per time and no more than once per week: after 3 visits if the issue remains that members should be referred to a licensed counselor. Georgetown CRC is a CAP Church. Shalem provides anonymous professional counselling at no charge through the **Congregational Assistance Plan**. Call Shalem directly at 1-866-347-0041.

- Restrict church office visits to no longer than an hour per time and no more than once per week, when another [staff] member is present in the building. After approximately 3 visits if the issue remains that member should be referred to a licensed counselor (CAP)
- Acknowledge the risk of meeting alone in a member's or leader's home.
- When visiting a member do not share a couch.
- Inform a secretary and/or spouse of your schedule. Report visits to church Council.
- When visiting a member in a hospital, do not close the door: remain visible from the doorway.
- For office visits the door should be fitted with a window and you should be visible through the door window
- Do not borrow money from or loan money to another member.
- Do not give or accept gifts of a personal or intimate nature, this could be a misinterpretation of affection.
- Limit the display of physical affection to a brief hug (when appropriate and only when others are present), a warm handshake, or pat on the back or arm. Offering or accepting more can be misunderstood as meaning something more than the given intention. Be respectful of other people's personal space.
- Never be alone, when visits are done with children and/or teens.
- Observe healthy boundaries when using technology.
- Church leaders should be familiar with Safe Church Policies for children, youth and Friendship, Transportation Policy, Social Media Policy and Off-Premises Policy.
- **All church leaders and council members are required to have current security clearances every 5 years.**

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