

## REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING CHILD ABUSE / NEGLECT PROTOCOLS

**CONSULTATION CALL** The investigation of child protection concerns is conducted by the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) and/or the police. When there is uncertainty whether a report should be made, MCFD can be called for advice. Callers should identify themselves but no other names should be given unless MCFD states that, based on what they've heard, a report is required. Individuals making a report are advised to make a record of the time, contact and nature of this child protection call.

*Section 13 and 14 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act are the legal guidelines to be followed regarding the protection of children.*

### **PROTECTION OF CHILDREN (Section 13)**

1. Protection of the child is required in the following circumstances if;
  - a) the child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed by the child's parent;
  - b) the child has been, or is likely to be, sexually abused or exploited by the child's parent;
  - c) the child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed, sexually abused or sexually exploited by another person and if the child's parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child;
  - d) the child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed because of neglect by the child's parent;
  - e) the child is emotionally harmed by:
    - i) the parent's conduct, or
    - ii) living in a situation where there is domestic violence by or towards a person with whom the child resides;
  - f) the child is deprived of necessary health care;
  - g) the child's development is likely to be seriously impaired by a treatable condition and the child's parent refuses to provide or consent to treatment;
  - h) the child's parent is unable or unwilling to care for the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care;
  - i) the child is or has been absent from home in circumstances that endanger the child's safety or well being;
  - j) the child's parent is dead and adequate provision has not been made for the child's care;
  - k) the child has been abandoned and adequate provision has not been made for the child's care.
  - l) If the child is in the care of a director or another person by agreement and the child's parent is unwilling or unable to resume care when the agreement is no longer in force.
- 1.1 A child has been or is likely to be sexually abused or sexually exploited if the child has been, or is likely to be a) encouraged or helped to engage in prostitution, or b) coerced or inveigled into engaging in prostitution.
- 1.2 The likelihood of physical harm to a child increases when the child is living in a situation where there is domestic violence by or towards a person with whom the child resides.

### **DUTY TO REPORT NEED FOR PROTECTION (Section 14)**

A person who has reason to believe that a child needs protection under section 13 must promptly report the matter to a director (MCFD) or the RCMP. No action for damages may be brought against a person for reporting information under this section unless the person knowingly reported false information.

A person who does not comply with this statutory obligation, or knowingly reports false information, commits an offence and is liable to a fine of up to \$10,000 or to imprisonment for up to 6 months, or to both.

## INTERVIEWING A CHILD AND REPORTING ISSUES

Once there is sufficient reason to believe there could be child protection concerns, do **NOT** continue interviewing the child. As you listen, ask general questions such as “*How did this happen?*” or perhaps, if there is the presence of injury, “*Who hurt you like this?*” Do **NOT** ask leading questions such as, “*Did your dad do this to you?*” In BC, a child is considered anyone under 19 years old.

Once there is sufficient reason for concern, conclude your meeting with the child and contact MCFD or the police (see “Procedures for Reporting and Investigating”). **Note:** the duty to report has not been fulfilled by reporting to anyone other than these two agencies. That means telling a supervisor such as a leader or pastor about the concern has not fulfilled your requirement to report. Details of all reports must be treated as confidential. For further information, see The Child Abuse Prevention Handbook noted in the conclusion.

## WHERE TO REPORT IN MAPLE RIDGE

MCFD	604-660-4927	24 hour Hotline	1 800 663-9122
RCMP	604 463-6251	Immediate danger	911

## PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING

**By law, a person having reason to believe that a child is in need of protection or has been abused, MUST report protection concerns.** Such reports are treated confidentially by MCFD and/or the police. The name of individuals making a protection report is not made known. Those impacted by such a report may guess and accuse an individual that he/she was responsible for making the report but the identity of who reports is **NOT** made known. Do not inadvertently confirm a guess by stating something like, “*By law, I had no choice*” rather redirect any such accusations to the Lead Pastor who will deal with these by redirecting them to MCFD/police.

## REPORTING ESSENTIALS

The responsibility to report **has not been fulfilled** by telling anyone other than MCFD or police. Telling someone else in authority about a protection concern has not discharged personal responsibility of making a report. If a person is troubled with making such a report, a co-report with a support person can be made. **By law** the support person, even someone in an ‘authority position’, cannot direct that a report not be made. If reasonable doubt exists whether a report should be made, this can be dealt with in a Consultation call to MCFD.

### ABUSE/NEGLECT OCCURRING IN CHILD’S HOME

Report protection concerns to **MCFD**. MCFD will notify the police.

As church policy, when staff or someone working in a volunteer position in the church has made such a report, the Lead Pastor is to be notified.

### COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

All communication with parents rests with MCFD in consultation with the police. If parents ask, they are to be directed to either of these two agencies. Under no circumstances are you to confirm that a report originated from the church.

### JOINT INVESTIGATION

MCFD and the police share joint responsibilities for conducting an investigation. Under no circumstances are church personnel to become involved in the investigative process.

## **ABUSE/NEGLECT OCCURRING WITH CHURCH PERSONNEL**

Report protection concerns to the **POLICE**.

By policy, the Superintendent or designate of the Canadian Pacific District Christian and Missionary Alliance (604-372-1922) is also informed of such a report. In consultation with the police, he will determine what church personnel should be notified. Any notification of church staff, including informing the Lead Pastor, would come from him.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

All communication with parents rests with the police. If parents ask, they are to be directed to the police. Under no circumstances are you to confirm that a report originated from the church.

### **INVESTIGATION**

The police assume the responsibilities for conducting an investigation under provisions in the Criminal Code of Canada. Staff are to cooperate with the police in their investigation.

## **ABUSE/NEGLECT OCCURRING WITH OTHER ADULTS**

Report protection concerns to the **POLICE**.

All processes including 'Communication with Parents' and the 'Investigation' are similar to Abuse/Neglect occurring with Church Personnel except, different from church policy, the Lead Pastor would be informed.

## **ABUSE OCCURRING WITH OTHER CHILDREN**

When a child is harmed by another child, report concerns to the Ministry Pastor in charge and to the Lead Pastor. Parents are to be notified EXCEPT in the case where, based on what has occurred, MCFD or the police need to be involved. For example, if the severity of the offense warrants, and/or what has happened is troubling and there is a significant age difference between those involved, the police or MCFD may need to be contacted. In this case, a Consultation call could be warranted. This is especially true if a child were harmed in a manner that suggests that the perpetrator may have been the victim of abuse.

## **WARNING SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE**

- Behavior changes - fear, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, aggression, afraid, nervous.
- Overly sexualized behavior
- Use of explicit sexual language that's age inappropriate

## **SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE**

- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, welts, bumps, fractures, burns or broken bones
- Injuries that don't match explanations
- Injuries that are left untreated - medical and dental

## **SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

- Over sexualized behavior or sexual interest that's inappropriate to the child's age is the biggest red flag / sign of sexual abuse
- Use of explicit sexual language that's age inappropriate
- Trouble walking, sitting, running, or doing normal activities
- Abusing other children

## **SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

- Loss of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-image
- Delayed emotional development
- Social withdrawal or loss of interest / enthusiasm for things they previously enjoyed
- Symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, pain without any medical cause
- Desperately seeks attention and love
- Attempt to run away or escape

## **SIGNS OF GENERAL CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

- Poor hygiene
- Poor growth/weight gain
- Lack of adequate clothing (shoes wrong size, holes in clothing, not weather appropriate)
- Taking / stealing food, money or other things without permission
- Hiding food for later
- Emotional and physical outbursts that are out of context or inappropriate
- Obvious lack of medical, dental, or psychological care