Child Protection Protocols For Churches in Barbados

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Introduction

The *Declaration of The Young Persons of the Caribbean* in Kingston, Jamaica on 15 May, 2012 stated that “violence against children is a norm or tradition in the region that is being passed on to generations, and therefore drastic preventive actions need to be adopted.”

The *Conference on Combatting Sexual Violence Against Children in the Caribbean* held in Bridgetown, Barbados 20-21 November, 2012 expressed concern that “efforts to prevent and stop the sexual abuse of children are undermined by a range of factors including deficiencies in the law, lax enforcement of the law, corruption and collusion, theological interpretations, gender norms and power relations, political interference, a culture of secrecy and silence, inadequate public education and sensitisation, lack of political will, poor coordination among child protection agencies, and a lack of multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary approaches to identifying and preventing the sexual abuse of children.”

Christian communities are not immune to child abuse as has been repeatedly demonstrated in the global media. Barbados is not unique in this respect. It has therefore become necessary for churches to agree on and implement clear protocols for the on-going protection of our families and children.

Defining Child Protection

Barbados has signed and ratified the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. According to that Convention:

*Article 1:* “A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”

*Article 19.1:* “States parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child”.

Save the Children defines child protection as “measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children.”

On its website UNICEF includes this definition of child protection in one of its documents: “A broad term to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the

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current context, it applies particularly to the duty of organisations—and individuals associated with those organisations—towards children in their care.”

Abuse happens to children of all ages, from any social background or ethnic group. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. The abuse of children can occur in all communities and is most likely to occur within families and by people known to the child.2

As far back as 1765 Sir William Blackstone in his Commentaries on the Laws of England wrote that parents owe their children three duties: “maintenance, protection, and education”.

**Scripture References**

Jesus was very clear about how He viewed children and their protection.

Matthew 18:10, “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 19:14, “Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'”

Mark 9:42, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.”

There is also the general injunction for due care of children:

Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

The Christian Scriptures also see children as a reward:

Psalms 127:3-5, “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.”

The Church places “a high value on children. In the light of the Bible they are seen as precious gifts from God entrusted to the care of parents, family, community of faith and society-at-large.”

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3 All Scripture references are from the New King James Bible unless otherwise stated.
Christians believe each person has a value and dignity which comes from God’s creation of male and female in God’s own image and likeness. Christians see this as fulfilled by God’s re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect than from harm.\(^5\)

**Duty of Care**

The Church, as a community of Christians, has an ethical, legal and spiritual responsibility to ensure the safety and protection of children and adolescents in its care whether through Sunday school, junior church, vacation Bible school, uniformed groups or any other children and youth programmes conducted within the Christian community. “To not do so, makes us accomplices to child … abuse and contributes to its victims’ voicelessness in a way that sanctions their disempowerment, marginalisation and the violation of their rights.”\(^6\) The Church must therefore seek to “prevent any form of child abuse … and protect employees and volunteers from false allegations.”\(^7\)

Jesus talked of the kingdom of God belonging to children. He gave them status, time and respect. A Christian approach to safeguarding children therefore asks both individuals and communities to create a safe environment for them, to act promptly on any complaints made, to care for those who have been abused in the past, and to minister appropriately to those who have abused.\(^8\)

The Christian community will seek to ensure the suitability of all persons asked to work with children and youth in all aspects of ministry and all such persons will be required to be knowledgeable about these protocols and their implementation.

All allegations of abuse must be taken seriously, fully considered and properly investigated. Guilt cannot be presumed as there is potential for the abuse of these protocols by someone making a malicious complaint.

The Christian community will not impede any criminal, professional or regulatory investigation into the abuse of children within its care but reserves the right to conduct internal investigations regardless of the outcome of any other investigation.

Reports of abuse will be treated with confidentiality. Barbados is moving towards mandatory reporting and when such laws are enacted the Christian community is expected to abide by the legal stipulation to report.

**Commitments**

The Church is committed to:

\(^5\) Model Church Policies. 2010. The Methodist Church (UK).
\(^6\) Jones, Adele D., Editor. 2013. Understanding Child Sexual Abuse: Perspectives From The Caribbean. Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, p.4
\(^8\) A Safe Church. 2008. Anglican Diocese of Southwark (UK).
 Hayward Church

The importance of the welfare of each child and zero tolerance of child abuse.
- Every child being able to participate in relevant church programmes within a safe environment whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin or religious belief.
- Caring and nurturing each child through respectful pastoral ministry.
- Creating an environment which is welcoming, respectful and safe from abuse.
- Valuing, listening to and respecting children and youth.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm and degrading treatment and respecting their rights, wishes and feelings.
- Taking seriously and responding appropriately and without delay to all suspicions and allegations of poor practices and/or abuse.
- Ensuring that all persons working with children through the programmes of the church will be recruited with regard to their suitability for these responsibilities and will be provided with guidance and training in good practice and child protection procedures.
- Reviewing and updating these protocols and principles from time to time.
Types of Abuse

It is important to understand that just because one warning sign of abuse is seen it does not automatically mean that child abuse is taking place. It is essential to look for a pattern of abusive behaviour and warning signs.

The following facts about abuse are based on research findings and highlight issues relating to the different categories of abuse:\(^9\)

- Most children are abused by adults they know and trust.
- The reported cases of child abuse are a small proportion of the cruelty, exploitation and neglect to which children in our society are subjected.
- Disabled children are more vulnerable to abuse; they are more dependent on intimate care and sometimes less able to tell anyone or escape from abusive situations.
- Children very seldom make false accusations of abuse, and will often deny the abuse or take back an accusation after they have made it.
- Children who talk about the abuse fear the consequences of telling – if things are bad, perhaps they may get worse.
- Children and young people who are abused can be very good at hiding their unhappiness and distress.
- Abuse has serious long-term harmful effects on children and young people. If untreated, the effects of abuse on children can be devastating and continue into adulthood.
- The Child Care Board will only remove children from their home where there is actual, or risk of, significant harm and if the child is in real danger of further abuse.
- Child sexual abuse is equally common among all social classes, professions, cultures and ethnic groups.

1. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity between an adult and a child. A child may also be sexually abused by another child. It involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Barbados has established that a person under the age of 16 cannot give consent to sexual activity. All such activity is therefore against the law and subject to legal sanction in a Court of Law.

There is a belief that when a young person reaches the age of consent they can willingly engage in sexual activities and that a sexual relationship at that age does not constitute abuse. Mutual consent presumes that the persons involved are on an equal

\(^9\) A Safe Church. 2008. Anglican Diocese of Southwark (UK)
footing with each other so that one person is not pressured by the position or authority of the other person. Where unequal power exists mutual consent may not in fact be a reality.

Examples of sexual abuse:

Physical:

- Fondling or touching a child’s genitals.
- Making a child touch an adult’s or other child’s genitals, even outside of clothing.
- Penetration, attempted penetration or any genital-to-genital contact including anal sexual intercourse.
- Oral contact with genitals involving a child and an adult or older child.
- Encouraging a child to masturbate or even masturbating the child.

Non-physical:

- Indecent exposure or exhibitionism (for example, deliberately displaying genitals for the view of children).
- Talking to a child about sex for inappropriate reasons, telling sexual stories or tales of sexual exploits.
- Allowing a child to watch or hear sexual acts or materials.
- Showing pornography or other inappropriate sexual material to a child.
- Making sexually oriented phone calls to a child.
- Sending sexually oriented email or text messages to a child.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child.

Exploitive:

- Child pornography – photographs, films, videos, internet sites or ‘live’ performances of children in sexual activities or poses.
- Child prostitution/transactional sex – children are paid by adults for sexual services. Payment may be money, food, drugs or things like clothes, shoes and cell phones.
- Internet exploitation – adults using email or websites to find children to sexually abuse.

Signs that sexual abuse may be occurring:

- Child reports having been sexually abused; may retract story later.
- Detailed and age-inappropriate interest in and understanding of sexual behaviour.
- Pregnancy.
- The presence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- Frequent headaches and/or stomach aches. This may include vomiting and
having difficulty swallowing.

- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing.
- Injury to the genital area, including bleeding, swelling or irritation.
- Pain when sitting and/or walking.
- Pain and/or difficulty with urinary and/or bowel functions.
- Unexplained trouble sleeping – nightmares, disturbed sleep patterns.
- Sudden drop in grades at school, trouble concentrating and/or often absences from school.
- Unexplained change in eating habits – overeating or refusing to eat.
- On-going emotional problems – depression, anxiety, fear, anger, moodiness, acting out.
- Self-destructive tendencies – self-mutilation, or deliberately harming him/herself.
- Low self-respect.
- Alcohol or other substance abuse.
- Withdrawal from friends and family including running away.

2. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is trauma or physical injury to a child caused by punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning or otherwise harming a child. It involves physical harm or injury to the child. It can also result from severe discipline, such as using a belt on a child, or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age or physical condition. “Physical abuse is any injury to a child which has been caused by other than accidental means, including any injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation of the injury.”

Examples of physical abuse:

- Cuffing, shaking, and shoving.
- Pulling a child's hair or ear.
- Banging a child against a wall.
- Throwing objects at a child.
- Biting and pinching.
- Suffocating.
- Forcing obnoxious substances into a child’s mouth, poisoning.
- Hitting a child with a belt, electrical cord or stick.
- Burning a child with scalding water or cigarettes.
- Giving a child alcohol or inappropriate/recreational drugs.

Signs that physical abuse may be occurring:

- Frequent injuries with unconvincing or inconsistent explanations.
- Bald patches on head due to hair pulling.
Bruises around the face and mouth.
Hand marks, fingerprints, bruises, swollen areas, pinch marks, human bite marks on any part of the body.
Cigarette or other burns.
Marks from a belt, electrical wire or stick.
Multiple bruises at various stages of healing, implying repeated episodes of injuries to the child.
Fear of going home and/or constant running away from home.
Discomfort with physical contact; shies away from touch.
Wearing inappropriate clothing to hide injuries, e.g. long sleeves on a very hot day.

Physical abuse vs. Discipline:

In physical abuse, unlike physical forms of discipline, the following elements are present:

- Unpredictability. The child never knows what is going to set the parent off. There are no clear boundaries or rules. The child is constantly walking on eggshells, never sure what behaviour will trigger a physical assault.
- Lashing out in anger. Physically abusive parents act out of anger and the desire to assert control, not the motivation to lovingly teach the child. The angrier the parent, the more intense the abuse.
- Using fear to control behaviour. Parents who are physically abusive may believe that their children need to fear them in order to behave, so they use physical abuse to “keep their child in line.” However, what children are really learning is how to avoid being hit, not how to behave or grow as individuals.

Correction characterised by severe, punitive, dictatorial control often leads to resentment and rebellion. Such harsh discipline is also associated with heightened risk for physical and psychological harm to children as well as increased likelihood the youth will resort to coercion and violence in solving their differences.\(^\text{11}\)

3. Neglect

“Child neglect is defined as a type of maltreatment related to the failure to provide needed, age-appropriate care. Neglect is usually typified by an on-going pattern of inadequate care and is readily observed by individuals in close contact with the child.”\(^\text{12}\)

It is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development.\(^\text{13}\)

The Salvation Army has defined neglect as “persistent failure to provide for the child’s

\(^{11}\text{ Child Protection Policy and Guidelines. 2012. Oregon Conference of Seventh Day Adventists.}\)
\(^{12}\text{http://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/child-neglect accessed 2012/12/18}\)
\(^{13}\text{A Safe Church. 2008. Anglican Diocese of Southwark (UK)}\)
basic needs, both physical and emotional.”

Examples of neglect:

- Failure to provide adequate food and housing.
- Lack of appropriate supervision.
- Abandonment
- Failure to provide necessary medical care.
- Inadequate hygiene or clothing.
- Inattention to a child’s emotional needs necessary for normal development.
- Allowing a child to ingest alcohol or illegal chemical substances.

Signs that neglect may be occurring:

- Clinical signs of deprivation: severe diaper rash, impetigo, lice, diarrhoea, vomiting anaemia, recurring respiratory illness, dehydration.
- Inadequate clothing, underfeeding.
- Lack of adult supervision.
- Developmental lags.
- Physical underdevelopment.
- Pasty, dull complexion;
- Tired – lethargic, listless appearance.
- Poor dental care.
- No immunisation or preventive care.
- Poor personal hygiene.

4. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is any verbal communication that harms a child. This kind of abuse can involve threats, insults, extreme punishment, name-calling, blaming and more. Basically, anything that makes the child feel horrible inside. While emotional abuse doesn’t involve physical pain or sexual acts, the effects of emotional abuse can hurt far worse and cause a lifetime of psychological problems.15

The Anglican Diocese of Southwark defines emotional abuse as “the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development.”16 The Salvation Army defines it as “deliberate or careless actions that cause or result in repeated humiliation, emotional trauma, fear or intimidation.”17

Examples of emotional abuse:
Verbal assaults with name calling, e.g. “stupid”, “worthless”, “a mistake”, “you just like your father/mother”.
- Sarcastic putdowns or belittling, especially in front of other people.
- Use of derogatory, threatening, derisive or demeaning language, e.g. “I brought you into this world and I can take you out.”
- Unnecessary shouting.
- Terrorising, stimulating fear, making threats of extreme punishments.
- Constant inappropriate and/or unwarranted criticism.
- Inappropriate socialising through reinforcement and encouragement of aggression, substance abuse, sexual acting out, delinquent and criminal activity.
- Unrealistic expectations of a child academically, physically, socially.
- Violent and/or obscene language.
- Deliberately withholding affection and love.
- Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Signs that emotional abuse may be occurring:

- Lags in physical, mental, social and emotional development.
- Personality, sleep, eating and speech disorders.
- Low self-esteem, feelings of shame and guilt, unusual fears, negative statements about self.
- Persistent nightmares.
- Difficulties in developing healthy interpersonal relationships with other children and/or adults, withdrawn, intensely watchful, especially of adults.
- Craves attention.
- Inability to trust, discomfort with physical contact and/or closeness.
- Self-destructive behaviour such as cutting self, suicidal tendencies.
- Low enthusiasm and perseverance.
- Aggressiveness, bullying others, cruel to others.
- Problems with school work.
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse.
- Sexual promiscuity.
- Psychosomatic illnesses.

Emotional abuse accompanies all other forms of child abuse but does not necessarily indicate that other abuse is taking place.

5. Bullying

Bullying is deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. Bullying may be perpetrated by another child or an adult.\(^\text{18}\) There is no clear boundary between bullying and abuse and

a significant number of offenders are themselves minors. Young perpetrators of abuse are still children and are entitled to have their needs considered though steps may need to be taken to protect other children.  

Examples of bullying:

- Physical – e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping, stealing.
- Verbal – e.g. racist remarks, name-calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages, abusive messages on other social media, persistent teasing.
- Emotional – e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group.
- Sexual – unwanted physical attack or sexually abusive comments.

Signs that bullying may be taking place:

- The child reports that he/she is being bullied.
- An increased expression of fear.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.
- Behavioural changes, e.g. reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed or tearful.
- An unexplained drop off in performance.
- Physical signs, e.g. stomach aches, headaches, difficulty sleeping, bed wetting, scratches and bruises, damaged clothes and sudden bingeing.
Factors that Can Contribute to Abuse

Children do not ask for abuse. Abuse is NEVER the child’s fault.
Not all abuse is deliberate or intended.

1. Home

Many forms of abuse arise from a lack of understanding of appropriate child rearing practices or involve immature parents who were themselves subjected to poor parenting or other stresses in the home. Home situations that could precipitate child abuse include:

- Single parent without adequate emotional, financial and extended family support systems.
- Chaotic home life without routine or order.
- Adult or older sibling abusing alcohol and/or drugs.
- Pre-existing violence within the family unit including high parental conflict.
- Geographic and/or social isolation.
- Overcrowding in the home.
- Adult unemployment leading to financial and other stresses including homelessness.
- Depression, psychosis or mental challenges in parent.
- Parent with low self-esteem and/or poor control over their emotions often resulting in low tolerance of frustration.
- Parents’ fanatical religious beliefs.
- Poor parent-child interaction.
- Inaccurate knowledge and expectations about child development.

2. Culture

Some forms of abuse can arise from established cultural beliefs:

- Children are property.
- Children should be seen and not heard.
- Parents have the right to control their children in any way they wish.
- Children need to be toughened up to face the hardships of life.
- Having a child is seen as a “rite of passage” to adulthood.

3. Education

Some forms of child abuse are mislabelled as behaviour management in an educational setting. Actions that are abusive rather than corrective include:

- Cuffing and/or shaking a child.
- Shutting a child in a closet.
Forcing a child to remain sitting, standing or motionless for extended periods of time.
Denying a child the use of a toilet.
Taping a child's mouth shut.
Using sarcastic put-downs when speaking to a child, especially publicly.
Ignoring a child who needs help.
Making a child the butt of teacher's jokes.
Humiliating a child in front of others.

4. Community

Child abuse can also be generated by societal factors:

- Lack of access to adequate medical care, child care, and social services.
- Exposure to racism/discrimination.
- Inadequate school environments.
- Exposure to environmental toxins.
- Dangerous/violent neighbourhoods.
- On-going community violence.
- Unemployment.
Reporting Situations of Concern

All reports of child abuse must be treated with confidentiality and respect. There are times when people make reports of abuse simply to cause problems for the alleged abuser. It is important, therefore, that reports be thoroughly investigated in as objective a manner as possible. The only agency in Barbados which is legally tasked with investigating child abuse is the Child Care Board.

All persons working with children and youth under the age of 18 within the context of church programmes and projects have a responsibility to ensure that these children are protected while in the care of the church and to raise issues that have to do with their care and safety. They have a responsibility to:

- Be familiar with this policy and process for reporting.
- Know who to contact within the church and governmental agencies to express concerns.
- Become knowledgeable about the indicators of abuse.
- Be observant.
- Promote equity and fairness in responding to reports/allegations of abuse.
- Understand that in serious situations there may be an obligation under law to report the issue to governmental agencies.

Principles of Reporting

- All concerns and allegations MUST be reported appropriately to the person in charge.
- Strong emotions can be aroused by child abuse but it is necessary that incidents be handled as dispassionately as possible.
- Loyalties to colleagues and the church cannot be allowed to cloud how reports are made and subsequently handled.
- Concerns need to be clearly expressed so that they can be properly investigated.
- Those who express concerns in good faith need the assurance that they will not be penalised for doing so.
- Issues need to be managed with sensitivity for the person reporting, the alleged abuser and the child involved.
- Guilt must not be presumed. There is potential for abuse of this procedure by someone making a malicious complaint.
- Where investigations require the involvement of governmental agencies, law enforcement or the legal system they cannot be kept confidential.
- Issues need to be resolved quickly in order to protect children and young people.
- Those who have reported concerns/incidents of child abuse need to know that their disclosure is being investigated.
- It is important that reports or allegations of abuse are investigated expeditiously. Failure to consistently do this will result in the emergence of a culture of silence.
that in turn will allow abuse to flourish.

- Some situations (e.g., bullying by an older child) can be resolved at an informal level but church staff and volunteers are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All allegations must be shared with the Child Care Board.
- The Child Care Board has the legal responsibility to investigate all child abuse referrals.

Reports of Abuse Taking Place Outside of the Immediate Church Environment

There are times when a child or other person may report or suspect abuse is taking place outside of the church environment, e.g., the home or school. In such cases, the person receiving the report:

- Shall immediately inform the priest/pastor.
- The priest/pastor shall immediately inform the head of the denomination.
- The priest/pastor shall immediately submit the report to the Child Care Board and shall liaise with the Board on how to inform the parents of the child involved.

Procedure for Reporting

Step 1 – Initial Report

Children and youth generally talk to someone they trust regardless of that individual’s position. If a child reports that he/she is being abused:

- A report is not an established fact of guilt but rather a request for assessment of the safety and condition of a child. It is the beginning of a helping process for children and families.
- Stay calm so as not to frighten the child.
- Reassure the child that he/she is not to blame and making the report is the right thing to do.
- Listen to the child showing that he/she is being taken seriously.
- Inform the child that you must tell others so as to ensure the abuse stops.
- Make sure the safety of the child is given priority.
- Refer the child to medical personnel if there is need for medical attention.

Report from child, youth, volunteer worker or church member:

- The person receiving the information shall fill out the Incident Report Form and immediately draw it to the attention of the head of the relevant department within the local church. If the report involves a volunteer working within the church that individual shall immediately be placed on administrative leave until the matter can be properly investigated and resolved.
- Where a Christian leader is accused of child abuse there will be the presumption of innocence until the investigation proves otherwise. However, for the protection
of the child and the accused as well as the integrity of the ministry of the church, the accused person shall immediately be suspended from his/her duties and every effort shall be made to have the matter investigated thoroughly and expeditiously to ascertain the truth and develop a proper solution. The alleged abuser is not to be allowed contact on church premises with the child allegedly abused.

♦ If the head of department is the person implicated in the report, the completed Incident Report Form shall be sent directly to the pastor of the church. The head of department shall immediately be placed on administrative leave until the matter can be properly investigated and resolved.

♦ If the pastor/priest or other similar leader of the church is the person implicated in the report, the completed Incident Report Form shall be sent directly to the national head of the denomination. The pastor/priest/leader shall immediately be placed on administrative leave until the matter can be properly investigated and resolved.

♦ Persons on administrative leave can only be reinstated when the matter has been thoroughly resolved. If found guilty, those persons are not to be allowed continued involvement with ministry to children within the church environment.

♦ When recording the report of a child who alleges abuse the person recording the report must be extremely careful to avoid putting thoughts into the child’s head or words into the child’s mouth. If a police investigation subsequently determines that the questions asked of the child clouded the evidence it may be difficult or impossible to properly resolve the issue.

♦ Try to ascertain the name and address of the alleged perpetrator.

♦ Record the circumstances in which the original disclosure of the concern was made.

♦ Record what you are told as accurately as possible using the child’s words. Do not interpret or embellish. Record the facts as they are told to you.

♦ Do not make snap judgements. An abused child will often not share all details at once. Trust needs to be established. The situation may be more complex or severe than it first appears.

♦ Record what you say to the child.

♦ Record what actions you have taken.

♦ Sign the report and date it.

If you observe injuries or behaviours in children which are consistent with those described in section on Types of Abuse you should:

♦ Ask open questions about any injuries you observe.

♦ Note what the child or adult says in response.

♦ Carefully record your observations as soon as possible following the guidelines in Step 1, notify the appropriate person as in Step 1 and keep the record in a secure place.
Step 2 – Review

♦ When a concern is first raised the person receiving the Incident Report Form will interview the person registering the concern as soon as possible but within 24 hours. This interview will be documented in writing on the Interview Report Form.
♦ An objective determination shall be made based on the interview and other relevant data as to whether the incident is minor and can be resolved within the local congregation or serious enough to warrant referral to the Child Care Board.
♦ If the incident is deemed minor, the matter may be resolved internally within the local congregation. However, a full written report must be filed with the denominational head within 48 hours of the matter being resolved.
♦ If the incident is not minor, the Child Care Board must be immediately informed.
♦ In all cases the head of the denomination must be informed immediately whether or not the Child Care Board’s intervention is sought. In such cases, within 48 hours copies of the Incident Report Form and the Interview Report Form shall be sent to the head of denomination under confidential cover.

Principles for a Preliminary Interview of an Alleged Abuser

♦ The Child Care Board is the only agency in Barbados that can legally intervene in cases of child abuse and nothing should be done that would subsequently hinder the Board in carrying out effective investigations of alleged abuse.
♦ If a preliminary interview with the alleged abuser is deemed necessary, a second person should always be at the interview, if possible someone with authority in the local church or denomination.
♦ Interview the accused privately and at a time when there will be no interruptions.
♦ State clearly and unemotionally that a concern has been expressed.
♦ For the safety of all, do not indicate who made the allegation.
♦ Give an indication of the circumstances in which the event took place and ask for the accused person’s memory of the incident.
♦ Record the responses using his/her own words. Do not interpret or embellish. The Interview Report Form can be used to record the interview.

Step 3 – Response

♦ When a complaint is substantiated in whole or in part against a church member, appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken against the abuser in accordance with the relevant policies of the denomination and the Child Care Board and head of denomination will be immediately notified.
♦ Discipline may involve removal from involvement in working with children, suspension of membership or termination of membership in the local church.
♦ Persons involved in incidents that have been referred to the Child Care Board will be subject to the decisions of the Board in addition to disciplinary action within the church.
♦ The review and assessment is the critical step in the management of reports of abuse. It must be done carefully, thoroughly and prayerfully. Both the accused
and the accuser need to be dealt with in a fair and objective manner.

- Dismissing a report as probably unfounded or a minor issue without proper investigation could result in a child being subjected to continued abuse. Also, if it is determined at a later date that the concern was brought to the attention of the church and was not addressed, there could be legal consequences.
- The handling of a situation in a high profile manner when it could be managed discreetly internally, or presuming guilt before a thorough investigation is done, could result in serious professional, social and personal consequences for the accused.
- Where an external investigation is instituted by the Child Care Board the local church and denomination will give full cooperation at all times.
- Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

Step 4 – Resolution

- Whether a report of abuse has been substantiated or not, the person who reported the issue will be informed that an investigation has been completed. Individuals need to be supported for their courage in reporting a concern. They also need to know that the church takes the protection of children seriously and will respond quickly to allegations of abuse. However, details of the investigation are not to be shared.
- A final detailed written report must be submitted to the head of denomination within 48 hours and the denomination will maintain a central registry of incidents outlining concerns reported and how those concerns were resolved.
- Situations requiring investigation and action inevitably result in concern and anxiety within the local church. Church leaders are advised to use the opportunity to review this policy with youth workers and employees to ensure they understand the directives and the consequences of infringement.
- It can also be an opportunity to review with children and youth the intent of this policy and the importance of talking to someone about situations that make them uncomfortable.

Step 5 – After a referral to the Child Care Board:

- Co-operate with the Child Care Board:
  - Don’t interfere.
  - Be guided by them before any further action is taken.
  - Attend multi-agency strategy meetings if invited.
- With advice from the Child Care Board, ensure that those who need support are offered it.
- Try to remain non-judgemental and don’t take sides.
- Don’t gossip and try to stop others gossiping about the issue.
- Carry out a risk assessment on your activities. Could risks be reduced to prevent
a similar situation arising in the future?\textsuperscript{20}

\ding{51} All press enquiries must be directed to the head of the denomination.

\textsuperscript{20} A Safe Church. 2008. Anglican Diocese of Southwark (UK).
Guidelines for Creating Child-Safe Ministry

It is not possible to completely and always protect children from potentially harmful circumstances. During the course of daily activities and interactions with others, situations may develop that provide the potential for abusive behaviours to occur. However, it is possible to minimise risks in churches by adhering to some general guidelines.

It must be stressed that while these guidelines can minimise the potential for the abuse of children and youth, they also provide protection for child/youth workers. False allegations can and do occur for a variety of reasons. Church leaders and employees are not exempt from these allegations. The ensuing investigation can be exhausting. Without a witness for your defence it can be difficult to prove your innocence.

1. Commit to the basic practice and philosophy of providing safe environments for children and youth participating in the ministry of the church.
   ♦ Once accepted by a denomination or congregation, this protocol should not be considered optional for ministry units within that denomination or congregation.
   ♦ This policy seeks to incorporate the theology of a loving Heavenly Father expressed through compassion and service.
   ♦ It is the responsibility of all persons having contact with children participating in church programmes to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If, in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists such persons shall immediately take appropriate precautions under the circumstances to protect all children. Nothing contained in any other church policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed to relieve persons having contact with children from this responsibility.\(^\text{21}\)
   ♦ It is acknowledged that a protocol and education about that protocol will not necessarily deter an abuser. However, the protocol will alert persons to the signs of abuse and provide a course of action to be followed for the protection of an abused child.
   ♦ A clear glass window will be installed in the door of all rooms typically occupied by children.\(^\text{22}\)

2. Require all staff, volunteers, child/youth workers and members to be familiar with this protocol.
   ♦ Once adopted, all child/youth workers within church programmes are required to be familiar with this protocol.
   ♦ A copy of this protocol shall be kept in an accessible place where it can be reviewed by those who wish to report suspected abuse.
   ♦ Training sessions based on this protocol shall be provided at the denominational

\(^{\text{21}}\) *Child Protection Policy, Baptist Church (Texas).*
\(^{\text{22}}\) Ibid.
and local church level on a regular basis to ensure all personnel are knowledgeable on the protocol and its implementation.

3. **Create a process in each ministry unit that makes it safe and possible for staff, volunteers and children/youth to report concerns.**

   - Introduce the protocol openly and in a positive manner.
   - Speak about it frankly so people can become familiar with it.
   - Establish a clear process within each ministry unity for those who need to voice concerns about a child being abused.
   - Receive all expressions of concern with respect.

4. **Choose child/youth workers/volunteers with care.**

   - It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable persons from working with children. This applies to both paid staff and volunteers, whether part time or full time. The church must ensure careful selection and recruitment of ordained and lay ministers, voluntary workers and paid workers with children and young people.
   - Anyone with a previous conviction for offenses related to the abuse of children is automatically excluded from working with children. Requesting a Police Certificate of Character is sometimes the only way a past criminal record is brought to light.
   - New members who express a desire to work with children and youth must have been a member of the local church for a minimum of six months before beginning ministry with children/youth. This period allows for better evaluation of the suitability of the applicant for working with children.\(^{23}\)
   - New workers/volunteers must be supervised for a minimum of three to six months after appointment.
   - All persons volunteering to work with children and youth should complete the Application for Work With Children and Youth. References are to be contacted. A Sample Letter For Requesting a Reference has been provided as well as a Reference Form. If the volunteer is accepted, the Volunteer Agreement Form must be completed. While this can be perceived as cumbersome paperwork, in the event of an abusive incident occurring the documents provide evidence of a desire and effort to protect.
   - Persons convicted of committing child abuse will not serve as volunteers or staff working in any church sponsored activity or programme for children/youth.

5. **Plan ministry to children/youth in a way that will minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.**

   - Child/youth workers/volunteers are not to be left alone with a child or teenager where there is little or no opportunity for the activity to be observed by others. If a

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\(^{23}\) *Child Protection Policy.* Baptist Church (Texas).
separate room is used the door will remain open. Install glass panels in doors to rooms where children will be accommodated during the programmes at the church.

- Child/youth workers/volunteers are not to meet a child or young person off church premises alone. If a meeting off church premises is necessary, the ministry unit’s head and the child/youth’s parent/guardian are to be made fully aware of the meeting and its purpose and at least two unrelated adults will be present.
- Never leave a child or group of children unattended. Provide appropriate adult supervision at all times. When children/youth meet for ministry, whether on church premises or off, at least two unrelated adults are to accompany them regardless of the group’s size or activity.
- Pay attention if an adult shows a greater than normal interest in a child e.g., such as buying a child special gifts for no apparent reason.
- Pay attention if a child indicates that he/she does not want to be with a particular person.

6. Persons working with infants and small children are required to take special care.

- Diapers may be changed in a separate room but doors will be always kept open.
- Small children are to be toileted in such a way that the privacy of the child is respected but the procedure can be discreetly observed. The door should be left open.
- No older child shall be permitted to take a younger child to the bathroom unless those children are siblings and the procedure can be discreetly observed.

7. Children need physical touch. It can bring them reassurance, a feeling of being cared for, comfort and safety. However, this activity has the potential for misinterpretation. Touch must be appropriate and safe.

- Touch must be related to the child’s needs and not those of the adult.
- Touch must be age appropriate. Affirm children with appropriate touching by keeping hugs brief and “shoulder-to-shoulder” or “side-by-side”. Always keep hands at (not below) shoulder level. A caregiver’s kiss should be on the forehead or cheek only. For small children who like to sit on laps, encourage them to sit next to you.
- Children and youth have a right to decide how much or little physical contact they have with others. Except in unusual circumstances, such as the need for medical attention, their wishes are to be respected.
- Touching may be acceptable in a public setting or in a group where activities are visible. It is not appropriate behind closed doors or in an unobservable location.

8. Vigilance must be exercised in situations where children and youth have access to computers and the internet.
Pornographic sites and chat rooms have the potential to draw children into dangerous activities. Some will groom the child, gain trust and then may attempt to set up a meeting with the child.

9. Guidelines for leaders in communicating electronically.24

- If teenagers want you to give you their mobile phone numbers, e-mail addresses or similar, and communicate with them this way, make sure that their parents know and have agreed.
- Only make contact with young people for reasons related to the work of the church.
- Only give personal contact details to young people that are within the public domain of the church, including your mobile telephone number.
- Be circumspect in your communications with young people to avoid any possible misinterpretation of your motives or any behaviour which could be construed as “grooming” those children for subsequent abusive acts.
- Be careful how you sign off: consider, for instance, how ‘love’ and ‘XXX’ might be perceived and interpreted by the young person.

10. Educate children and youth about how to keep themselves safe. This can be done in an informal, positive way without instilling unnecessary anxiety.

- Talk to them about: Appropriate and inappropriate touch
  Appropriate interactions with strangers
  The safety of group activities
  Internet dangers
- Ensure that if an incident occurs children and youth know how to deal with it and who to talk to within the church or ministry unit.

11. When children are injured.

- Keep a written record of any injury that may occur, along with the details of any treatment administered to the injured child.
- If during the church’s care a child is accidently hurt, the child appears distressed, the child appears to be sexually aroused or if the child misunderstands or misinterprets something done by an adult care-giver, report any incident to a colleague and to the appropriate church authority as soon as possible and make a written note of it. Tactfully discuss the incident with the child’s parent(s).

12. Additional good practices.

- Always work with children in an open environment (e.g. avoid private or unobserved situations and encourage open communication).
- Children and young people should not be permitted to remain on Church property

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unless two unrelated adults are present.

♦ Make the experience of attending church fun.
♦ Promote fairness when confronting and dealing firmly with bullying.
♦ Always give priority to the welfare of the child.
♦ Always challenge children’s use of inappropriate language.
♦ Always request written parental consent if children are to be transported away from church property (e.g. picnics, day trips, sporting activities, etc.) and ensure that two unrelated adults accompany the children/youth.
♦ Persons working with children should be excellent role models.
♦ Always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback to children rather than negative criticism.
♦ It is not the responsibility of church workers to decide that child abuse is occurring. It is their responsibility to act on any concerns by contacting the Child Care Board so that inquiries can be made and necessary action taken to protect the young person. This applies to both allegations and suspicions of abuse occurring within the church and elsewhere.25

Sex Offenders and the Church

On occasions persons with a history of abusing children come into church programmes. Their need for contact with people and for Christian fellowship should be provided as we offer God’s love to the ‘whosoever’ and seek to deal with all persons in a redemptive manner. However, we also have a fundamental responsibility to care for and protect children, youth and vulnerable adults within our fellowships. Persons with this history cannot serve as volunteers or staff in children and youth departments and programmes or transport children to and from church activities.

The complex nature of child abuse intervention and the treatment of perpetrators require resources that are usually beyond the scope of ministry provided by the local church. However, the presence of a known perpetrator in a congregation requires high levels of vigilance. Provision for alternative opportunities for perpetrators to grow spiritually in settings where children are not present is strongly urged.²⁶

The offender may assert that he/she is a changed person and may sincerely wish this were true. However, even with extensive counselling and behaviour modification, sexual aberrations are extremely difficult to eradicate. Unfortunately this is something the offender must live with.

There are others who will intentionally use the church setting or activities with children to re-offend.

For these reasons, if a known sex offender wishes to be part of a local church, precautions must be put in place. The pastor/priest must have a frank discussion with the offender and establish clear boundaries regarding contact with children and youth. This is for the protection of the children and young people but also for the offender himself who may at some point be wrongly accused.

If a person abuses a child on church premises or at church functions and its leaders know, or should have known, the person is a sex offender, the church may have a difficult legal case to defend.²⁷

Protocol Implementation

These Child Protection Protocols will be an effective and useful document only as they are implemented at the level of local church ministry units. A major intent of the document is that it be used as a teaching tool and resource with children/youth volunteers/workers in the churches’ young people’s programmes. The way in which it is used, of course, depends on the age if the child. The basic message to everyone in our congregations needs to be:

²⁷ Ibid.
Some behaviour by adults is not acceptable.
Children and youth have a right to say “no”.
The church has a process that can help.
Tell someone.

Resources are available from the Child Care Board and UNICEF that can provide additional information or teaching material. The internet has literally millions of web sites with pertinent information. Your search therefore must be narrowed to specific topics—for example, child abuse types, emotional child abuse symptoms, etc.

Education alone will not totally eliminate abuse but can inform and empower individuals to be proactive about minimising its occurrence and the resulting negative effects on children’s lives.
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<th><strong>Name of Church:</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Address of Church:</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Details of Child/Youth Suspected of Being Abused:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Date of Birth:</strong> Year .......... Month ................. Day .......................</td>
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<td><strong>Telephone Number:</strong></td>
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<th><strong>Details About the Person Reporting Incident:</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Telephone Number:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Position in Church/Ministry Unit:</strong></td>
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<th><strong>Details About the Accused Person (if known):</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Address:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Telephone Number:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Position in Church/Ministry Unit:</strong></td>
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<th><strong>When Report First Received:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date of Report:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Time of Day Report Made:</strong></td>
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## DETAILS REGARDING INCIDENT BEING REPORTED

Describe clearly and in detail what is reported to you. Use the actual words used by the person making the report. Report FACTS as told to you. Report OBSERVATIONS—e.g. signs of possible injury or emotional state. Use extra paper as needed.

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<th>Date of Alleged Incident: ...........................................................................................................</th>
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<td>Time of Day of Alleged Incident: ...............................................................................................</td>
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<td>Describe how you became aware of the situation: ........................................................................</td>
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<td>Record what was told to you by the person making the report and anyone else who was present when the incident allegedly took place:</td>
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What did you say to the person making the report?

What did you do with the information? To whom did you go following the disclosure?

Are there any other details you think are relevant?

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<th>Signature</th>
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<tr>
<td>Print Name</td>
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## Interview Report Form
### Suspected Abuse of a Child

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Administrative Details**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Person Conducting Interview</th>
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<tr>
<td>Name of Person Being Interviewed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date and Time of Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of Other Person(s) present at Interview</td>
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**Person Being Interviewed:**  
- Alleged Abuser □
- Alleged Abused Person □

**What did you say to the person being interviewed?**

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How did the person being interviewed describe the alleged incident? Please report in their words and avoid embellishment. Use extra paper if needed.
How did you conclude the interview?

What is your assessment of the alleged incident?

What are your recommendations for action on this matter?

What did you observe—e.g. emotional state of the person interviewed, visible physical injuries, etc.

To whom are you sending this report?

Signature ________________________________     Date _______________________
Print Name ____________________________________________________________
Application for Work with Children and Youth

Persons volunteering/applying for work with Church children and youth programmes are asked to complete this form.

**Basic Information:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Address of Church</th>
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<td>Name of Applicant</td>
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<td>Date of Birth</td>
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<td>Maiden Name</td>
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<td>Present Address</td>
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<td>Telephone Numbers</td>
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<td>Previous Addresses in Past Five Years</td>
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<td>Name of Pastor</td>
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<td>Pastor’s Telephone Number</td>
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**Please list any skills, qualifications and interests that you have.**

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Please list any previous experience you have had in working with children and/or youth. Please provide the name of the church/organisation and the dates.

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<th>Name of Church/Organisation</th>
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Do you have any illness which might directly affect your work with children and youth? If yes, please provide details. This will not necessarily prejudice your application.

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Please list three references that can be contacted concerning this application.

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<th>Name</th>
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1). Name 2). Name 3). Name

Address Address Address

Tel: Tel: Tel:

- I agree to attend training on the Child Protection Protocols.
- I agree to implement the Child Protection Protocols.
- I agree to update my child care and protection training as required.
- I agree that the persons I have given as references may be contacted by the church where I am applying to work with children/youth.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Volunteer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your relationship to the volunteer/worker? Friend, family, employer, other – please specify</td>
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<tr>
<td>How long have you known the volunteer/worker?</td>
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<td>Please comment on his/her honesty, reliability, health, experience, suitability to work with children/youth.</td>
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<td>Do you have any other comment that would be helpful in processing his/her application</td>
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<td>Signature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please print your name</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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Sample Letter Requesting a Reference for a New Volunteer/Worker

Dear ...........

(Name of volunteer/worker) is interested in working with children/youth at (name of church). (He/She) will be working primarily with (age) year olds as (give brief description or work).

The (name of church) is committed to providing a safe environment for our children and youth. We wish to ensure that those whom we accept as volunteers are suitable and will provide a positive and healthy experience for those in our youth programmes. (Applicant’s name) has provided your name as a person who can give a character reference.

Please complete the attached questionnaire and return it to us in the pre-paid envelope. It will be treated in the strictest confidence. Your earliest attention to this would be greatly appreciated.

With many thanks and God’s blessings.

Yours Sincerely,

Pastor’s Name
Volunteer Agreement

This form must be completed by volunteers/workers in the church and facilities who volunteer/work with children and young people.

☐ I agree to work/minister under the direction and in full cooperation with the pastor/priest, the head of the ministry unit to which I may be assigned, or persons delegated by them.

☐ I agree to be guided by the church’s mission statement.

☐ I agree to conduct myself at all times in a way that will be a positive example to the young people/children I serve.

☐ I agree to attend training on the Child Protection Protocol and to implement the protocol in my work/ministry with children/youth.

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<th>Full Name (CAPITAL LETTERS)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Address</td>
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<td>Church</td>
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<td>Signature</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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