

TORONTO UNITED CHURCH COUNCIL

Connecting Resources with Ministry

Church Development Discussion Papers

TITLE: Establishing Your Child Protection Policy (Sample Policy)

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The following is an example of a Safety Policy for Children's Programs developed by the Christian Education Committee at First United Church in Port Credit. In order to establish a useful set of safety policies and procedures, the committee assessed where safety hazards might exist and then took steps suitable to their particular situation to minimize the risk. Members considered all aspects of safety in terms of dealing with a large building, fire, and personal protection and well-being.

The policy is reviewed annually and revised if necessary. Confirmation of its implementation is reported regularly to the congregation's governing council and the duty of care is reflected in the church's constitution. In addition to this written safety policy, children participate in an annual learning activity to help them understand personal safety and appropriate interaction with other children. The Christian Education Committee also developed a statement regarding how volunteers recruited to work with children were to be screened.

Safety Procedures for Sunday Story Circle Children's Program

Sunday Morning: The following procedures are put in place for the safety and support of children and leaders in our Sunday Story Circle program. Much of this happens informally but cannot be taken for granted. To regularize procedures and communicate them with children, parents and leaders will help us all in a shared concern for each other's well-being.

Christian Education Host: A person will be on duty each Sunday as the Host in the children's areas. This person will have a desk in the stairway with sight to the main doors. There will be one regular Host with one back-up person. The Host is in charge of monitoring the halls, taking children on the lower floor to the bathroom if required by the story leaders, doing two check-in visits to every story circle room to observe and assist or seek assistance if required. A telephone is to be available to the Host [a detailed duty list is provided].

Open Door Policy: Each door to a story circle room is to remain open permitting quick access for the Host or ministry staff to do check-ins.

Check-In: Every week the host will check-in with each room where program is held. The host is to walk into the room for a few seconds, wave to the story leader and respond if any support is requested. Most Sundays, a ministry staff person will also do a check-in to all rooms.

Story Leaders: Story leaders are responsible to read all safety procedures and to remain with their group from the time the children enter until they leave. Children ages 4 to grade 2 will remain in their room until a parent or older sibling or family member known to them arrives to pick them up.

Bathroom Visits: Upper floor rooms have a bathroom in each room. Children can use these one at a time. The story leader would not enter the bathroom unless there was an obvious cause for alarm or cry for help. These bathrooms are to be child-proofed and all cleaning items are to be out of the children's reach. Lower floor rooms 1, 2 and 3 use the bathrooms at the end of the hall. These are also to be child-proofed. In this area if a child requests to go to the bathroom, the story leader notifies the Host to come to the room. The Host accompanies the child to the bathroom. The Host looks inside the bathroom to be sure it is empty. Our building is large and open to the public so bathrooms must be checked first. The Host indicates for the child to enter the bathroom but the Host does not enter the bathroom. The Host remains at the door until the child comes out. If help is requested, the Host may enter to check what is needed. The Host will record this on the check list sheet including name of child and the help given so that a record can be kept. When children are in singing groups or other group situations and there is a bathroom break for the entire group, parents accompany children as a group and supervise the group inside as well as on the way.

Fire Escape Procedures: If the alarm bells sound, story leaders take immediate steps to evacuate their group. Take the attendance list. Line children up at the door, in partners if possible, checking the list to see that all are accounted for. Calmly open the door, check hallway and lead the children out of the room directing them toward the main doors of the CE wing. Keep checking that you can see the back of the line. Go down the side walk away from the building staying on the lawn to the left or right side in front of the CE wing. Stay with children and follow instructions of fire officials. On hearing the alarm, the Host will immediately open the main doors to the CE wing (they can be propped open). The Host will monitor each group's exit of the building until sure that all groups have evacuated. Staff and other appointed helpers will go immediately to the Toddler Care room to assist their exit. Parents in the sanctuary will be instructed not to go to the CE wing since that would block the children's exit. They can meet children outside.

Other emergency: The Host will have access to a telephone with emergency calling instructions. In case of injury or illness, do not move the injured or ill person. Instruct children not to move an injured or ill person. Notify the Host of the situation. Host may call 911 and request assistance or may seek staff or ushers to assist. If a child is feeling sick and your discretion tells you that a parent should be called, notify the Host who will notify the ushers to locate the parent(s) in the worship service.

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