RCNZ Abuse Policy

Introduction

Child (sexual) abuse has always been a sad reality from the earliest time. Only in the recent years this evil has received more exposure and shows that it can also occur within church communities. Therefore, the Reformed Congregations of New Zealand at Carterton has a moral responsibility to ensure that each child is safe and will not face the unwanted and damaging intrusion and destruction of child (sexual) abuse.

It is the policy of the church to protect all children participating in our organizations from all forms of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. It is also the policy of the church to encourage all individuals associated with them to avoid even the appearance of such conduct in order to prevent any potential misunderstandings that may give rise to false accusations against an individual interacting with other children.

In short, the mains goals of the policies and guidelines stated in this document include:

1. To uphold the honour and glory of the Lord in a church that honours God's law and acts in integrity and uprightness in all areas of Christian living.
2. To protect all children using our facilities from all forms of abuse to prevent life-long damage. (Consult **Appendix 6)**
3. To protect all individuals who interact with children on behalf of our organizations, both volunteer and paid staff, from false allegations of child abuse.
4. To give guidance in any alleged cases of child abuse according to the Word of God and the laws of New Zealand.
5. To support victims of child abuse in a Christian manner.
6. To confront and help the abuser (if a member of our church community) to come to the acknowledgement and repentance of wrongdoing and to restore such a person in Christian love upon the confession of guilt.
7. To request the abuser to absent him/herself from all public congregational gatherings if so requested by the abused and/or the family.

The reference to "church' in this policy includes all organizations and activities under our Reformed Congregation of New Zealand (hereafter 'church') church's governance. This includes the church nursery, choir, catechism classes, boys' club, girls' club, youth group activities (including church youth camps), community and evangelism outreach programs, and all church appointed committees. For all overnight trips with the youth, it is mandatory to follow the rules outlined in **Appendix 1**.

While Ponatahi Christian School falls under the authority of the church, the school has its own policies in accordance with NZ Ministry of Education requirements, and as such it is not specifically covered by this policy.

Principles

The following basic principles are fundamental to this policy and serve to provide guidance where the policy does not address a particular matter:

A. The response of the Christian church to child abuse should be one of obedience to the Word of God and to the instituted NZ civil authorities, in a spirit of love, compassion, mercy and justice with the aim bring repentance, restoration and healing.

B. The protection of the child is paramount. If there is any doubt in the reporting or management of child abuse, the person should err on the side of protecting the child until all proper research is concluded.

C. The primary responsibility for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the child lies with the child's parents or guardians. As church, therefore, we need make efforts to encourage parents to educate their children about the dangers of sexual abuse. Education has proven to be an effective form of protection as children know how to recognize improper behavior and have been given the tools to deal with it appropriately when approached. Our form of education should include the following elements,

    1. defining and distributing this policy;
    2. annual review of our abuse policy with all the leaders of various groups working with children, including the consistory;
    3. periodic topical discussion with the entire church family at appropriate occasions;
    4. making periodic references to abuse in public ministry and congregational prayers

D. As we all share original sin, our church recognizes that we are not immune to the problem of child abuse in any form or shape. This awareness should keep us vigilant in doing all to prevent or confront abuse.

E. The state has the authority from God to intervene in the relationship between the children and parents, or guardians or other adults, only where the parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child or when assistance is requested by the family. The state also has the authority from God to use the means at its disposal where necessary to protect the child from abuse when the immediate caregivers are unwilling or unable to do so.

F. The church is responsible to support the abused child when the parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to ensure the wellbeing of the child.

G. The church should cooperate with the instituted authorities when dealing with problems of child abuse.

Glossary of Terms

Consistory	The body of elected office bearers of the Reformed Congregations of New Zealand at Carterton, serving at any given point in time.
Appointed Church Official	A person appointed by the consistory to perform a duty or duties described in this policy. The consistory may delegate duties to one or more appointed church official(s).
Counselor	A person or agency appointed by the consistory to provide counseling (e.g., a trained counselor, pastor, elder).
Parent(s)	(a) the mother or father of a child. (b) the person legally entitled to custody or guardianship of the person or

child; or

(c) the person with whom a child resides and who stands in the place of the child's mother or father.

Standards of Conduct

A Prohibited Conduct

To achieve the goal of preventing any form of child abuse or potential of false allegations of child abuse, individuals interacting with children shall not engage in any of the following conduct:

1. Any form of sexual abuse, including but not limited to:
    - sexual exploitation
    - harassment
    - molestation
    - disseminating, exhibiting, or displaying sexually explicit material to children,
    - using sexually explicit language in the presence of a child
    - demonstrating any sexual or romantic interest in a child
    - removing any dress or clothing from any child, except when appropriately required under necessary circumstances and then in the presence of another adult whenever possible
    - not wearing modest attire in the presence of a child
    - inappropriate sexually-tinted touching, hugging, or kissing of a child
    - sharing pornographic material with a child
    - sleeping in the same bed or bedding with a child[1]
2. Any form of physical abuse including, but not limited to:
    - hitting, kicking, slapping, or shoving a child
    - selling, giving, or furnishing any child with any tobacco substance, alcohol, or illicit drugs (or legal drugs in a non-prescribed way intended to do harm)
3. Any form of emotional abuse including, but not limited to:
    - swearing or using obscene language in the presence of a child
    - insulting or degrading a child

[1] This point needs to be interpreted in the context of inappropriate sharing of beds or bedding, and excludes normal, socially healthy, situations such as when a toddler shares a bed with their parents when s/he is scared.

B Recommended Conduct

Furthermore, to prevent the possibility of abuse or false allegations of abuse, individuals must adhere to the following guidelines whenever possible.

1. Private Conversations

    - Private conversations should only be held when absolutely necessary. This includes communications through phone calls, texting or other private social media.
    - If possible, have someone else present during the conversation with the child.
    - Private conversations should be conducted in public and populated locations which are accessible by others.
    - If meeting in an office or other similar location, select an office that has glass partitions or windows and is situated where others are nearby.
    - Inform colleagues who you will be speaking with and when.
    - Conversations must remain professional and appropriate at all times.
    - No private conversation should be held if any romantic interest is developing between the individuals.

2. Guidelines for Working with Children

    - Staff or volunteers should never be alone with a child, including in buildings, rooms, vehicles, or private places; remain where others can observe and accompany you.
    - Unless necessary and approved by your supervisor, do not assist a child in the toilet.
    - Staff/volunteers must take 2 or more children to the toilet at a time OR one child going to the toilet must be accompanied by two staff/volunteers. When this is not practically possible, an open-door policy must be applied, i.e., whenever a child is being helped to the toilet or changed by an adult that is not their own parent/caregiver the door remains open so that they can be interrupted or seen at any time.
    - Ensure that at least one other staff members, volunteer, or child accompanies you when you are with a child.
    - Maintain an “open door” policy, allowing parents or adults to drop in anytime.
    - Avoid “out of program” or “off-premises” contact between staff or volunteers and children.

C Guidelines for (over-night) trips with the youth:

see **Appendix 1** for the specifics of these guidelines.

Various Responsibilities and Actions of the consistory

A. If any of the consistory members are aware that a visiting person is a past or current sex offender, he is obligated to share this with the entire consistory. The consistory is to decide, on a case-by-case basis, what course of actions with be taken. This could be informing the visitor that we are aware of his/her past or current offense and therefore he/she will be under supervised attendance or assigning someone to supervise the person without his/her knowledge.

B. If any of the consistory members is made aware that one of the members has been involved with child pornography, he is obligated to share this with the entire consistory. The consistory needs then to determine on the proper course of action, even if this is a secret sin, for child pornography can easily lead to actual sexual abuse.

C. Disclosure of abuse and how to handle this professionally

A child may try to find different ways to tell you that they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Talking about what has happened is really scary for children. This means that they will most likely try to say things in a way that is tentative, vague or uses other people's names or places. Sometimes they'll say things very quietly or simply make hints. They might act out sexual behavior with dolls or toys or use words that are beyond their age or (sexual) maturity level. It's really important to listen to what they are trying to say, be understanding and take what they say seriously. It is very unusual for children or young people to make up situations of abuse. If a child tells you about abuse, **Appendix 5** shows some guidelines to follow.

It is worth being aware of the fact that in churches there can be a tendency to trust adults and value their opinion over that of a child. This attitude has painfully proven to be for the predator's profit. The sad reality has shown that even highly respected adults, including 'godly' office bearers, have abused children. Hence, a child's disclosure must be taken very seriously, and the child's safety is paramount.

D. Steps in Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect

1. Within our church setting, the common abuse reporting would be

a. either an alleged abuse by a parent, caregiver, friend, relative or other person of one of the children belonging to our congregation

b. or an alleged abuse of our congregation's children by a church employee, contracted service provider or volunteer

c. Study the procedural suggestions in **Appendix 4 & 5** of this policy.

2. What to Report to a Child Protection Social Worker?

You can call Child, Youth and Family at any time 0508FAMILY (0508 326459) When you call them, their specialist staff will listen to you and be able to give advice.

You can call them if you:

- Think a child or young person may be unsafe or in danger of harm

- Think a child or young person may be suffering from ill-treatment, abuse or neglect
- Are concerned about a child or young person and want some advice
- Are not sure whether you need to be concerned and want to talk things through.

3. *Useful hints for when you call*

When you call CYF it helps to have as much information to pass on as possible.

It is often helpful to write down all the information you want to give them, and then check off your list as you talk it through. This might include:

- your concerns
- details of incidents including dates
- details about the child or young person and their family, for example name and addresses
- the reasons why you think this child is at risk, or suffering abuse or neglect
- if you're aware of any other times when the family or child has been involved with CYF or the Police.
- you may have been keeping a diary of events and noticed patterns or clusters of signs emerging. Please share with them as much information as you have about your concerns.

E. Main Role Responsibilities Defined

1. Role of Child Protection Social Worker

- assesses the report
- ensures the safety of the child
- commences an investigation if there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child needs protection
- contacts parents
- may provide services to the child and family

2. Role of Police

- protects a child in immediate danger
- conducts a criminal investigation
- interviews the alleged offender

3. Role of Church

- observes children for indicators of abuse or neglect
- handles disclosures from children
- reports promptly to a child protection social worker

- notifies the activity supervisor a report has been made
- supports the child emotionally
- monitors the child for signs of stress
- refers the child for counseling when appropriate

4. Role of Consistory

- ensures ongoing support and safety of the child
- assists in securing personnel, resources, and/or making arrangements for a child protection interview held in a church setting
- refers inquiries about child protection and/or criminal investigations from parents to a child protection social worker, the police, and/or the Appointed Church Official

5. Role of Appointed Church Official

- ensures a safe environment during investigations
- consults with the child protection social worker and/or police
- ensures that no church employee interferes with any investigations
- communicates with parents regarding actions taken by the Consistory
- provides pastoral care to the child(ren)

Background Information on Abuse

A. What is Child Abuse?

The following definitions are adapted from the NZ Interagency guide *Working together to keep children and young people safe*[2] *and The British Columbia Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect (1998)*.

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including food, clothing, adequate shelter, supervision, affection, education, and medical care. Neglect is the most common form of abuse.

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of behaviour where the child is consistently rejected, put down and consequently shamed. They may be isolated, constantly degraded, criticized, terrorized, humiliated, scapegoated, insulted or negatively compared to others. Emotional abuse is a component of all abuse.

Coercive controlling abuse is unjustifiable excessive control. While parents must discipline and set rules for their children, unjustifiable control is a form of abuse. For example, the parent does not allow the child out of the house, and/or does not allow them to attend school. Coercive abuse is usually referred to as domestic abuse in which not only the children but also the spouse (in most cases the mother) are victims.

[2] Published by Child, Youth and Family, PO Box 1556, Wellington 6011.

Financial abuse is when parents, or other adults, financially extort children. For example, demanding money or keeping a child's pay from their jobs without a child's permission *etc*. It could also involve the adult forcing the child to work exorbitant hours for their business to the extent where the child's health, sleep or schoolwork is compromised.

Physical Abuse is a deliberate, non-accidental physical assault or injury by an adult or significantly older or more powerful child that results in or is likely to result in, physical harm to a child.

Sexual Abuse is the use of a child for sexual gratification by a person in a position of trust and/or authority, or by a significantly older or more powerful child. It includes sexual touching, threatening sexual acts, obscene gestures, or deliberate exposure of oneself to the child, or deliberately exposing the child to sexual activity or pornographic material. This may be consensual and can happen within or outside the family. Statistics reveal that most sexual abuse is done by someone whom the child knows and trusts, often parents, older siblings, relatives, trusted leaders and teachers.

Sexual Exploitation includes permitting, encouraging or requiring a child to engage in conduct of a sexual nature for stimulation, gratification or self-interest of another person; prostitution; or production of material of a pornographic nature.

B. Recognizing Possible Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

Abused and neglected children almost always show signs of their suffering. Some of the most common indicators are listed in **Appendix 2.** Everyone working with the youth is required to annually review this list.

C. Be Aware Most Children Don't Tell

The reasons children usually don't volunteer the abuse are varied. **Appendix 3** outlines the main reasons why. Therefore, when a child comes forward to share his or her experience with abuse, it is most likely the truth is shared with you.

E. Supporting Children Who Have Been Abused and/or Neglected

1. The Impact of Abuse and Neglect on Children

Children who have been abused and neglected or who witness abuse and neglect of their loved ones may experience:

- A sense of loss of their childhood
- Feelings of being betrayed by adults in position(s) of trust
- Difficulties in forming healthy relationships
- Feelings of shame and humiliation
- Feelings of guilt about being responsible for the abuse
- Fear of being re-victimized
- Feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, anxiety or depression
- Feelings of anger or rage

- Hyperactivity, poor impulse control or inattentiveness
- Self-destructive behaviors e.g., self-mutilation, eating disorders, criminal activities, promiscuity, drug use, truancy from school or work, suicide attempts,

2. Helping Children Rebuild Resiliency and Trust

In addition to prayer, a child who has suffered from the trauma of abuse should be offered the following aspects of support:

- Ensure a child is listened to (see also Appendix 3). It is important that a child feels it is believed and that they are not re-victimized
- Focus on her/his God-given assets and strengths
- Be warm and accepting
- Instill hope that with God's help, the child can work through this adversity
- Set clear expectations and goals for the child
- Be a positive role model
- Create a welcoming environment
- Provide consistency and stability
- Set clear boundaries and clear rules of conduct for all children
- Provide routine and structure
- Monitor the child for high stress level, anxiety, exhaustion, self-destructive behaviors
- Report new suspicions of abuse about the child
- Treat him/her like all the other children
- Consult with a counselor

Church Appointed Officials and Consultants shall work with victims of child abuse and their families to encourage and monitor appropriate counseling services.

Conclusion

We need to do all in prayer and work that all forms of child abuse may be prevented. The best of policies in place will not prevent abuse. Yet the truth is confirmed repeatedly that abuse mostly happens in the context of unprepared children, unprepared leaders and a sense of false security that this will not happen among us.

So, besides prayer that God will be a protecting wall around us, let us do all to build and maintain the protective walls we can provide.

Appendix 1: Guidelines for (Overnight) Trips

Any organization or outreach falling under the responsibility of the Consistory must establish rules for (overnight) trips that are consistent with this policy. Any ad-hoc overnight trips organized for church youth must follow the guidelines of this Appendix.

1. Inform the consistory and families of the plan to arrange an overnight trip for church youth.
2. In general, a full itinerary will have to be made available at least 2 weeks prior to the trip. Trip plans shall at minimum include:
    a. Venue.
    b. Mode of transport.
    c. Health and safety planning; emergency planning, including knowing how to obtain emergency medical assistance.
        i. At least two chaperones must be qualified first aiders.
    d. Duration of trip, departure & return times; plan of activities.
3. Parental Permission Forms containing emergency and medical information are required for each overnight trip.
4. The chaperones are to meet the following conditions:
    a. An oversight team of at least two adult chaperones is required: an “adult chaperone” is defined as someone at least 21 years of age. It is fine to have helper chaperones of ages 18-20, but these are to be under the leadership of the adult chaperones.
    b. The consistory is to determine whether screening/background checks of chaperones is required. In any case, individuals who have been convicted of, are currently charged with, or have self-disclosed crimes that require registration as a sex offender, or any act of child abuse are excluded from being chaperones. The consistory reserves the right to investigate past accusations of sexual misconduct when no conviction occurred. These cases will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and kept confidential.
    c. The character of trips and ratio of adults’ chaperones to children should be:
        i. Preschoolers: no church-related overnight trips shall be organized
        ii. 5-9 years: 1 adult/helper chaperone for every 4 children
        iii. 10-14 years: 1 adult/helper chaperone for every 5 children. If both girls and boys attend, a minimum of 2 female and 2 male adults/helper chaperones is required.
        iv. 15-up: a minimum of 2 male and 2 female chaperones.
5. The standards of conduct shall be in accordance with Section B of this Policy. In addition, the following guidelines should serve as useful examples of proper conduct:
    a. Make sure children are present on the bus or other means of transportation every time transportation is used.
    b. Make sure the children are in their room at curfew.
    c. Make sure children understand daily itinerary.
    d. Observe children for suspicious behavior that might involve breaking the rules.

e. Be on guard for children being loud, obnoxious, and/or rude. Do not tolerate this behavior.
f. Assist in medical emergencies and contact person in charge immediately.
g. Inquire within assigned group about any individual medical abnormalities.
h. No children or chaperones should leave the group for unauthorized excursions.
i. If you have genuine reasons for doing so, you may search children's rooms at any time with or without the children's permission.
j. Check before the trip that all necessities have been taken.
k. Make sure children are properly dressed at all times.

Behavior standards under normal circumstances[3] include:

1. "Buddy systems" should be used by chaperones; thus, it is very important to ensure 2 adults are present at all times (1 "adult" and 1 "helper" 18-20 is fine also).
2. One-to-one contact with a child should always occur in a public place.
3. Any verbal or nonverbal sexual behavior with any child is inappropriate.
4. Do not touch a child against his/her will anywhere on their body.
5. If a child needs a hug, do upon asking and always in public with others around.
6. Sexual gestures or overtures a child makes to a staff member should be reported to the appropriate personnel.
7. No chaperone will share sleeping quarters with a participant who is not his/her son or daughter.
8. Where for discipline reasons it becomes necessary for a participant to share accommodations with a chaperone, there must be two adults present at all times.
9. Do not appear in front of a child when not appropriately clothed.
10. Do not change clothes in the same room or in view of a child.
11. Driving alone with a child should be avoided at all times.
12. If necessary to drive alone with a child: Do not sit close to one another in the car; do not come into physical contact with each other; do not stop the car to talk, or if you must stop the car, turn on the inside light of the car.
13. Do not strike or touch a child as a means of discipline.
14. Do not use derogatory language when addressing a child.
15. Be alert for suspicious or unusual behavior.
16. All suspicions of child or sexual abuse need to be reported to appropriate personnel.

[3] These guidelines are not intended to unduly restrict the normal interaction between adults and children. Common sense should prevail at all times. However, unless there are genuine reasons for doing so, e.g., managing health & safety risks, these examples will serve as useful guidelines.

17. No child should be taken on any type of trip or excursion without the written consent of the custodial parent.
18. No child should be allowed to visit you in your room.
19. No child should be denied food, water or shelter.

Appendix 2: Possible Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

These are *warning signs*; they do not necessarily mean abuse and neglect are happening.

Neglect

- Looking rough and uncared for – kids might be extremely dirty and not have the right clothes to keep warm and dry. Neglected children may also be underweight or small for their age because they're not getting enough, or the right sort of food.
- Persistent nappy rash or skin disorders can be an indication that children aren't being well cared for.
- Out and about unsupervised – if the child is left alone or doesn't have a safe home to go to, they might spend lots of time at the neighbors, steal food, or regularly hang out at school or on the streets. Neglected and abused kids are at greater risk of drug and alcohol abuse and can drift onto a dangerous pathway to offending.
- Unable to concentrate, falling behind in their schoolwork and attendance – sometimes coupled with poor speech and social skills, or other developmental delays is a sign that kids are not getting the support and nurturing they need.
- Indiscriminate attachment to adults – strong attention and affection seeking, or a severe lack of attachment to their own parents can be a sign of neglect.

Emotional abuse

- Sleep problems like bed-wetting or soiling – with no medical cause, nightmares and poor sleeping patterns.
- Frequent physical complaints – real or imagined such as headaches, nausea and vomiting, and abdominal pains. This might coincide with the child being very underweight or dehydrated.
- Signs of anxiety – including poor self-esteem, being unable to cope in social settings and sometimes obsessive behaviour. Children who are abused are very sad and alone and might talk about hurting themselves or ending their lives.

Physical abuse

- Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions – particularly in unusual places like the face, on their back or tummy, thighs, the backs of their legs, or upper arms. Also look out for the regularity of these injuries to see if there is a pattern forming.

- Unexplained fractures or dislocations – many kids are active resulting in bumps and breaks, but people need to be thinking about how and why these injuries happen. Especially worrying are fractures to the head or face, and hip or shoulder dislocations. Be very concerned if this is happening in young babies, who are less active and not moving around enough to accidently hurt themselves.
- Burn marks – anywhere on the body are concerning, and if not easily explained need to be notified. Be mindful of burns in the shape of on object like a stove ring or iron, cigarette marks or rope burn.
- The child or their parent can't recall how the injuries occurred, or their explanations change or don't make sense.

Sexual abuse

- Physical indicators – like unusual or excessive itching, bruising, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in the genital or anal area, and urinary tract infections. Also be concerned and ask questions if there is ever blood in a child's urine or feces, it is painful for them to go to the toilet, or if a child or young girl is showing signs of being sexually active. When pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease is identified, abuse must always be considered, especially in girls under 16 years.
- Age-inappropriate sexual play or interest – and other unusual behaviour like sexually explicit drawings, descriptions and talk about sex can indicate this type of abuse.
- Fear of a certain person or place – children might be trying to express their fear without saying exactly what they are frightened of, so listen carefully, and take what they say seriously.
- Some children may purposefully try to make themselves unattractive or try to feel clean through obsessive washing.

Other possible signs

- Eating disorders and substance abuse.
- Kids who are disengaged or needy of adult attention and acceptance
- Very aggressive behaviour towards toys, people or pets – they may be acting out what's happening to them.
- Children who suddenly don't want to go home or be with certain people or make attempts to run away.
- Feelings of low self-worth and loneliness.
- Becoming anxious and fearful after being outgoing and friendly.
- Expressing sadness, crying frequently, becoming depressed.
- Lacking friends or not participating in activities.
- Appearing lethargic.

Appendix 3: Reasons children don't tell

1. Fear
   a) Of the abuser – Often the abuser threatens to harm the child or the child's family if the secret comes out.
   b) Of not being believed – Often the child reasons that adults are older and wiser and always right, so why would parents (teachers, other adults) believe the child is telling the truth and the adult is lying? They may also fear that their parents will believe they're imagining things or making up the story. Abusers often tell the child that the child's parents will believe his story and not the child's.
   c) Of being punished for causing the abuse, especially in homes where parents are strict and keep order with physical or rigorous punishments.

2. Blaming themselves. *Since grown-ups are "always right"* the child reasons, *I must have done something wrong to cause this.* The child views the abuse as punishment for being a bad person. Children may think they were abused because there is something wrong with them, that they are bad or dirty. Though many children are manipulated, bribed, or tricked into sexual abuse, victims still blame themselves. Some abusers convince the victims that they enjoyed the abuse, or they wouldn't have let it continue. So, victims are ashamed to tell. Though this is faulty reasoning, in 100% of the cases we have dealt with, the victim feels that he/she is the one at fault for the abuse. The guilt and the belief that the reason he/she was abused is because he/she is a horrible person is a common but terrible consequence of sexual abuse of the child. "Victims report shame as the most damaging symptom of sexual abuse" (Jeannette Vought: Christian Recovery Center, Minneapolis, MN.)

3. Poor self-esteem or powerlessness. When a trusted friend or loved one uses the child's little body for selfish purposes, the child often feels unworthy of safety and protection. Learned helplessness. Sexual abuse strips away what little power and dignity a child has.

4. Denial. Pretending it never happened is a defense mechanism children use to try to make sense of the world and maintain their sanity. Easier / safer to deny reality or minimize especially if the abuser is a parent.

5. Trying to keep the family together. If the abuser is a family member, silence is the price children choose to pay in order to maintain some stability and security in their chaotic world. It seems their only option.

6. Confusion. Many question whether they really were abused. They can't accept the notion that someone they trust and / or love could abuse them. Especially when kids haven't been educated about sex and good/bad touch, they may not be sure that what is or has happened is wrong. Abusers often disguise abuse in seemingly acceptable behaviors—tickling, bathing, diapering, hugging, kissing.

Appendix 4: When Children Talk about Abuse

1. Listen and be reassuring

   It's really important to make a child feel safe in telling you. Listen to them and be reassuring:

- Accept what they have to say and make sure you don't say anything critical like, 'Why didn't you tell me sooner?'
- Let them know it is good they told you about it.
- Let them know it is not their fault.
- Let them know it is not ok for things like this to happen to kids.
- Tell them you will get help.

It's best not to question them about their experience, just listen and be reassuring.

The best response might be "thank you for telling me about that, now I need to talk to someone so we can make sure you're safe".

2. Write it down

   As soon as possible, write down what the child tells you, using the same words they say, and how you responded.

3. Don't question or interview the child

   Make sure you don't question the child further, as this may interfere with the information they've given.

4. Call Child, Youth and Family or the Police.

   Call Child, Youth on 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459) or the Police as soon as possible. You can ask for whatever advice, assistance and support you need.

5. Keep the child safe

   Make sure the child knows they are safe and have done the right thing in telling you. Don't let anyone who may be involved in the abuse know the child has said anything to you.

6. Inform the Consistory

   The Consistory will determine what steps to take from an ecclesiastical and pastoral perspective. Where appropriate and possible, anonymity of all, or any of the, involved persons will be ensured. As noted in Appendix 4 reporting abuse is to CYF and/or police first and then to the Consistory.

Appendix 5: Two Possible Scenarios

Scenario #1 Responding to Alleged Child Abuse and Neglect by Parent, Caregiver, Friend, Relative or Other Person Whether Current or Historic

The Report

- report allegations of child abuse and neglect promptly to a child protection social worker
- *call the police if the child is in immediate danger*

Documenting the Information

- information regarding any reported allegation should be properly documented
- information should be treated in the strictest confidence

Notifying the Consistory

- notify the Consistory that a report has been made to a child protection social worker and/or the police
- protect the privacy of the child

Do Not Contact the Offender(s), His/Her Parents, Nor the Parents of the Victim(s)

- the child protection social worker and/or the police will contact the parents
- the police contact the alleged offender when a criminal investigation is taking place

The Investigations

- cooperate fully with any investigation which may be conducted by the child protection social worker and/or criminal investigation by the police
- at the discretion of the investigators, a support person may be present for the child during the interview

Sharing Information

- provide information requested by the child protection social worker and/or the police
- the child protection worker must report back to the person who made the report the results of the investigation, unless reporting would cause emotional or physical harm to anyone, or a criminal investigation is contemplated or underway.

Supporting the Child

- be available to listen
- monitor the child's well-being
- consult with the counselor where appropriate

Scenario #2 Responding to Alleged Child Abuse and Neglect by a Church Employee, Contracted Service Provider or Volunteer

The Report

- *Call the police if a child is in immediate danger and/or an alleged criminal offense has occurred*
- report promptly to a child protection social worker
- notify the Consistory a report has been made
- **do not notify the alleged offender**; this responsibility is determined by the Appointed Church Official in consultation with the child protection social worker and/or the police
- maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of both child and the alleged offender

Documenting the Information

- information regarding any reported allegation should be properly documented
- information should be treated in the strictest confidence

Initial Response by the Appointed Church Official, Child Protection Social Worker and/or Police

- the Appointed Church Official, the child protection social worker and police collaborate to:
  - ◊ ensure the safety and well-being of the child involved and any other children who may be at risk
  - ◊ clarify their respective responsibilities during the investigations
  - ◊ determine who will contact the parents and/or interview the child
- after the assessment the child protection social worker determines whether or not there are grounds for proceeding with an investigation

The Investigations by the Child Protection Social Worker, Police and Appointed Church Official

Persons conducting investigations need to work collaboratively, sharing information where they are legally permitted. A priority should be to limit the emotional impact on the child as much as possible by treating the child complainant sensitively, keeping the number of interviews to a minimum and providing support. At the discretion of the investigators, a support person may be present for the child during the interview.

Child Protection Social Worker

- conducts the child protection investigation
- determines if a child needs protection

Police

- determines if a criminal offense may have occurred

- interviews the alleged offender, the child involved and other potential witnesses in connection with the criminal investigation

Appointed Church Official

- facilitates the investigations of the child protection social worker and/or police by ensuring that employees cooperate with the ongoing investigations
- initiates a disciplinary investigation of the conduct of the employee
- investigates and determines what action should be taken by the Consistory if the alleged conduct involves a contracted service provider or volunteer

Contact Numbers

In danger or emergency: call **Emergency Services** 111

Child, Youth and Family Line: **0508 FAMILY** or 0508 326 459

Family Violence Information Line: 0800 456 450 (available 9.00am -11.00pm daily)

Appendix 6: Reasons for you to take preventative action

Sexual abuse is devastating.

Physical damage:

- Eating disorders
- Drug dependency, substance abuse
- Self-harm (cutting, other self-inflicted injuries)
- Extreme risk-taking behaviour
- Sexual difficulties or disinterest
- Homosexuality
- Loss of virginity
- Pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted disease(s), infection
- Prostitution
- Suicide

- 70-80% of sexual abuse survivors report excessive drug and alcohol use
- One study showed that among male survivors, 50% have suicidal thoughts and more than 20% attempt suicide
- Young girls who are sexually abused are more likely to develop eating disorders as adolescents
- More than 60% of teen pregnancies are first preceded by experiences of molestation, rape or attempted rape
- Approximately 40% of sex offenders report sexual abuse as children
- Prostitution
- Approximately 70% of sexual offenders have between 1 and 9 victims; 20-25% have 10 to 40 victims
- Serial offenders may have as many as 400 victims in their lifetimes

Emotional damage

- Confusion
- Fear
- Anxiety / panic attacks
- Hyper-vigilance (can't relax)
- Depression
- Nightmares
- Sleeplessness
- Isolation / loneliness / withdrawal
- Self blame: load of guilt and shame
- Feeling dirty / different / defective
- Anger
- Loss of childhood, innocence, confidence, self-respect, self-esteem, trust in men, trust in women, trust in family, general trust in people
- Suicidal thoughts, attempts
- Helplessness
- Powerlessness
- Emotionless
- Relationship difficulties, often leading to strained marriage, divorce, or other broken relationships

Spiritual Damage:

- Distorted image of God
- Struggles to trust God
- Distorted image of self

Practical Damage:

- Activities restricted
- Financial loss
- Difficulties at school
- Career affected, even to the point of job loss and inability to have steady work
- Further abusive relationships
- Psychiatric admissions