



# Keeping Our Kids Safe

## Guiding Principle

Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church (WMB) is a people-driven organization responsible to those within its sphere of influence as well as to the surrounding community. It is a public organization in that all are welcome to participate in the life of the church. That means that on any given day, people both well known to the church as well as first time visitors can be in the building participating in the various activities.

These people reflect a broad spectrum from young to old, with all the needs of any community setting fairly represented over the course of a specified period of time. It is the responsibility of the church to recognize the various needs represented and the associated practice of care that comes with those needs. Of particular concern are the needs represented by those identified as **vulnerable people** – *“all individuals whose circumstances render them more susceptible to harm than other people.”*<sup>1</sup>

The underlying assumptions to the application of risk management in any setting are:

- There are no absolutes and no guarantees in risk management. No risk management system in the world can prevent all risks. Things can and do go wrong.
- Ignoring the potential for trouble never makes it go away and often exacerbates the outcome.
- Facing risks head on and making every effort to control them can sometimes avert disaster or minimize the magnitude of the harm that results.
- If something does go wrong, any attempts that have been made to anticipate and prevent the loss or tragedy through a risk management process will constitute concrete proof of diligence, and consequently reduce personal and organizational exposure to liability.

This document will identify policies and procedures that will help all active participants serve in their ministries with confidence and a sense of empowerment. *“Active participants”* are those who actively participate in the facilitation of a program formally recognized as an initiative of WMB. Policies and procedures will be identified with respect to the position of activity as opposed to any one individual that may fill that position. This document will address the prevention of abuse of the following recognized groups:

- Children (ages infant to 12 years old);
- Staff and volunteers, both paid and unpaid as it relates to the prevention of sexual harassment.

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Association, 1.2

### ***Suspected Abuse***

Any person including, but not limited to, ministry personnel, who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protection, is **legally required** to immediately report the matter to the Department of Social Services or the police. Reporting must be done orally by telephone or in person.

- For the protection of our children and youth, all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse against children and youth will be taken seriously.
- Upon hearing of potential abuse or allegations of abuse to a child or youth, the ministry personnel should complete a Suspected Abuse Report Form documenting all pertinent information. The victim should not be asked leading questions nor should the accused or any other parties be contacted at the point of completing the Suspected Abuse report form. All forms must be kept permanently unless otherwise directed by legal council.
- Any allegations of abuse to a child or youth must be reported to the proper authorities. The reporting is encouraged to be done in conjunction with a WMB staff member.

### **Safety Guidelines**

Safety and security are primary concerns for the children and families who attend Waterloo MB Church. At the same time, we are also concerned for the adults and teens ministering to these children. We need to work towards providing a safe environment for effective ministry. In light of this goal, the following policies and procedures have been developed for the protection of children and staff.

### ***Program Room Staffing and Supervision Guidelines***

God's Word directs us to conduct ourselves in a Godly manner; being an example of obedience, respect and honesty to those who are in our care. Our desire is to provide a safe, loving classroom where the child feels comfortable and learning can take place.

### ***Volunteer Screening***

- All volunteers will submit a Kids Ministry Volunteer Application every year they volunteer
- All volunteers 12 and older will be required to provide a valid Criminal Record Check – vulnerable sector search, to the WMB office within 8 weeks of beginning their volunteer position.
  - o Upon being approved to volunteer in Kidz Ministry, a letter will be provided to the volunteer by the Director, Kidz Ministry to enable the volunteer to visit a local Police Station and apply for the Criminal Record Check at the reduced volunteer rate. Criminal Record Checks take approximately 4-6 weeks to be processed by the Police station.

- While waiting for the Criminal Record Check to be processed, the volunteer will be required to sign a waiver (included in the Volunteer Application) stating that they have not been accused of any Criminal act which would be identified on the Criminal Record Check – vulnerable sector search.
- Waterloo MB staff will be responsible for tracking all Criminal Record Checks
- Volunteers will be asked to renew their Criminal Record Check every five (5) years (the number of years investigated by a Criminal Record Check).
- The status of each volunteer's Criminal Record Check – in process or complete – will be communicated to their leader/coordinator and that leader/coordinator will ensure that at least one of the weekly volunteers in each program has a valid and complete Criminal Record Check.

### *Volunteer Identification*

- All volunteers working with children will wear a nametag which identifies them to parents and newcomers (these can be obtained by using the electronic check in system)
- Volunteers who are First Aid certified, will have this indicated on their nametag to make them identifiable

### *Two Volunteers*

- A minimum of two unrelated volunteers should be present in any room with children except in the event of an emergency. This standard may require that grade levels be combined.
- When children are being signed into the nursery, it is acceptable to have one volunteer in the front of the nursery, and one in the back, as the top of the back door will be open, and parents will be coming in and out.
- Where two adult volunteers are not present for a period of time, the open door policy is mandatory.
- Volunteers between the ages of 12 and 16 must be assigned to work alongside volunteers over the age of 16

### *Open Doors*

- When it is necessary that only one adult volunteer be in the room with children (e.g. volunteer leaves room to take children to the washroom), the door of that room will remain open.
- Our building has rooms either with a window in the door or a barn style door so that the upper half of the door can remain open. Also, windows in the classrooms allow ministry supervisors to look in occasionally without interrupting the activities of the group

### *Volunteer/Child Ratios*

- Adequate staffing is necessary to provide effective care and teaching. The recommended ratios are:
  - a. One volunteer for every 3 infants (birth to 17 months)
  - b. One volunteer for every 4 - 5 toddlers or preschoolers.
  - c. One volunteer for every 5 – 6 JK or SK children
  - d. One volunteer for every 7 – 10 elementary-age children
- Please take caution that you are only accepting the amount of kids you (and the other volunteers) are able to handle. The ratios we suggest may be too high if you have children in your care that require much of your attention (inconsolable, misbehaving, etc).

### *Child Security*

- When a parent/guardian brings their child(ren) to a program, we are responsible for the safety and security of that child until they are once more in the care of the parent or guardian or released with the permission of a parent or guardian. Children should attend the program designed for their age, grade or developmental level.

### *Occasional Observers*

- Occasional observers who join a group will have their attendance recorded and kept on file with the classroom attendance for that day. Visitors will be clearly identified and if they have not been screened and approved, they will not be placed in a position of trust with children who are not their own.

### *Registration of Children*

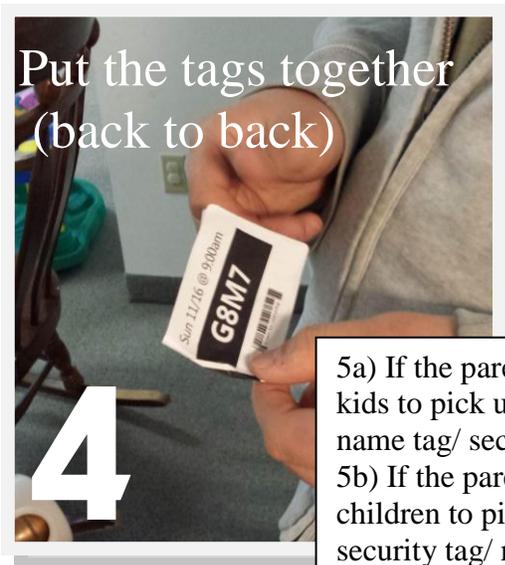
- Registration will happen through our electronic “Check In”. The first Sunday that the child attends a program, the parents/ guardians will be required to provide certain information and consent through our Registration form. The child’s special needs and allergies of the child will be on their name tag, by imputing the information into the “medical notes” area in Check In. Parents/ Guardians will be required to fill in a new registration/consent form each year.
- Attendance is to be collected weekly, and kept on file for the duration of the ministry year.
- A record will be kept of Kingdom Kidz leaders on duty in each group or program. This record will be maintained with the record of attendance and kept on file for the duration of the ministry year.

## Receiving and Releasing of Children

### Nursery-Kindergarten

- A sign-in and sign-out process will be provided for all nursery, preschool, JK, and SK programs. This process includes the Welcome Centre volunteers signing children in and out with the electronic Check In system. When a child is signed in, the child will receive a name tag, and the parent will receive a Security tag. The child may only be released when the parent (or the other parent or guardian) returns with the security tag, which has the same code as the Child's name tag. The following pictures demonstrate our release policy for kids Nursery to Grade 4.

## Releasing of the Child Process



5a) If the parents has no other kids to pick up- throw out the name tag/ security tag  
5b) If the parents have other children to pick up- return the security tag/ name tag to them

- In the nursery: If there is a problem with a child during the service and the parent needs to be notified, either the “call box” is used via child’s number. Or a message should be relayed to the sanctuary Tech Team and a message will be displayed across the projection screen ... “Would the parent of < child’s code > please come to attend your child”
- We advise that a parent or designate does not enter the nursery or other program room when picking up their child unless requested to do so. This enables the volunteers to maintain order and provide a better level of security.
- In the preschool room: If there is a problem with a child during the service and the parent needs to be notified, a message should be relayed to the sanctuary Tech Team and a message will be displayed across the projection screen ... “Would the parent of < child’s code > please attend to your child”.
- We advise that a parent or designate does not enter the nursery or other program room when picking up their child unless requested to do so. This enables the volunteers to maintain order and provide a better level of security.

### *Elementary*

- For younger elementary, grades 1, 2, 3 and for newcomers, we recommend that the child stay in the classroom until the parent or designate arrives. The volunteers must check the parents security tag and the child’s name tag to ensure the codes match before releasing the child.
- If a parent gives the elementary child permission to be released from the program without them present
- Children should never be dropped off in a program area without an adult volunteer present. If only one volunteer is present, the door must be left open.
- Children, grades 4 to 6 (or younger), who have permission to be released from a program without a parent or guardian present must have that information indicated on their registration form or on the clipboard. Before releasing the child from the program area, volunteers will ask whether the child knows where to find his or her parent/guardian. If the child seems uncertain, volunteers will keep them in the program area.

### ***Pictures and Custody Orders***

#### *Picture Waiver*

- All children will be registered by a parent or guardian using the Kids Ministry Registration form appropriate to that child’s involvement at WMB. The parent or guardian must complete the picture waiver section of the Kids Ministry Registration form. All requests of parents/ guardians related to picture taking will be respected and followed.

### *Custody Orders*

- All custody orders will be protected. Under no circumstances is a custody order to be violated unless there is police/court intervention.
- Where there is question to the identity of someone seeking access to a child or to their rightful access to that child, the child will be held until the registering parent or guardian can be contacted.

### ***Washroom Guidelines***

#### *Nursery*

1. Diaper changing procedures are clearly posted in the nursery diaper changing area.
2. If at all possible, it is strongly encouraged that diaper changing be done by the child's parent.
3. Diaper changing is to be done only by volunteers who are scheduled that week and must be conducted within view of other ministry volunteers.

#### *Preschool, JK, SK*

1. We strongly recommend that parents take their children to the washroom prior to the start of their program. This recommendation should be communicated to parents at the beginning of each new ministry year and throughout the year to newcomers.
2. We recommend that two people escort a group of children to the washroom. One of these people must be an adult. Some classes may not have two adults available, therefore there will be a ministry supervisor checking the program areas to provide assistance with washroom and security duties.
3. If just one child must go to the washroom, the child will be encouraged to find a buddy of the same gender. The two children will go to the washroom with an adult volunteer. If the children are taking longer than necessary, prop open the door and call their names. If they seem to be misbehaving in the bathroom, please grab another adult volunteer to watch you as you go into the washroom to see if the children are safe.
4. Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into the cubicle with a child and shut the door.
5. If preschool children need assistance in the washroom, an adult may enter the washroom cubicle to assist under the following guidelines:
  - a. A second adult should be within visual contact.
  - b. The outside washroom door must be propped open and the adult must stand in the open cubicle doorway.

#### *Elementary (grades 1-6)*

1. A child should not be sent to the washroom alone, but should be accompanied by a peer buddy of the same sex and approximate age. If someone more than two years older accompanies the child to the washroom then steps (2) and (3) apply.

2. If an “adult” volunteer, i.e. someone more than two years older, escorts the child to the washroom then the washroom door is to be propped open to make sure that everything is in order. The volunteer should remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child before escorting him or her back to their program. The volunteer should call the child’s name if he or she is taking longer than seems necessary.
3. Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into the cubicle with a child and shut the door.

### ***Health and Safety Guidelines***

- Children having severe allergies will have the information brought to the attention of their Kingdom Kidz leader and noted on their registration form and nametag.
- In the nursery, a list of allergies will be posted in the sign in area.
- The cleaning and sanitation of toys and table surfaces will be done on a regular basis.

### ***Illness***

- A child who is ill and could therefore expose others to illness is not to be received into the nursery or program room. Factors and symptoms to consider are:
  - o Fever, unusual fatigue, unusual irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat
  - o Children with a known communicable disease
- In the case of vomit, a cleaning solution called Biosorb is kept under the sink in the Nursery washroom. Wear gloves and follow the instructions on the Biosorb bottle.

### ***Medication***

- Ministry volunteers are not to give or apply any medications. Parents are to be contacted and should administer all medications.
- Medication is not to be left in a program room. When a child brings medication, the medication is to be kept in the possession of the Director of Kids Ministry or their assigned replacement.
- In the extreme case where Epi-pens and puffers are needed for allergies or asthma, written instructions are to be provided by the parent or guardian to the ministry leader. Requests should be written, signed, dated, and filed permanently.
- Topical medications for diaper changing purposes are to be used only when instructed and provided by the parent or guardian.

### ***Injury***

- First Aid Kits are located on each level of the building. One is outside of room 102 in the Lower Auditorium and the other is under the church mailboxes on the main level.
- A parent will be contacted when an injury, accident, or medical emergency occurs.

- Incident reports are to be completed for any and all accidents (Located with the First Aid Kits, in hanging file in the nursery and in Leader's Binders). Injuries are to be reported to the Director of Kids Ministry
- Only volunteers who are First Aid Certified will administer emergency first aid.

### *Dealing With Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood*

- When a child is injured, the individual is to be separated from others. The area where the injury occurred or where any blood may have dropped on the floor or toys is also to be isolated
- Ministry volunteers need to ensure that no other children have contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury
- Non-latex gloves are to be used when bandaging the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears, and eyes
- Extreme care will be taken in cleaning up all blood and bloody bandages and the safe and secure removal of waste and disposal of gloves to a secure waste removal container
- Hands are to be washed carefully with sterilizing soap available in the first aid kit
- When ministering to children with HIV or AIDS, specific guidelines for the care of these children will be developed and followed

### *Fire Emergencies*

- We pray that a fire or other emergency never occurs but, if it does, our first concern is the safety of children.
- In the event of a fire, children are to be escorted out of the building through the nearest exit and taken to the sidewalk area in front of the church, and proceed to the Lexington Field for pick up by their parent or other designated caregiver. In the case of bad weather, Faith Lutheran Church, directly across Lexington road will provide emergency shelter.
- Nursery: The team leader will take the attendance list and the orange vest with him/her. Members of the worship team will help escort children to the field. An evacuation crib is located in the back of the nursery and is to be used to escort multiple children out of the nursery safely. Once at the field, all children will be brought to the leader with the orange vest. Parents will pick up children there. Children will be released when the parent arrives with their security tag, which has a code that matches the Child's code on their name tag.
- Preschool: The leader will take the attendance list and the yellow vest with him/her. Have all preschoolers hold on to the rope (found on the hooks) as you make your way down to the field. Please put on the safety vest. Once at the field, all children will be brought together in a line while they wait for their parents to arrive. Children will be released to their parent after matching the security codes found on the child's name tag and parent's security tag. Parents are not to pick up their children in the WMB building or on their way to the field.

- JK/SK: the leader will take the attendance list with him/her. Have all JK/SK children hold on to the rope (found on the hooks) as you make your way down to the field. Please put on the safety vest. Once at the field, all children will be brought together in a line while they wait for their parents to arrive. Children will be released to their parent after matching the security codes found on the child's name tag and parent's security tag. Parents are not to pick up their children in the WMB building or on their way to the field.
- Grade 1-6: One Tribe Leader will take the attendance list with him/her and lead their tribe out through the appropriate exit towards the field. Once at the field, all children in the tribe will be brought together in a line while they wait for their parents to arrive. Children are not to be released without checking the security codes on the child's name tag and the parent's security tag.
- Emergency evacuation procedures will be posted in a visible place in each program room stating the planned route of escape to the nearest exit

### ***Proper Display of Affection***

#### ***Appropriate Touch***

Physical touch is an important element in the communication of love and care. Volunteers, Leaders and Staff need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love.

- Speak to the child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
- Hold the child's hand when speaking, listening or walking him or her to an activity.
- Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting or quieting is needed.
- Pat a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.
- Gently hold the child's shoulder, hand or chin to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour.
- Hold a preschool child who is crying.
- All touch should be done in view of others.

#### ***Inappropriate Touch***

To respect the personal space of children and to provide peace of mind of parents, we want to be on the lookout for improper touching or situations that could be, or appear to be improper. The following types of touch must be avoided:

- Kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you.
- Extended hugging and tickling.
- Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit except when assisting a child with toileting as outlined previously.

- Carrying older children (grade 1 and up) or having them sit on your lap. Always keep your hands visible.
- Being alone with a child.
- Avoid prolonged physical contact
- “Wrestling” with children or horseplay.