

“PLAN TO PROTECT” POLICIES

1. Six-Month Waiting Period

- a. All prospective Ministry Personnel will have regularly attended church at West Zion Mennonite Church for the previous six months before serving with children or youth.
- b. Exceptions can be made for transfers, or members in good standing from another approved local church. For these exceptions, reference checks must be received from at least three individuals, including one from their previous Pastor or present Pastor and if applicable their past Children’s Ministry Director.

2. Previous Accusation, Conviction or Suspicion

- a. Individuals that have been accused, or convicted, or are under the suspicion of crimes against children and/or youth or have been convicted of violent crimes or other relevant crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programs where children or youth participate.

3. Education of Ministry Personnel on the Plan to Protect Policies

- a. Those individuals who serve with children or youth between the ages of 0 & 18 are required to read through the Ministry Training Folder containing West Zion’s Plan to Protect Policies and to sign a form at the end ensuring that they have read and understand and are willing to comply to our policies. Their signature on the Declaration Form also indicates that they understand the disciplinary action to be taken by the leadership of West Zion Mennonite Church should suspicious activity be reported.

4. Volunteer Ministry Personnel Application Form:

- a. Any person 18 years of age and older desiring to serve with children or youth between and including the ages of 0 to 18 years must complete a *Volunteer Ministry Application Form* providing **two references**. If not in attendance at West Zion Mennonite Church **one of these two references** must be from your present pastor.
 1. Specifically those involved in:
 - a. Mid-Week Children’s Programming
 - b. Sunday Morning Children’ Programming
 - c. Youth Group
 - d. Worship Teams who have children or youth involved
 - e. Nursery
 - f. Summer Children’s Programming

5. Volunteer Ministry Service Form/Guideline:

- a. To be used as a guide for the respective Team Director when meeting with prospective:
 1. Worship/Music Team members (non-members)
 2. Life Group leaders (non-members)
 3. Children’s Ministry workers who under 18 years
- b. A **signature** is **not required** by the applicant

6. RCMP Criminal Record Background Checks:

- a. Any person 18 years of age and older desiring to serve with children or youth between the ages of 0 to 18 years must complete an RCMP Criminal Record Background Check.
- b. RCMP Criminal Record Background Checks will need to be redone if ministry personnel have been absent from the community or church for more than six (6) months (consideration by the pastoral staff will be made for those known to have explainable absences re: long-term missionaries, illness)
- c. Persons in Children/Youth Ministry lead positions, and all Pastors, will renew their RCMP Criminal Record Background Check every five years (5).

7. Family Services Intervention Record Checks

- a. Persons in Children/Youth Ministry lead positions will obtain and renew a Family Services Intervention Record Check every five (5) years
- b. All Pastors will obtain and renew a Family Services Intervention Record Check every five (5) years or prior to their Pastoral Contract Renewal.

8. Christian Leadership Life-Style Agreement:

- a. All those who are 18 years of age and older who are Elders and/or Youth Leaders will sign the Christian Leadership Life-Style Agreement.

9. Transportation

- a. All those 21 years and older, with 5 years of driving experience, who wish to drive youth or children, other than their own, on a church-sponsored event must:
 1. Be approved by the Ministry Lead
 2. Sign the Driver's Contract
 3. Submit a photocopy of their current and valid insurance and driver's
 4. Submit a copy of their vehicle insurance
 - a. Must have a minimum of 1 million dollars liability coverage.
- b. All youth under the age of 18 must be transported by an approved driver (point 8.a.) during church-sponsored activities unless travelling with their own parents/guardians.
- c. The number of occupants in vehicles transporting children and youth during church-sponsored activities must not exceed the number of seat belts and each child must be in age appropriate safety restraints. Seat belts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times the vehicle is in operation.

10. Youth Parental Consent Form

- a. All parents of attending youth must have a completed Parental Consent Form for their children.
- b. The Consent Form includes medical release information.
- c. Photocopies or electronic copies of the Consent Forms must be kept in the ministry lead's possession during trips and events with the originals filed in the church office for 25 years.

11. Youth Group Specific Policies:

- a. All youth who are 18 years of age and still **attending** youth events will be required to have an RCMP Criminal Record Background check completed and on file at West Zion *upon the discretion of the youth leadership team and the Administration Team* (only required if requested by the Youth Leadership Team and/or the Administration Team). This will cover for overnight trips as well.
- b. Those youth who are 18 years of age and under who help lead youth with the supervision of adult youth leaders will NOT be required to have an RCMP Criminal Record Background check completed. (Many students turn 18 while in their Grade 12 year and are either still attending youth activities or helping serve under the supervision of approved leaders) Upon Grade 12 Graduation RCMP Criminal Record Background Check is required along with all other necessary paperwork for Plan to Protect.
- c. All adult leaders must have an RCMP Criminal Record Background Check completed and on file at West Zion Mennonite Church
- d. All adult leaders (18 & over) must agree to and sign West Zion's Christian Leadership Life-Style Agreement form.
- e. All adult leaders must complete a Volunteer Ministry Personnel Application Form complete with two references.
- f. All adult leaders must read, understand and complete all given information in the Plan to Protect Training duotang including signing and handing in the Declaration Form to the office.
- g. All parents of attending youth must have a completed Parental Consent Form for each of their children.

- h. All parents and/or leaders who drive with youth *other than their own children* in their vehicles must read, understand and complete all given information in the Plan to Protect Training Duotang (RCMP Check, Volunteer Ministry Personnel Application Form, Driver's Contract, Declaration Form) to the office. They must also submit a photocopy of their current and valid insurance and driver's license to keep on file at West Zion – their insurance must have a minimum of 1 million dollars liability coverage.
- i. **Staffing Ratios for Youth Overnight Events:**
 - 1. *Junior High Events* - one Ministry Personnel for every 7 students
 - 2. *Senior High Events* - one Ministry Personnel for every 10 students
- j. **Staffing Ratios for Regular Youth Events**
 - 1. The Youth program will strive to have at least 1 leader for every 15 students.
- k. To comply with insurance standards, there must be at least two *unrelated* Ministry Personnel at all youth events.
- l. Overnight events with mixed genders must be accompanied by both male and female Ministry Personnel.
- m. It is recommended that there be a 5-year gap between Ministry Personnel and the youth they serve.
- n. **Contacting Opportunities:**
 - 1. Ministry Personnel are encouraged to meet with youth in small group settings and in teams.
 - 2. One-on-One Mentoring should be pre-approved by ministry lead and documentation made and filed.
 - 3. One-on-One Mentoring must be done in public settings and only under the following conditions:
 - a. The Ministry Lead is informed of the time and place of the meeting prior to the meeting
 - b. Parental permission is granted
 - c. Separate transportation is arranged for members of the opposite gender
 - 4. Being alone with a student, even if nothing ever happens, opens the door to risk of an accusation. Avoid the risk by never placing yourself in a place without witnesses.
- o. **Appropriate Physical Contact**
 - 1. One-arm hugs, shoulder-to-shoulder hugs, touch on the back or shoulder
- p. **Inappropriate Physical Contact**
 - 1. Chest-to-chest hugging, extended hugging, overexuberant affection, lap-sitting, kissing, touching of thighs, knees or inappropriate spots of the body
 - 2. Ministry Personnel must be aware of conduct that could be misinterpreted
 - a. Horseplay, tickling, extended backrubs
 - 3. Conduct that may seem innocent to one party but may be deemed inappropriate by another party or those watching, should be closely monitored and Ministry Personnel should be encouraged to refrain from this conduct.
 - 4. Ministry Personnel are not to be left alone with a youth
- q. **Youth Ministry Personnel Standards – Lifestyle**
 - 1. For the protection of our youth, Ministry Personnel are to be committed to maintaining a consistent spiritual life including prayer, Bible reading, attendance at youth events, planning meetings and worship services.
 - 2. Ministry Personnel are to be role models of integrity at all times. Ministry Personnel are to refrain from activities that are illegal or could be considered morally and biblically questionable. If Ministry Personnel involve themselves in questionable or borderline behaviors, students may silently watch and, engage in these same behaviors. If Ministry Personnel involve themselves in questionable or borderline behavior and keep them private, then their personal integrity is challenged.
 - 3. All those wishing to serve as Ministry Personnel with the youth will sign the Christian Leadership Life-Style Agreement.

4. **Dating:** Ministry Personnel working with youth are discouraged from pursuing a dating relationship with a student (if one previously exists due to leaders coming out of the youth group the main youth leader is to be informed and there shall be no public display of affection - PDA at youth events.)
- r. **Responsibility of Youth**
1. From the set start and finish times for the scheduled youth events, the Youth Leadership Team that is present at the event are responsible for the attending youth according to the guidelines described in the West Zion Plan to Protect policies.
 2. When the event has reached the set finish time, the responsibility of the attending youth then shifts from West Zion Mennonite Church and its Ministry Personnel to the parents of those youth, unless a parent has given West Zion and its Ministry Personnel direct permission to extend that responsibility for whatever reasons, (prayer time, working through issues, giving the youth a ride home etc.).

12. Special Events & Overnight Policies:

- a. **Consent Forms** will be obtained for every child or youth participating in regular, offsite or overnight youth events.
- b. **Overnight Parental Permission Forms** – a participant in a church activity that involves overnight activities of any kind shall be provided with Parental Permission Forms that must be signed and returned to the leader of the event before the activity. These completed forms will accompany the ministry lead during the trip.
 1. This form will include written communication regarding retreats and overnight events, the exact location of the event, emergency phone numbers and the name and contact number of the main ministry leader attending the event. This information will be made available to families no less than one week prior to the event.
- c. All original Consent Forms remain filed at the church office and photocopies or electronic copies will remain with the ministry lead during the outing.
- d. Policies for Ministry Personnel staffing will be followed. Female Ministry Personnel will be assigned responsibility for female youth, and male Ministry Personnel will be assigned responsibility for male youth.
- e. Youth attending retreats and overnight event will not be allowed to leave the event. Any exceptions must be added to the Consent Form signed by the parent.
- f. Female and male youth are not allowed in each other's rooms or tents for any reason during retreats and overnight events and they are not permitted to sleep in mixed company.
- g. The "Off-Site Travel Form" will accompany the group with the original left in the church office and filed permanently consisting of the names and numbers of all participants the location of event and contact numbers, and the drivers and vehicles involved.

13. Supervision of Ministry Personnel:

- a. Ensure that classrooms have windows, or that doors are left open.
- b. Attendance of Ministry Personnel will be taken at each event.
- c. To comply with insurance standards, there must be at least two *unrelated* Ministry Personnel in the facility when serving with children and youth.

14. Plan to Protect Program Maintenance:

- a. The Office Administrator will strive to maintain the needed records to comply with our Plan to Protect Policies.
- b. The Plan to Protect Program is reviewed frequently making necessary adjustments to ensure the safety of our children and youth.

15. Ministry Personnel Staffing Ratios:

- a. **Infants Age 0-2:** 1 Ministry Personnel to every 3 infants
- b. **Preschool Age 3-4:** 1 Ministry Personnel to every 5 children
- c. **Elementary Ages 5-11:** 1 Ministry Personnel to every 10 children
- d. **Junior High Events Ages 12-14:** 1 Ministry Personnel for every 15 students

- e. *Junior High and Elementary Overnight/Off-Site Events* – one Ministry Personnel for every 7 students
- f. *Senior High Events Ages 15-18:* - one Ministry Personnel for every 15 students
- g. *Senior High Overnight/Off-Site Events* - one Ministry Personnel for every 10 students

16. Classroom Staffing

- a. Adequate staffing is maintained in all classrooms.
- b. If there is only one Ministry Personnel per class, there must be a window in the door or the door should remain open.
- c. Ministry Personnel between the ages of 12 and 17 must be supervised by a Ministry Personnel over the age of 18. There must be a window in the door or the door must remain open.
- d. It is recommended that there be at least a five-year gap between Ministry Personnel and the children they serve.

17. Special Needs

- a. If a child or youth with mental or physical limitations intends to regularly attend a ministry of West Zion Mennonite Church, it is left to the discretion of the Sr. Pastor, Family Pastor, Childrens' Ministry Director and/or the Discipleship Team as to whether or not the child or youth needs an accompanying Aide in order to participate in the intended West Zion activities.

18. Occasional Observers

- a. Occasional observers are not to be placed in a position of trust with children who are not their own.

19. Ministry Personnel Identification

- a. At our mid-week children's meetings:
 - 1. Ministry Personnel have been provided with identification nametags or approved clothing

20. Child Registration – Children's Programming (Sunday morning, mid-week, summer)

- a. Registration forms have been given to all participants and are kept on file.
- b. Release and permission statements have been included on all registration forms.
- c. A PIPEDA policy and purpose and extent statement has been established by Church leadership and included on all registration forms.

21. Receiving & Releasing Children –

- a. **Nursery to Age 4 (Pre-school)**
 - 1. Sign-in and sign-out forms have been developed and their usage monitored for all children in the Nursery and Pre-School program.
 - 2. Children are not to be dropped off in a classroom without Ministry Personnel present.
 - 3. Babies and pre-school children will only be released into the care of the child's parent or designate utilizing a signature/initial.
- b. **Elementary Age**
 - 1. Younger elementary students & newcomers are to remain in the classroom until the parent or designate comes to pick them up & the student recognizes them.
 - 2. For the older elementary students, Ministry Personnel are to ask whether the child knows where to find his/her parent. If the child demonstrated uncertainty, the Ministry Personnel will keep the child with hem in the classroom until the parent or designate picks up the child.
- c. The policy for receiving and releasing of children has been clearly communicated to all Ministry Personnel.

22. Attendance

- a. Attendance of children and youth will be taken at children's and youth programming
- b. Attendance of all Ministry Personnel will be taken at children's and youth programming.
- c. Plans have been made to keep all attendance records on file for 25 years.

23. Washroom Guidelines

- a. Inform and encourage parents to deal with their baby's toileting needs and to take their children to the washroom prior to each class or service.
- b. **Nursery:**
 1. Ministry Personnel have been educated on the diaper changing policies.
 2. West Zion Mennonite Church Policy is to only have the parents of the child change their diaper.
- c. **Preschool:**
 1. Pre-school children are not to go to the washroom alone
 2. Two Ministry Personnel will escort a group of children to the washroom
 3. No Ministry Personnel will ever be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and they are never to go into the cubicle with a child and shut the door.
 4. When a pre-school child needs assistance in the washroom, Ministry Personnel may enter the washroom cubicle to assist utilizing the following guidelines:
 - a. Female Ministry Personnel assist both girls & boys in the washroom
 - b. The outside washroom door must be propped open and the adult must stand in an open cubicle doorway. Ministry Personnel will take into consideration the privacy of the child.
- b. **Elementary Children:**
 1. Elementary boys and girls are not to be sent to the washroom alone but should be accompanied by a buddy and Ministry Personnel.
 2. Ministry Personnel will escort the children to the washroom and prop the door open to make sure that everything is in order. Ministry Personnel should then remain outside the washroom and wait for the children before escorting them back to the classroom.
 3. Ministry Personnel are not to be alone with children in an unsupervised washroom and are never to enter into the cubicle and shut the door.
 4. Male Ministry Personnel are not to accompany female children to the washroom.

24. Architectural Precautions

- a. Renovation suggestions for architectural precautions have been identified by the "Plan to Protect" team and submitted to Church leadership.
- b. Electrical outlets in the Nursery have been covered with outlet plug covers.
- c. Ensure that windows in classrooms provide clear lines of visibility

25. Health & Safety Guidelines:

- a. First-Aid kits are available in the Kitchen, Secretary's office, (other locations)
- b. Plans have been made for annual emergency evacuation drills.
- c. Incident Report forms have been made accessible to Ministry Personnel.

26. Proper Display of Affection

- a. The Ministry Personnel have been educated and informed on "appropriate" and "inappropriate" touch policies.
- b. Ministry Personnel are not to be left alone with children or youth.
- c. **Youth:**
 1. **Appropriate Touch**
 - a. One-arm hugs, shoulder-to-shoulder hugs, touch on the back or shoulder

2. **Inappropriate Physical Contact**
 - a. Chest-to-chest hugging, extended hugging, over exuberant affection, lap-sitting, kissing, touching of thighs, knees or inappropriate spots of the body
 3. Ministry Personnel must be aware of conduct that could be misinterpreted such as horseplay, tickling, extended backrubs
 4. Conduct that may seem innocent to one party but may be deemed inappropriate by another party or those watching, should be closely monitored and Ministry Personnel should be encouraged to refrain from this conduct.
- d. **Children:**
1. **Appropriate Touch**
 - a. Hold a pre-school child who is crying
 - b. Speak to a child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears
 - c. Hold a child's hands when speaking, listening or walking him or her to an activity
 - d. Gently hold the child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behavior
 - e. Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting or quieting is needed
 - f. Pat a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm them
 2. **Inappropriate Touch**
 - a. Do not kiss a child or coax a child to kiss you
 - b. Do not engage in extended hugging or tickling
 - c. Do not hold a child's face when talking to or disciplining the child
 - d. Do not touch a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit
 - e. Do not carry older children and do not allow them to sit on your lap
 - f. Avoid prolonged physical contact with any child or youth
 - g. Physical discipline will be left to parent's discretion, and no volunteer or leader shall submit any punishment inflicting physical pain.

27. Discipline & Classroom Management

- a. The Ministry Personnel have been educated and informed on discipline and classroom management policies.

28. Bullying Among Peers

- a. Our children and youth have a right to a caring, respectful and safe church environment where they will encounter the love of God in action. All Ministry Personnel will take action to prevent bullying, teach against it, and assist and support children and youth who are being bullied. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.

29. Consequence and Disciplinary Action for Non-Adherence

- a. Immediate disciplinary action will be taken if the above polices are not followed by any of our volunteers which may include a Suspected Abuse Report completed and further judicial action taken if necessary.
- b. In the case of an injury, an Incident Report form will be filled out and kept on file.
- c. In the case of suspected abuse, the appropriate action will be taken, starting with filling out the Suspected Abuse Report Form and reporting the concern to the team leader and Pastors. It will be the call of the Pastors or Elder Chair to follow up with police and or appropriate government agency.