

**STIRLING SAFE CHURCH POLICY:
Abuse Prevention Policy for Minors¹**

1. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church seeks to implement its Households of Faith vision by providing emotionally and physically safe space for its Children, Youth, Staff and Volunteers. Staff and Volunteers involved in the Stirling faith community have a special calling and responsibility to mentor Children and Youth in a way that embodies the highest standards of Christian love and by providing an environment in which Children and Youth can grow physically, emotionally and spiritually. Healthy relationships are of vital importance to this objective. Staff and Volunteers will conscientiously model healthy physical, sexual and emotional boundaries, in which the safety and well-being of Children and Youth are always ensured.

We recognize that this requires providing an environment in which the risk of Physical, Sexual or Emotional Abuse is absolutely minimized through policies that outline expectations of positive relational boundaries between Stirling Staff and Volunteers and the Children and Youth relating to our congregation. There will be no tolerance for Abuse, Harassment, or Neglect by Staff and/or Volunteers working with Children and Youth in our congregation. In addition, Staff and Volunteers will be pro-active in preventing harm to Children and Youth, as well as protecting themselves from false and wrongful allegations.

2. DEFINITIONS

In order that it is clearly understood what constitutes acceptable behaviour, definitions of abuse and related issues are essential.²

- Acceptable Touch:** Acceptable physical expressions of love and caring can include the following behaviours:
- a) Bending down to the Child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully.
 - b) Putting an arm around the shoulder of a Child who needs quieting or comforting or holding their hand.
 - c) Patting a Child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.
 - d) Holding a preschool Child who is crying.

¹ This policy is based on and substantially mirrors the policy of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada entitled, *A Plan to Protect Our Children, Youth & Leaders*.

² Defined terms are indicated by capitalization throughout the body of the policy.

Adult:	Anyone eighteen (18) years of age and over.
Bathing Suit:	For girls, a Bathing Suit is defined as a one-piece suit. In this definition, a bikini or two-piece is not considered a Bathing Suit. For boys, a Bathing Suit is defined as trunk shorts.
Child:	Means a Vulnerable Person.
Child Abuse:	Inappropriate physical, emotional, and/or sexual behaviour in relation to a Vulnerable Person(s).
Child Neglect:	The failure of those responsible for the care of a Vulnerable Person to meet their physical, emotional or medical needs to an extent that the Vulnerable Person's health, development or safety is endangered.
Emotional Abuse:	Emotional Abuse constitutes any pattern of hurting a Vulnerable Person's feelings to the point of damaging their self-respect. It includes, but is not limited to, verbal attacks, insults, humiliation or rejection.
Event:	An Event is defined as a specific program Event for Vulnerable Persons and does not include such occasions as an intergenerational potluck meal, regular worship services, or other events that normally include Vulnerable Persons as a matter of course.
External Resource Person:	Any Adult who has been asked by Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church to provide leadership for a single Event who does not have ongoing involvement with Stirling Children or Youth—e.g. speaker, workshop leader. Such a person is considered an External Resource Person whether or not payment or an honorarium is given for their services.
Harassment:	Harassment includes, but is not limited to subjecting a Vulnerable Person to behaviours that are disturbing, worrying, unnerving, tormenting, or distressing. Harassment can take a variety of subtle or overt forms ranging from name calling to physical confrontation. The "accessory role," whether by silence, laughter, or non-intervention, implies indifference or unspoken approval and is therefore also considered a form of Harassment.
Inappropriate Touch:	Inappropriate touch includes the following behaviours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Corporal punishment. b) Touching a Child or Youth in any area normally covered by a Bathing Suit except when assisting a Child with toileting. c) Kissing a Child or coaxing a Child to kiss you. d) Extended hugging and tickling. e) Any touch a Child is uncomfortable with, even if the touch is well intentioned.

f) Inappropriate Touch includes instances when the touching is initiated by a Vulnerable Person and directed towards an Adult. It is the responsibility of the Adult to disengage from this Inappropriate Touch and to redirect the behaviour of the Vulnerable Person.

g) Any of the behaviours described as Sexual Abuse below in this Section.

Mentor: A screened Volunteer who has been selected to build a healthy, supportive relationship with a specific Youth.

Minimum Waiting Period: Twelve months of significant affiliation with Stirling are required before a Volunteer in the medium to high responsibility category may take a lead role.

Minor: Means a Vulnerable Person.

Observed Symptoms: Any unusual cuts, bruises, and/or lacerations on the body and/or abnormal behaviour unbecoming the Child or Youth in question. A Vulnerable Person who has suffered Emotional, Physical or Sexual Abuse may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and self-destructive or aggressive behaviour.

Physical Abuse: Physical Abuse is the act or intent of using physical force or action that results, or could result, in the injuring of a Vulnerable Person and is any use of physical force that goes beyond Reasonable Discipline. This definition of Physical Abuse applies to all Staff and Volunteers and is not dependent on differing cultural standards of discipline.

Premises: Premises is defined as any location at which an official Stirling Event is being held. Premises can also include the period of transit between two locations, for instance, a bus ride.

Reasonable Discipline: Natural consequences for actions that are contrary to the stated rules or expectations of proper behaviour at Stirling sponsored events. Reasonable Discipline will not involve physical contact, except to protect the safety of a Vulnerable Person. Reasonable Discipline does not include Verbal or Emotional Abuse.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual Abuse occurs when a Vulnerable Person is used for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between Children and/or Youth may also be considered Sexual Abuse if older or more powerful Children or Youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful. Sexual Abuse includes behaviours that involve touching as well as non-touching. Sexual Abuse includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviours:

Sexual Abuse that is defined as touching includes:

- a) Fondling
- b) Oral, genital and anal penetration

- c) Intercourse
- d) Forcible rape

Sexual Abuse that is defined as non-touching includes:

- a) Verbal or written comments
- b) Pornographic images
- c) Obscene phone calls, texts or messages
- d) Exhibitionism
- e) Allowing Children and/or Youth to witness sexual activity

Stirling: Means Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church Inc.

Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church: Means Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church Inc.

Staff: Any person at a Stirling Event under the direct employment of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church Inc. Staff excludes External Resource Persons, or persons receiving an honorarium for their services.

Team Approach: Having two (2) or more Adults present when working with Vulnerable Persons.

Unrelated Adult: Any person who is age 18, or older, who is not related by blood or marriage to any member of the family.

Volunteer: Any person who has been asked by Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church to provide leadership, care, or support for an Event that involves the custodianship or care of Minors.

Vulnerable Person: Any person under eighteen (18) years of age.

Youth: Means a Vulnerable Person.

3. SCREENING

A. Screening Procedures

We recognize that different roles carry with them differing power dynamics and therefore different levels of risk and responsibility. Any Staff person or Volunteer with power or authority over Children and/or Youth will be subject to the screening assessment and procedures laid out below. The screening of Volunteers will be the responsibility of a member(s) of the pastoral team in conjunction with all ministries working with Children and Youth.

Persons who have been screened by the standards of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada *Safe Spaces Enabling Ministry* criteria, and have a current status under that policy, will not require additional screening provided that their responsibility status is appropriate for the role they will be fulfilling at Stirling.

1. Parents/caregivers who attend events along with their Child or Youth and are **not** in primary leadership. **Risk level low**
 - a. Screening not required
2. External Resource Persons engaged to speak or lead at a one-time Event in a group setting (e.g. speaker, workshop leader). **Risk level low**
 - a. Safe Church Covenant
3. Individuals involved in on-site leadership of children and youth in a group setting (e.g. Faith formation leaders, helpers). **Risk level medium**
 - a. Leaders are known to Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church
 - b. Minimum Waiting Period
 - c. Volunteer Registration Form (references required if individual does not meet the Minimum Waiting Period)
 - d. Safe Church Covenant
 - e. Criminal reference check
4. Individuals involved in on-site and off-site leadership of youth in small group, large group, or one-on-one (e.g. Youth sponsors, Mentors). **Risk level high**
 - a. Leaders are known to Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church
 - b. Minimum Waiting Period
 - c. Volunteer Registration Form
 - d. References (even if Minimum Waiting Period is met)
 - e. Safe Church Covenant
 - f. Criminal reference check
5. Ministry Team Members, who, due to leadership power dynamics, are always considered to be in a situation of high responsibility. **Risk level high**
 - a. Through the hiring process Staff members agree to:
 - i. Respect the principles and policies of *A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership, A Policy and Procedure for Ministerial and Staff Misconduct*, the *Stirling Workplace Harassment Policy* and the *Stirling Workplace Violence Policy*.
 - ii. Undergo a criminal reference check.

B. Screening Criteria

1. Leaders Are Known to Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church:

All personnel who fall under medium and high responsibility categories, whether Volunteer or paid, will be known to Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church. These persons will be invited to a leadership position by a Stirling representative, by a Stirling Staff person, or will be responding to a general request for Volunteer leaders.

2. Minimum Waiting Period:

Volunteers who fall under medium and high responsibility categories must have 12+ months of significant affiliation with Stirling before being in a position of primary leadership of a Stirling Event. The Minimum Waiting Period for primary leadership is waived for Staff.

3. Background Reference Checks:

Volunteers who fall under the high risk category, or any Volunteer in the medium risk category who does not meet the Minimum Waiting Period, must provide the names of three references, one of which is their most recent/current pastor. Any Volunteer who does not meet the Minimum Waiting Period will always be required to work with a longer term Volunteer or Staff member and will not be the primary leadership person in charge of an Event.

A Stirling Staff member or designated Volunteer will consult with references using the *Background Reference Check Form* in Appendix C and record the appropriate information to be kept on file in the church office. References will be asked to reflect on the volunteer's experience/ability in the following areas:

- a) Faith Journey
- b) Ability to develop/maintain relationships with Children/Youth
- c) Ability to work well in a team setting
- d) Any concerns they might foresee with the individual volunteering in our Faith Formation Ministry at Stirling

4. Safe Church Covenant:

All Volunteers and Staff engaged in ministry with Children or Youth will have read and understood Stirling's *Safe Church Policy: Abuse Prevention Policy for Minors* and will sign a copy of the *Safe Church Covenant*, which will be kept on file in the church office. See Appendix A.

5. Volunteer Registration:

All Volunteers and Staff involved in medium and high risk activities will complete Stirling's Volunteer Registration Form. These forms will be kept on file in the church office. See Appendix B.

6. Criminal Reference Checks:

All Staff and Volunteers who fall under the medium and high risk categories will need to supply criminal reference checks – vulnerable sector. Costs will be covered by Stirling. It is acceptable to file a copy of an original criminal reference, provided that a Staff member has seen the original and certifies the copy with a signed notation to this effect. A record involving any abuse of Children or Youth will, in all cases, disqualify the individual from working directly with Children and/or Youth. The criminal reference check must be dated within six months of its submission to Stirling. Criminal Reference Checks are good for a period of five years.

4. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

A. General Principles

All Child Abuse involves the misuse of power. Misuse of power takes place when individuals take advantage of the authority or power they have over Vulnerable Persons. As a matter of principle, it is always the responsibility of the individual with greater power to protect and maintain relational boundaries, even if a person with lesser power invites a person with greater power to breach those boundaries.

B. Administration of the Policy

Oversight of policy administration will be the responsibility of a member(s) of the pastoral team in conjunction with all ministries working with Children and Youth. This will include Volunteer and Staff education, the production of printed materials required by the policy, the filing in a secure place of documentation required by the policy, reviewing and ensuring the currency of required documentation such as congregational covenants, Volunteer registration, background reference checks, and criminal reference checks, ensuring compliance with the policy to the best of their ability, and conducting an annual review (evaluating current practice and looking forward) of the policy's effectiveness in conjunction with annual training sessions. This review will be submitted to Faith Formation Ministry and, via the lay leader, to church council.

Pastoral team staff in conjunction with all ministries working with Children and Youth will also be responsible for assessing and assigning risk levels to Events not described in this policy and will then implement the appropriate screening that is required. This will also relate to events for which Stirling provides Volunteers but for which it is not entirely responsible, such as an inter-church Youth or vacation Bible school program. In circumstances such as this, Stirling will negotiate appropriate screening criteria with the third party involved.

Pastoral team staff in conjunction with all ministries working with Children and Youth will also oversee the provision and maintenance of equipment related to this policy such as first aid kits, availability of a cell phone, etc.

C. Team Approach

At all Stirling sponsored events involving Children and/or Youth, including Mentor activities, a Team Approach will be employed to ensure that there are always two or more Unrelated Adults present. As a general principle, Staff and Volunteers will avoid placing themselves in circumstances where they are alone with Children and Youth. Whenever possible, Adults should be within easy sight of another screened Unrelated Adult

In rare circumstances, a Stirling Staff member or Volunteer who has undergone the appropriate screening outlined in the screening protocols (Section 3: Screening) may be in a situation where s/he will be alone with an individual or group of Children or Youth. To provide accountability, the Staff member or Volunteer will ensure that at least one other Staff member is fully aware of the nature, location, and time frame of the Event.

Meeting with a Child or Youth to provide pastoral or lay support, including Mentoring, will only occur:

- a) In the presence of another Unrelated (wherever possible) Adult
- b) In a public space with other Unrelated Adults present—e.g. a coffee shop

- c) In a room or office with an open door or a window in the door, and whenever possible, with one or more other Unrelated Adults present in the area.

D. Out of Program/Off-Premises Contact

Whether on or off-Premises, Stirling Staff and Volunteers running Stirling programs will not engage in one-on-one socializing with Children and/or Youth outside of Stirling programs. This does not refer to contact made in supportive or Mentor-type relationships as referenced above in C. Team Approach.

E. Off-Premises Safety Standards

Children and/or Youth are required to stay on the Premises of a Stirling Event at all times unless a specific part of the program requires groups of people to leave together and there is more than one Adult present (e.g. caroling or groups doing random acts of kindness). The "Premises" for an Event will be the boundaries as defined by Stirling Staff or Volunteer leaders for that specific program or activity. In the case of an emergency where a Child and/or Youth requires medical treatment, if at all possible, two Unrelated Adults shall accompany the Child and/or Youth to the treatment location.

F. Discipline

Physical forms of discipline are not acceptable. Corporal punishment as a form of discipline is prohibited. Containment of an out-of-control Vulnerable Person is appropriate if it is necessary to ensure the safety of that person or the safety of other participants in the Event. If Staff or a Volunteer needs to discipline an individual Child or Youth in confidence, the conversation will be held in the presence of another Adult or out of earshot but in view of at least one other Adult.

G. Supervision of Bathroom Breaks (All vulnerable persons)

Any changing of diapers is the responsibility of parents/guardians.

Similarly, it is the responsibility of a parent or guardian to take their pre-Senior Kindergarten child to the bathroom. If not possible, then the screened Volunteer should do so in the presence of at least one Unrelated screened Volunteer.

School age Children requiring assistance should be accompanied to the door of the bathroom, which the worker should open to make sure no one is hanging around in the bathroom and then wait outside the door in the hallway in case they are called for help or hear anything suspicious. Helpers under the age of 16 should not be authorized to take children to the washroom unaccompanied by a screened Adult.

H. Safe Church Covenant

All Stirling Staff, Volunteers, and External Resource Persons will be required to sign a *Safe Church Covenant* indicating that they have read and understood these policies and procedures.

I. Documentation

Documentation pertaining to Staff, Volunteers, External Resource Persons and Events will be kept on file indefinitely in a secure location. Documentation includes the following:

- a) Signed Safe Church Covenants
- b) Volunteer Registration Forms

- c) Background Reference Check Forms
- d) Criminal Reference Check Forms
- e) Incident Report Forms
- f) Medical Information & Permission Forms

J. Consent by Parent/Guardian

Written consent by a parent/guardian will be required for all high risk activities as defined in 3.A.4. Parents/guardians are required to complete a Medical Information and Permission Form prior to their Child/Youth's participation in such Events. This form must be completed or re-affirmed annually. When it is appropriate for Event leaders to carry copies of the forms (e.g. overnight retreat), information on the form will be held in confidence by the leaders of the Event and will be available to them for the duration of the Event. See Appendix E

For the Mentor program, in addition to the Medical Information and Permission Form in Appendix E, the Mentor will work with the parent/guardian and the Youth to develop a covenant describing—at minimum—expectations for parental/guardian consent (e.g. annual or per-Event) and communication forms permitted (e.g. email, texting, phone). A copy of this covenant will be given to the parent/guardian, the Youth, and the Mentor, and will be filed indefinitely in Stirling's Safe Church documentation. The Mentor will work with the parent/guardian and the Youth to re-affirm or revise this covenant annually. If reaffirmed, the original covenant may be dated, signed and re-filed.

K. Social Media

All Staff and Volunteers will abide by the principles and guidelines in the Safe Church Social Media Policy found in Appendix F. This policy is of particular importance to those serving as Mentors, for anyone considering "friend-ing," emailing or texting a Stirling Child or Youth, and for those exploring social media options for Stirling-related programs or groups.

L. General Health and Safety Issues

Stirling Staff and Volunteers will do their utmost to protect the physical health and well being of those Minors entrusted to their care. Examples of good practice are as follows:

- a) **On-site First Aid Kit.** Stirling Staff and Volunteer leaders will know the location of the on-site first aid kit and the location of phones available to make emergency calls. A list of individuals with First Aid Training will be maintained and posted in the church.
- b) **Off-site First Aid Kit.** Stirling will maintain an off-site first aid kit that will accompany all off-site Events that would not otherwise have first aid equipment available. For off-site events, Stirling Staff and Volunteer leaders will ensure that at least one individual has current First Aid Training.
- c) **Restocking First Aid Kits:** All First Aid Kits will be restocked and updated prior to the start of the Faith Formation year in September.
- d) **Health and Safety:** Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church follows the guidelines laid out in Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act as well as the Fire Safety Plan as required by Fire Department Officials of the City of Kitchener.
- e) **Cell Phone.** During off-site events, at least one participating Adult in the group will carry a cell phone for emergency calls. If older Youth are on their own for short periods of time

during an Event, cell phone communication will be maintained.

- f) **Transportation To and From Events.** Where possible, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to provide their Child with transportation to and from Stirling Events. If it is necessary for Staff or Volunteers (including Mentors) to provide transportation for a Minor, they will avoid being alone in a vehicle with a Child or Youth. In rare instances, if this is unavoidable, another screened Unrelated Adult will be informed of the arrangements for transportation.
- g) **Off-site Transportation.** Transportation for off-site program Events will be provided by any of the following:
 - a. Professional bus drivers
 - b. Volunteers licensed to drive a school bus
 - c. Staff licensed to drive personal vehicles
 - d. Volunteers licensed to drive personal vehicles
 - e. Parents/guardians licensed to drive personal vehicles

In all cases the individual must be appropriately licensed and vehicle insured for liability.

Whenever possible, a minimum of 2 screened Unrelated Adult supervisors will be in the vehicle with the Child(ren) and/or Youth at all times. Whenever possible, vehicle drivers will have no at-fault accidents and not more than 2 minor traffic violations in the past three years, and be a minimum of 25 years of age.

- h) **Reporting of Hazards.** Stirling Staff and Volunteers will report to Facilities Ministry Chair any physical safety hazards related to the Premises.

M. Protocol and Guidelines for Reporting Suspicion of Child Abuse

Suspicions of potential Child Abuse may be raised in a number of ways, including: actual witnessing of an abusive incident, observing physical or psychological signs; symptoms of abuse with no actual report by the Child; hearing a report from the victim or another Child. In the case of any suspected Child Abuse, the following procedures shall be observed in the order enumerated below.

1. **Inquiring About Abuse.** While it may, at times, be appropriate to ask a Child how an Observed Symptom appeared, it is never appropriate to ask any leading questions which might suggest to a Child that s/he has been abused or suggest names, places or methods of abuse. Further, no person shall conduct any investigation or question any individuals regarding suspected Child Abuse unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate authorities. Such investigations can be undertaken only by the Family & Children's Services or the police.
2. **Reporting a Suspicion of Abuse.** Any Stirling Volunteer or employee having suspicion of the abuse of a Child attending a Stirling sponsored Event must report the suspicion to the local Family & Children's Services or the police immediately. Any delay in reporting or providing the appropriate information may place the Child at further risk.
3. **Consulting About Abuse.** The Volunteer or employee may wish to consult with a Stirling Pastoral Team Member, but only if doing so does not delay the reporting of the concerns to the authorities.

- 4. Documentation of Abuse.** It is expected that any witness(es) to Observed Symptoms or events raising concern regarding abuse of Children and/or Youth will document their observations in an *Incident Report Form*, as outlined in Appendix D, including:
- a) Specific signs of Observed Symptoms
 - b) Any report of abuse made by the Child or others, and/or any witnessed event that raised suspicion
 - c) The date and time relating to any of the above
 - d) Any response the Child made to any of the above

This report will be written and signed as soon as possible after reporting to the appropriate authorities. The report will then be given to a Pastor and filed in the church office. A log of all follow up involvements regarding this concern will be maintained by those involved.

- 5. Confidentiality.** Any report and subsequent documentation of suspected Child Abuse is to be considered and treated as confidential. Access to this information will be limited to Pastoral Team Members and/or specified persons in Stirling responsible for providing leadership in this area, to the Family & Children's Services and police. When required, a Stirling-appointed attorney and/or insurance carrier will also have access.
- 6. Dissemination of Information.** The notification of the Child and/or Youth's parents/guardian of the suspicion of abuse will be carried out only in consultation with the Family & Children's Services or the police.
- 7. Support of Witness.** It is recognized that the witness(es) to any suspicions of Child Abuse will require support, especially once a report is made to the authorities. Appropriate pastoral support is key to their well-being, and they should also be instructed on how to respond if the Child, parents/guardians, or other interested parties contact him/her. Such instructions should include:
- a) Refraining from sharing any statement made by the Child with anyone other than the authorities until the authorities have determined whether or not the Child needs to be protected from contact with the person in question.
 - b) Refraining from sharing information with the parent/guardian, or any other person that has not been reported to the authorities. All information must be promptly reported to the Family & Children's Services.
 - c) Refraining from attempting to convince a parent/guardian that the alleged abuse happened or did not happen.
 - d) Listening to any information a parent/guardian or other party may offer about the suspected abuse, recording it immediately after the conversation, and ensuring that the additional information is reported in a manner consistent with the original report of the suspected abuse.
 - e) Assuring parents/guardians of the confidential nature of the report and the need to maintain confidentiality.

- 8. Safety During an Investigation of Abuse.** Appropriate precautions must be taken to

ensure that the victim of abuse and other Children at the Event or subsequent events are kept safe during the ongoing investigation by authorities. Such precautions should include the following:

- a) If the accused is a Staff member or Volunteer of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, s/he will immediately be suspended from his/her office or duty, pending the outcome of the investigation.
- b) The suspension will be carried out with full pay (for paid personnel) and without prejudice.
- c) Suspension shall be given in such a way that the investigation by the Family & Children's Services or police will not be jeopardized.
- d) The suspension from duties will not be viewed or accepted as the "guilt" of the accused, but only as an indication of the priority given to protect the welfare of Minors.
- e) If appropriate, a spokesperson will be designated to disclose to the congregation the facts, as known at the time, without disclosing any names of persons involved or other confidential details.
- f) All of the above steps will be carried out in consultation with the authorities.

9. Professional Support. Plans for pastoral and possibly clinical support of all parties involved will be offered as soon as the investigation is under way.

10. Reinstatement of the Accused. The decision whether or not to reinstate the accused to his/her previous position or duty will be dependent on the outcome of the investigation. Reinstatement will be done only if it is deemed safe and proper to do so, and in consultation with the police, Family & Children's Services, legal counsel and Child Abuse experts. If the accused is reinstated, efforts will be made to restore strained relationships and facilitate a healing process.

In the event of prosecution resulting in conviction, the abuser will not be restored to his/her previous position or duty within the congregation.

5. PREMISES

Most, but not all, Stirling events take place in the church building or on the church Premises.

A. Open Door Policy

All rooms in the church normally used for programming for Minors will have windows in the doors. If rental facilities are used, Premises with windows in the doors will be preferred. In both cases, if no windows exist in doors for rooms being used, an open door policy will be employed unless two or more Unrelated Adults are present in the room.

B. Access/Entry

If possible only one outside door will be unlocked during an Event. Once attendees have arrived, it is recommended that this door be locked if possible so as to limit access to the building.

C. Monitoring of Premises

Stirling Staff and/or Volunteers responsible for any given Event will monitor, as best as possible, any traffic coming in and out of the building.

6. TRAINING

This policy and procedures will be made available to all Staff and Volunteers working with Children and Youth. Annual training will be scheduled and the policy will be periodically reviewed with Staff and Volunteers. Members of the Stirling Pastoral Team in conjunction with all ministries working with Children and Youth will initiate implementation of policy training.

7. RESPONDING

- A. Staff and Volunteers will take seriously any report of perceived Child Abuse.
- B. Legal steps and procedures as outlined in the Operational Procedures, Section 4 will be carefully followed.
- C. Stirling Staff and Volunteers will refrain from admitting liability for any incident involving Children or Youth, or from making public statements about such an incident, without first obtaining formal legal counsel and the advice of Church Council.
- D. Assurance of confidentiality will be provided for both the alleged victim of abuse as well as the alleged perpetrator.
- E. In the event of an accident or incidence of abuse, Stirling Staff or a designated responder will immediately contact the congregation's insurance company and/or broker in order to satisfy the statutory conditions of the congregation's liability policy. Contact with the congregation's insurer will be maintained by the appropriate person(s) so as not to compromise any possible insurance coverage should an insurance claim become active.
- F. *Incident Report Forms* for significant injury during Stirling sponsored activities and/or suspected abuse will always be completed. This documentation will be kept in a confidential file indefinitely. See Appendix D.

The following forms are referenced in this policy and are to be used as indicated.

Appendix A: Safe Church Covenant

Appendix B: Volunteer Registration Form

Appendix C: Background Reference Check Form

Appendix D: Incident Report Form

Current copies of these forms are attached as Appendices. These forms may be updated periodically as required without the need for church council approval unless such change substantively alters any of the processes outlined in this policy.

Appendix A

**STIRLING AVENUE MENNONITE CHURCH INC.
SAFE CHURCH COVENANT**

As followers of Jesus Christ and as a Staff, Volunteer or External Resource Person of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church Inc., I recognize and accept the calling to mentor Children and Youth at Stirling Events and to ensure that our community of faith is a safe space for their nurture and faith development.

In order to make our Stirling Household of Faith as inviting, caring, and safe as possible, I covenant with the members of this congregation to be pro-active in preventing harm to our Children and Youth.

I, being familiar with the principles and guidelines outlined in the *Stirling Safe Church Policy: Abuse Prevention Policy for Minors*, covenant before God and this congregation to abide by the spirit and principles of these guidelines.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 20____

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____
(Staff/Volunteer/External Resource Person)

Witness: _____
(Congregational Representative)

Signed in Duplicate: One copy for Staff/Volunteer/External Resource Person
One copy placed on file in the Church Office

Appendix B

STIRLING AVENUE MENNONITE CHURCH INC. VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION FORM FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

(All information received will be held in strict confidence)

In our desire to make our Stirling Household of Faith a safe space for Children and Youth, our congregation believes that the following information is necessary to protect our program participants, as well as our Volunteers and Staff. Thank you in advance for sharing this commitment to safe church.

1. Personal Information

Full Name: _____

Address: _____
(Street) (City)

(Province) (Postal Code)

2. How long have you attended Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church? _____ Years

3. If you have attended Stirling for less than twelve months please provide the name, address, and phone number of previous church(es) attended in the last two years, as well as the years attended. If you have attended for more than twelve months, skip to number 4.

(Name)	(Location)	(Phone)	(Years Attended)
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(Name)	(Location)	(Phone)	(Years Attended)
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4. If you have attended Stirling for less than twelve months or are in a high risk volunteer position (see Section 3B: Screening Criteria) please provide references as indicated below, otherwise skip to number 5.

Most recent/current pastor:

(Name)	(Location)	(Phone)
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Provide two (2) *non-family* references:

Full Name: _____ Relationship to you _____
Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Full Name: _____ Relationship to you _____
Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

5. Have you ever been charged with a criminal offence? Yes No
6. Will your volunteer work at Stirling possibly involve driving children/youth to or from an event? Yes No

If yes, have you had *any* at-fault vehicular accidents or *more than two* minor traffic violations (e.g. speeding, failure to yield or stop) in the past three years? Yes No

Volunteer Statement:

I authorize the churches listed in this registration form to give any information they may have regarding my fitness for ministry with Children and Youth. I will provide a criminal reference check if called upon to do so. Furthermore, I acknowledge that the above information is correct to the best of my knowledge and acknowledge that I have read and understood the *Stirling Safe Church Policy: Abuse Prevention Policy for Minors* and agree to comply with it.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

**STIRLING AVENUE MENNONITE CHURCH INC.
BACKGROUND REFERENCE CHECK FORM
(Confidential Information, for office use only)**

Name of Applicant: _____

Record of contact with references identified by applicant for ministry with Children or Youth:

Date of Contact	Name of Pastoral Reference	Method of Contact Email/Phone/Fax
Summary of Contact:		

Date of Contact	Name of Non-family Reference	Method of Contact Email/Phone/Fax
Summary of Contact:		

Date of Contact	Name of Non-family Reference	Method of Contact Email/Phone/Fax
Summary of Contact:		

In Compliance with Waiting Period: Yes No
Signed Safe Church Covenant on File: Yes No
Volunteer Registration Form on File: Yes No
Current Criminal Reference Check on File: Yes No

Level of Screening Completed: Low Medium High
Responsibility Assessment: Low Medium High

Name of Person Doing the Screening and Assessment: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

**STIRLING AVENUE MENNONITE CHURCH INC. SAFE CHURCH POLICY:
INCIDENT REPORT FORM REGARDING A VULNERABLE PERSON
(Confidential Information)**

Child or Youth to whom this report refers:

Date:

Time:

Event:

Location:

Stirling Staff person or Volunteer in charge:

Details of incident or observed symptoms:

Actions taken/reported to:

Response of Child/Youth:

Others Present:

Person making this report:

Signature:

Date:

Return to a Stirling Pastoral Team Member for Filing in the Church Office

Appendix E

**STIRLING AVENUE MENNONITE CHURCH INC. SAFE CHURCH POLICY:
MEDICAL INFORMATION & PERMISSION FORM
(Confidential Information)**

*As a part of Stirling avenue Mennonite Church's commitment to the safety and well being of our children and youth we ask that this form be filled out by the child's parent/guardian for our own confidential records to ensure that we are aware of any special needs and are **able and authorized to care for them in case of an emergency.***

PERSONAL INFORMATION FOR CHILD/YOUTH

Youth (First) _____ (Last) _____

Name of Youth: (First) _____ (Last) _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

City: _____ Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date of Birth: (Y) _____ (M) _____ (D) _____ School: _____ Grade: _____

Church Affiliation (if any): _____

HEALTH INFORMATION

OHIP #: _____ Other Insurer: _____

Insurer: _____

Please list any special Health Care needs below. Be sure to include food/drug allergies, medical conditions as well as any other information that would be helpful in an emergency.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____

Names of Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____

Phone #: (Home) _____ (Work) _____ (Cell) _____
(Email) _____

Secondary Contact: (Name) _____ Phone #: _____

Is this person authorized to guide medical care? (Circle One) YES NO

CONSENT OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

I give permission for _____ to participate in the activities of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church Inc. from September 1st, 2015 to August 31st, 2016, including the Youth Retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. During that time, I authorize the adults in charge of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church Inc. events and programmes for children and youth to consent for emergency medical treatment for my child in the event that neither I nor any other parent/guardian can be contacted.

(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

(Date)

Do you wish your child to be included on the 2015-2016 Youth Contact List? (Circle One) YES
NO