

TCMC Safe Church Policy

Document History

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2022-11-19	Draft	n/a	Robert Boardman	Adapted from MCEC Plan to Protect policy
2022-12-14	1.0.0	2022-12-14	Jason Yuen	Approved at 2022-12-14 Board meeting
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2025-11-01	1.0.3	2025-11-04	Jason Yuen	Specifies that Lead Pastor and Board Chair are responsible for handling abuse allegations, (Section 5.1, 2) adds annual training (Section 14), added section numbering, adds definition of Safe Church Team
2025-12-02	1.0.4	2025-12-02	Jason Yuen	Changes police check requirement to every 5 years, adds requirement for annual declaration, adds Appendix F for annual declaration form

1. Purpose

In order to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, TCMC must provide an environment in which all people can grow physically, emotionally and spiritually. We recognize that this requires providing an environment in which the risk of physical, sexual or emotional harm is absolutely minimized through policies that outline expectations of positive relational boundaries between TCMC Staff and/or volunteers and all who attend TCMC events.

2. Abuse

Healthy relationships are of utmost importance, and include conscientiously modeling healthy physical, sexual and emotional boundaries in which the safety and well-being of all people are ensured. There will be no tolerance for abuse, harassment or neglect by Staff and/or volunteers working with anyone at TCMC events. All allegations and/or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and handled with the utmost care. The suspected victims will be treated with dignity and respect.

3. Definitions

In order that it is clearly understood what constitutes unacceptable behaviour, definitions of abuse and related issues are essential. Abuse includes, but is not limited to, the types defined below.

Child Abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver of person in a position of trust (even though s/he may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health, or a child's welfare.¹

Physical Abuse is any deliberate physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a person. It can include punching, slapping, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a person. It is different than what is considered **reasonable discipline**.²

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of behaviour that attacks a person's development and sense of self-worth. It includes, excessive, aggressive, or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a person beyond their capacity. Emotional abuse includes constant criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring or isolating the person.³

Child Sexual Abuse occurs when a person is used for sexual gratification of an adult or older child. It can take many forms. Coercion (physical, psychological or emotional) is intrinsic to sexual abuse. This includes:

- a. Intercourse
- b. Exposing a child/youth's private areas
- c. Fondling for sexual pleasure
- d. Verbal comments
- e. Pornography, allowing a child to look at or perform pornographic pictures or videos
- f. Obscene phone calls
- g. Exhibitionism

¹ Faith Trust Institute 2006

² The Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex 2006

³ The Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex 2006

h. Allowing children and/or youth to witness sexual activity

Neglect is defined as the failure of those responsible for the care of another person to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs to an extent that the person's health, development or safety is endangered.⁴

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, disturbing, worrying or unnerving, tormenting or distressing with annoying labour, care or misfortune. 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 to a particular viewpoint or even tacit approval and is therefore also considered a form of harassment.

Bullying occurs when a stronger, more powerful person hurts, frightens or threatens a smaller or weaker person deliberately and repeatedly. It is a series of repeated, intentionally cruel incidents, involving the same people in the same bully and victim roles. It can also consist of a single interaction.

Improper Touch and Discipline: Corporal punishment (punishment administered by an adult to the body of another person ranging in severity from a slap to a spanking) is unacceptable. Touching another person in any area normally covered by a **bathing suit** is unacceptable. Kissing a person, coaxing a person to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling all constitute improper touch. Unacceptable touch includes any touch a person is uncomfortable with even if the touch is well intentioned.

Additional Definitions of Terms Found in this Policy

Adult - anyone 18 years of age and over

Youth - typically students in high school

Child - anyone under the age of 18, but usually refers to a student in elementary school

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

Observed symptoms - any unusual cuts, bruises and/or lacerations on the body or abnormal behaviour unbefitting the person in question

Premises is defined as any location, inside or outside, at which an official TCMC event is being held. Premises can also include the period of transit between two locations, such as the bus ride to and from an event

Vulnerable people - includes adults with physical or mental challenges, the elderly, and children under 18 years of age⁵

Reasonable Discipline - natural consequences for actions that are contrary to the stated rules or expectations of proper behaviour at TCMC events; will not involve physical contact or verbal or emotional abuse

Staff - any person at an TCMC event under the employ of TCMC as an employee or contractor (excludes people receiving honoraria)

Volunteer - any unpaid person, or person receiving an honorarium, who has been asked by an TCMC Staff person to assist at an TCMC event (e.g. in food preparation, parking, registration, worship, etc.)

⁴ The Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex 2006

⁵ <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/types-criminal-background-checks>

4. Screening

TCMC determines the suitability and responsibility of all leaders representing TCMC involved with each of its events. Depending on this responsibility assessment, various screening procedures are necessary. Any staff person or volunteer with power or authority over others will be subject to the screening assessment and procedures laid out below.

4.1 Responsibility Assessment

4.1.1 Low Responsibility

- a. TCMC Staff/volunteers have administrative responsibilities only
- b. Events where vulnerable people do not attend
- c. Events where there are no planned activities for vulnerable people

4.1.2 Medium Responsibility

- a. Events where vulnerable people are in groups with more than one adult at all times

4.1.3 High Responsibility

- a. Events with an overnight component
- b. Events where personnel would have an opportunity to be alone with vulnerable people
- c. Includes any Staff persons or volunteers who are in a position of power and/or trust

4.2 Screening Procedures

All volunteers and staff who represent TCMC at children's, junior youth, youth, and elderly events, without exception, must be screened.

All volunteers and staff who represent TCMC at adult only events will be screened based on an assessment of the attendees. All event settings will have two leaders in place who are fully screened and trained.

Recruitment and screening steps will be completed prior to volunteers and staff being placed a position of trust. However, should calendar pressures or mid-year vacancies make it impossible for TCMC to have volunteers or staff complete all steps prior to serving, any individual who has not been fully screened will have limited access to vulnerable people and will not be placed in a position of trust.

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

Depending on the responsibility assessment, the following screening procedures will be employed to qualify Staff and/or volunteers for medium and high responsibility ministry service.

4.2.1 Medium Responsibility Screening Procedures

- a. staff/volunteer application form, and release of information and declaration of intent
- b. background reference checks

4.2.2 High Responsibility Screening Procedures

- a. staff/volunteer application form, and release of information and declaration of intent
- b. background reference checks
- c. minimum waiting period
- d. police vulnerable sector checks

4.2.3 Application Form and Release of Information and Declaration of Intent

All staff/volunteers must complete a Staff/Volunteer Registration Form (Appendix A) providing personal information, education, employment and volunteer history, congregational involvement and references. The form will determine an applicant's suitability to work with vulnerable people. A signed and witnessed Release of Information and Declaration of Intent (Appendix B) must be submitted with the registration form. Completed forms will be kept indefinitely.

4.2.4 Background Reference Checks

Volunteers and paid Staff who fall under the high and medium responsibility category must provide two references. All references will be contacted by telephone or email and record of the conversation will be signed by the person who made the contact. TCMC Staff will keep record of contact with these references using the Reference Check Form (Appendix C).

4.2.5 Minimum waiting period

Any staff/volunteer who falls under high responsibility and who is not known to an TCMC congregation for at least six (6) months will not be placed in a position of trust.

4.2.6 Police Vulnerable Sector Checks

All Staff and volunteers who fall under the high responsibility category will need to show evidence of their police reference check. Costs for the police checks will be covered by TCMC. A sample letter is included in Appendix D. Volunteers and Staff with ongoing involvement in TCMC events and programs will be required to get a police vulnerable sector check every five years. All police checks are kept indefinitely by TCMC.

4.2.6 Annual Declaration

Annually, volunteers and Staff must complete mandatory training and submit a declaration that they are in compliance with the Safe Church policy.

5. Reporting Suspicions of Abuse

5.1 Safe Church Team

A Safe Church Team should be established. This team should:

- Be the escalation point and communication co-ordinator for any reports of abuse
- Consist of the Lead Pastor, the Board Chair, and the Church Administrator

5.2 Protocol and Guidelines

Suspicions of potential 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 person involved; hearing a report from the victim or another person. In the case of any suspected abuse, the following procedures shall be observed in the order enumerated below:

1. While it may, at times, be appropriate to ask the person how an **observed symptom** appeared, it is never appropriate to ask any leading questions which might suggest to a person that they have been abused or suggest names, places or methods of abuse. Further, no person shall conduct any investigation or question any individuals regarding suspected abuse unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate authorities. Such investigations can be undertaken only by the Family and Children's Services or the police.
2. Any TCMC volunteer or staff having reasonable suspicion of the abuse of another person attending a TCMC sponsored event must notify the Safe Church Team. This must be done before reporting the suspicion to the local Family and Children's Services or the police. If none of the Safe Church Team is available, the volunteer or employee must not delay the reporting of the concerns to the authorities. Reporting must be done immediately.

If there is any suspicion of sexual misconduct, this should be additionally reported to the MCEC denomination (<https://mcec.ca/resources/sexual-misconduct>)

This report may initially be on a consultative basis without revealing the identity of any person involved, but if the police or the Family and Children's Services representative indicates that an investigation must be undertaken, then all pertinent information must be provided. Any delay in reporting or providing the appropriate information may place the potentially abused person at further risk.

3. It is required that any witness(es) to **observed symptoms** or events raising concern regarding abuse of another person will document their observations in a written report that includes the following:
 - a. specific signs of **observed** symptoms
 - b. any report of abuse made by the person or others, and/or any witnessed event that raised the suspicion
 - c. the date and time relating to any of the above
 - d. any response the person made to any of the above
 - e. This report is to be written and signed as soon as possible after the appropriate reporting to TCMC Staff, Ministry Partners and/or the authorities. The report will then be kept by the TCMC Staff person responsible for the event as well as a log of all follow-up involvements regarding the concern.
4. Any report and subsequent documentation of suspected abuse is to be considered and treated as confidential. Access to this information will be limited to specified persons in

TCMC responsible for providing leadership in this area, Family and Children's Services, and police. When required, a TCMC-appointed attorney and/or insurance carrier will also have access.

5. The notification of the child's and/or youth's parents/guardian in the case of suspicion of child abuse will be carried out only in consultation with the Family and Children's Services or the police.
6. It is recognized that the witness(es) to any suspicions of 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 person and/or the person's parents or family members and/or other interested parties contact them. Such instructions should include
 - a. refraining from sharing any statement made by the possibly abused person with anyone other than the authorities until the authorities have determined whether or not the possibly abused person needs to be protected from contact with the suspected abusing person
 - b. refraining from sharing information with the parent or any other person that has not been reported to the authorities. All information must be promptly reported to the Family and Children's Services and/or the police first.
 - c. refraining from attempting to convince a parent or other family member that the alleged abuse happened or did not happen
 - d. listening to any information a parent 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 all concerned or affected people of the confidential nature of the report and the need to maintain confidentiality
7. Appropriate precautions must be undertaken to ensure the victim of abuse and others 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 an employee or volunteer of the event they will immediately be suspended from their 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 and 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 victim(s)
 - e. An official will be designated to disclose to TCMC Staff and any other organizations involved the facts, as known at the time, without disclosing any names of persons involved
 - f. All of the above steps will be carried out in consultation with the authorities
8. Plans for pastoral and possibly clinical support of all parties involved will be developed as soon as the investigation is under way.
9. The decision whether or not to reinstate the accused to their 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; therefore, in consultation with the police, Family and Children's Services, legal counsel and abuse experts. If the accused is reinstated, efforts will be made to restore strained relationships and facilitate a healing process.
10. In the event of prosecution resulting in conviction, the abuser will not be restored to their previous position or duty within TCMC.

6. Team Approach

At all TCMC sponsored events involving vulnerable people, a team approach will be employed to ensure that there are always two or more adults present. In rare circumstances, an TCMC Staff member who has undergone the appropriate screening outlined in the "Screening" section may be in a situation where they will be alone with a group of vulnerable people. To guarantee accountability in this situation, the following points will be adhered to

- a. The Staff member will ensure that at least one Staff member is fully aware of the nature and location of the event
- b. The Staff member with the group will be clear to at least one other Staff member about beginning and end times for meetings
- c. The appropriate administrative assistant will have clear information concerning location and schedule for the meeting.

All youth and junior youth events will have an *adult sponsor : youth* ratio of 1:5 for events with an overnight component, including bus trips, or 1:7 for day events. Both male and female TCMC Staff or representatives must be present at overnight events where there are participants of both genders.

7. Discipline

Physical forms of discipline are not acceptable. Corporal punishment as a form of discipline is prohibited. Physical restraint of an out-of-control vulnerable person is appropriate if it is necessary to ensure the safety of the person or the safety of other participants at the event.

If Staff or a volunteer person needs to talk with an individual 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. If this is not possible the Staff or volunteer person must be accountable to another adult for any time spent with an individual one on one. This will be done by indicating to another adult the amount of time that will be spent with the vulnerable people and where the conversation will take place.

7.1 Acceptable and Unacceptable Touching

1. Acceptable Touching: Love and caring can be expressed in the following acceptable ways. All touch must be done in view of others.
 - a. Bending down to the person's eye level if necessary and speaking kindly to him or her carefully
 - b. Putting an arm around the shoulder of someone who needs quieting or comforting
 - c. Patting a person on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm them.
2. Inappropriate Touching not only includes instances where touching is initiated by an adult, but also when initiated by a youth or child to an adult. Staff and volunteers must avoid the following
 - a. Kissing another person, coaxing another person to kiss you, extended hugging and tickling
 - b. Touching a person in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit
 - c. Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap
 - d. Being alone with a child or youth
 - e. Massaging a child or youth

8. Documentation for Staff and Volunteers

Documentation pertaining to Staff and volunteers will be kept on file indefinitely. Documentation includes the following:

1. Most recent police checks
2. Reference Checks
3. Staff/volunteer Registration Form

9. Parental Consent

TCMC will be responsible for obtaining parental consent for children and youth who are attending TCMC events.

10. Premises

Most, but not all, TCMC events take place in rented facilities and TCMC church buildings.

1. **Open Door Policy:** Facilities with windows in doors will be preferred. If no windows exist in doors for rooms being used, the door or doors must be kept open unless two or more adults are present in the room.
2. **Monitor Designation:** TCMC Staff and/or volunteers responsible for any given event will monitor all rooms in the premises periodically.
3. **Access/Entry:** If possible, only one outside door will be unlocked during the event. Once registration is over this door will be locked if possible.
4. **Cabins:** A minimum of two adults will be assigned to each cabin. Individual adults are never to be alone in a room with a child or youth. At no time should personnel sleep in the same bed with another person unless they are married. Any individuals who are not sponsors or who have been screened by TCMC for medium responsibility or less should have separate sleeping arrangements.

11. Out of Program/Off-Premises Contact

Out of program contact should generally be limited to purposes that further the mission of the church.

12. Responding

1. Staff and volunteers will take seriously any report from a vulnerable person of perceived abuse.
2. We will refrain from admitting liability or from making public statements about any suspected incident of abuse without obtaining formal legal counsel. Assurance of confidentiality will be provided for both the alleged victim and perpetrator.
3. We will immediately contact our insurance broker to satisfy the statutory conditions of our liability policy and to avoid jeopardizing any available coverage response.
4. Unusual experiences that occur at TCMC events will be recorded. A report must be completed as soon as possible following the incident.

13. Safety

TCMC and ministry partners will take every precaution to ensure vulnerable people remain safe and uninjured. Emergency contact information will be collected for every participant in accordance with Mennonite Church Canada Privacy Policy when participants are taken to an offsite event. If participants require ongoing medical supervision during the event, the sponsor/adult leader for that congregation will be responsible.

1. Fire - If a fire breaks out, all event participants will follow the evacuation procedures outlined by the premises. All TCMC Staff must be aware of the procedures and escape routes.
2. Photos – No photographs of event participants will be taken without prior approval. No photographs will be posted on Facebook, TCMC website or other online social networks without approval from event participants.
3. Transportation – When transportation is being provided by TCMC, such as a bus, TCMC will choose a credible carrier with highly qualified drivers.

14. Training

This policy and these procedures will be made available to all Staff and volunteers working with others for each event at the time of employment, first meeting, or other designated time. The policy will be reviewed at the start of events with all Staff and volunteers. Training will be performed on a yearly basis. The policy will be posted on the TCMC web site.

Appendix A

Staff/volunteer Registration Form for Ministries with Vulnerable People

(All information will be kept confidential)

In our desire to reduce the risk of abuse within TCMC ministries with vulnerable people we believe this information is necessary to protect our participants, volunteers and staff. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

1. Personal Information

- a. Name _____
- b. Address _____
- c. Telephone _____
- d. Email _____
- e. Staff/Volunteer Position _____
- f. Occupation _____
- g. Emergency contact _____

2. List any gifts, training, education or other qualifications that you believe you have for ministry with vulnerable people.

3. Are you currently ordained, licensed or commissioned pastoral Staff within TCMC?

4. How long have you attended TCMC? _____

In order to provide a safe and secure environment for vulnerable people, we believe it is necessary to ask the following questions as part of our screening process. All information collected will be kept in confidence by TCMC and will not be disclosed unless required by law.

5. Have you ever been charged with a criminal offense? If yes, please list offence(S) and the date(s) of conviction

6. Have you ever been investigated for suspected child abuse? If yes, please list date(s) and outcomes of investigation

7. Provide two references who are not family members

Full name		Relationship	
Phone		Email	
Full name		Relationship	
Phone		Email	

Staff/Volunteer Statement: I acknowledge that the above information is correct to the best of my knowledge and acknowledge that I have read and understood TCMC's Plan to Protect and agree to comply.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B

Release of Information and Declaration of Intent

I have read the TCMC Safe Church Policy and I agree to the expectations of the policy.

I hereby give TCMC consent to verify the information provided by me in the Staff/Volunteer Registration Form and to contact the references provided and obtain and verify any information from them (and any other persons that TCMC determines might be able to provide relevant information) that may be relevant to my application.

I will provide a police record check when requested.

I grant TCMC permission to perform an internet search on me, if deemed necessary, and to review and consider any information found about me on the internet.

I understand that if TCMC approves my staff/volunteer application and later determines, in its discretion, or any time that I am not suitable for staff/volunteer service in TCMC or for the staff/volunteer position for which I am applying, TCMC may terminate my staff/volunteer service or staff/volunteer position for any reason without advance notice.

If TCMC approves my application for a staff/volunteer position, I will sign any documents that TCMC requires and will at all times cooperate fully with the Staff of the church in the fulfillment of my duties and will keep all confidential information I encounter in my role as a staff/volunteer, confidential.

If at any time I determine that for any reason I am unable to support or adhere to or follow the policies, procedures or doctrine of TCMC, I will inform TCMC and will resign my staff/volunteer position.

I hereby acknowledge that, to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this Staff/Volunteer Registration Form is true and correct.

Applicant Name _____ Date _____

Signature of Applicant

Witness Name _____ Date _____

Signature of Witness

Information received is confidential and is being gathered for the purposes of considering your application for staff/volunteer ministry with TCMC and for determining what, if any TCMC ministries, you may be suited for in the future.

Appendix C

Reference Check Form

(Confidential)

Record of contact with a reference identified by applicant for ministry with vulnerable people.

Name of applicant

Date of contact	Name of reference	Person contacting reference	Method of contact. (e.g. E-mail, letter)	Summary of contact

Questions to ask References

Explain that you are calling in regard to an applicant who has identified them as a reference.

Explain what the applicant is applying for.

Explain TCMC's Plan to Protect Policy and why reference checks are necessary.

1. What is the context of your relationship with the applicant?
2. Would you have any reservations with this person being around vulnerable people (children, youth, adults with physical or mental challenges or the elderly)?
3. What are this person's strengths and weaknesses?
4. Would you describe this person as someone who follows through with commitments s/he makes?
5. Any other comments?

Appendix D

Letter for Vulnerable Sector Check

Date

To Whom It May Concern,

This is to verify that a Vulnerable Sector Check is required for <first name and last name of staff/volunteer> residing at <address of staff/volunteer>. <first name> will be employed or volunteering as <position> for <name of event or role>.

<Describe the event, what the staff/volunteer's position would be, and the staff/volunteer's responsibilities towards children/youth>

I, <name of supervisor>, am a ministry leader at TCMC and by signing below I am certifying the information provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sincerely,

<Supervisor's name>

<Position>

Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church

<Contact info>

Appendix E

TBD: Incident Report Form

Date/Time: _____

Location: _____

Persons present: _____

Details:

Name of reporter: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix F

Annual Declaration Form (for police checked members)

Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church
Year: 2025

I, _____ (Full Name),
residing at _____ (Full Address),
hereby declare the following as part of the annual review process for volunteers/workers who
have undergone a police records check with Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church:

- I confirm that I have not been charged with or convicted of any criminal offense since my last police check or annual declaration.
- I confirm that I have not been involved in any activity or conduct that would disqualify me from working with vulnerable individuals, including but not limited to children, youth, or the elderly.
- I understand that this declaration is a continuing condition of my involvement in ministry/service at Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church, and I agree to inform the church leadership immediately if there are any changes to my legal status or circumstances related to this declaration.
- I acknowledge that false declarations or failure to report changes may result in the suspension or termination of my ministry responsibilities.
- I confirm that I have read through the Safe Church policy, and I agree to comply with the policy.
- I have attended the mandatory annual training for staff and volunteers in person / online.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____

Witness Signature: _____