Abuse Prevention
Made Easy(er)

Effective Prevention
Strategies for Churches
and Christian Charities
Physical and sexual abuse remains the #1 risk for organizations and institutions entrusted with the care and safety of vulnerable persons, including children, teenagers and vulnerable adults.

Sadly, we are no longer shocked by daily stories in the media uncovering instances of abuse committed against children while in the care of boys’ and girls’ organizations, sports associations, day cares, schools, campgrounds, churches, orphanages, shelters and group homes.
Christian ministries who do not screen may unintentionally be making themselves easy targets by providing pedophiles or those with serious sexual or violent criminal records with unrestricted access to the children in their care.

A lack of proper procedures may also place pastors, staff and volunteer workers unnecessarily at risk for false allegations.

Physical and sexual abuse prevention is the highest legal duty owed by the leaders of any organization that runs programs, ministries and events for minors and vulnerable adults; with potential for personal legal liability against the directors.
Actual and alleged abuse ... what cost?

- Innocent victims
- Emotional, psychological and spiritual trauma for a lifetime
- Effects on families and community
- Reputations of churches, charities and ministries
- Substantial civil damages against organizations, leaders and individuals
- Destruction of personal reputations, careers and relationships due to false allegations
The Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

- Financial Costs
- Victimization of Children
- Congregational Disunity

Spiritual Crisis

- Shattered Trust
- Damaged Families
- Media Coverage
- Litigation

church protection
Unfortunately, we are now aware of over 70 cases of documented abuse involving individual or multiple victims at churches within evangelical Christian circles in Canada...48 of these have occurred in smaller congregations or at churches in rural communities!"

- Abuse Prevention Newsletter, June 2017
Abuse prevention is onerous!

We’re just a volunteer organization!

We trust our volunteers!

It’s so expensive!

It’s unspiritual and legalistic!

We’ve never had an abuse claim!
We get it – Your organization reaches and serves Vulnerable People – it’s what you do!

It’s why you exist and we are thankful for what you do – organizations and ministries like yours that fulfill Christ’s purpose to reach the world through your testimony, dedication, compassion and faithful service.
We know that abuse prevention measures including procedures such as criminal record checks can be an ongoing challenge for charities whose purpose is to help the most vulnerable persons in society – children, youth and vulnerable adults.

In a perfect world, we could trust everyone! But as we are all painfully aware, it is not a perfect world and big part of the reason churches and Christian ministries exist is to help make it better.

Safe care of the vulnerable must be a primary focus of our witness and testimony as Christians to the communities we serve and seek to reach!
What does scripture have to say about protection and the vulnerable?

“Love … always protects” – I Corinthians 13: 4-7

“It would be better if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea, than he should cause one of these little ones to stumble” – Luke 17: 1-2
What are our society’s legal requirements and standards of justice?

“(Is) it unfair to fix liability without fault on non-profit organizations performing needed services on behalf of the community as a whole?

It is difficult not to be sympathetic to this plea. Churches and aid societies undertake to care for society’s most needy. They do work few others would, and they do it in a selfless, generous manner ... It is unjust, the defendant argues, that they be made to pay damages when, through no legal fault of their own, an unscrupulous employee or volunteer abuses his position with one of the wards. There is, however, another perspective to be considered; that of the innocent child who was the victim of the abuse. From this perspective, the defendant’s institution, however meritorious, put the victim in the intimate care of (the abuser) and in a very real sense enhanced the risk of his being abused ... the institution should bear legal responsibility. It may also deter other incidents of sexual abuse by motivating charitable organizations entrusted with the care of children to take not only such precautions as the law of negligence requires, but all possible precautions to ensure that their children are not sexually abused.”

- Chief Justice Beverley McLachlan, Supreme Court of Canada – An excerpt from the majority opinion in Bazley v Curry 1999.
What do Christian leaders say about the care of children in ministry?

“Our ability to reach people is directly related to how well we care for their children.”

“I urge all Christian leaders to take Paul’s advice to the Corinthians – *For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of man.* Christian ministries must be a model for the world in how we handle the potential for abuse.”

“Trust in God … screen all others!”
Good News About Christian Ministries and Abuse Prevention

• Churches and Christian charities have come a long way in implementing effective abuse prevention plans to protect the children, youth and vulnerable adults in their care; and protecting their workers from false allegations.

Among our client organizations across Canada, the percentage of churches who have implemented formal prevention plans has increased from less than 10% in 1996, to over 80% in 2017.

Many leaders now use their prevention plans as another means of promoting their organization programs and premises as a “safe place” in their community.

• Christian Charities that have “safe place” plans provide a strong witness and a positive Christian testimony, attracting non-church families, children and youth into their ministries, programs and events.
So how do we make Abuse Prevention Easy(er)?
The amount of work involved is proportional to the size of your operations, ministries and programs – small congregations and organizations usually have much less screening to do!

Unlike a generation ago, there are now lots of great abuse prevention resources available to Christian ministry leaders, including sample protection plans, application forms, waivers, pocket guides for workers and third party screening services that specialize in not-for-profits.

When the task of implementing and maintaining a prevention plan is shared among the leaders from all departments (i.e. Sunday school, nursery, boys and girls clubs, youth groups and vulnerable seniors ministries) the load is much lighter.

Both ministry personnel and board members need to buy in!
Abuse Prevention Plan Checklist
7-Point Checklist

- A Statement of Policy
- Defining Abuse
- Screening
- Operational Procedures
- Safe Premises
- Training Workers
- Responding To Abuse
Screening all children’s and youth ministry workers who have care or supervision of minors and vulnerable adults.

Screening should also apply to personnel who have management authority and power over other staff with respect to career advancement and performance review.

Insurers specializing in liability and employment practices coverage have already seen an increase in claims and potential claims since the rise of the #Me Too Movement. Christian workplaces are not immune to sexual harassment and assault.
The following staff and volunteers should be subject to mandatory screening:

- All staff including paid and unpaid ministers and lay pastors
- All volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults/seniors
- All board members, elders, deacons, trustees, directors and officers
- Designated monitors and care staff
- Refer to the “Who Should We Screen” chart contained on Page 8 of our Abuse Prevention Newsletter handout
Effective screening for these individuals includes the following procedures:

- Targeted recruitment of personnel
- Employee and volunteer applications including ministry agreements and release for background references and criminal record checks
- Personal Interview
- Background reference checks (minimum 2) for new workers
- Criminal Record Checks for all new workers 16 and over, prior to eligibility. Initial checks must be original copies, viewed within 60 days of issuance.
A CPIC is a “name-based” check (i.e. based on full legal name and date of birth for applicant) of the National Repository of Criminal Records that is updated with input from municipal, provincial and federal police jurisdictions across Canada.

A VSV is an enhanced version of a Criminal Record Check that includes:

- Search of Canadian Police Information Centre database (CPIC)
- Scan of the “pardoned” sexual offender database (approx. 15,000 individuals)
- Search of local police indicies including reports and incidents of domestic abuse
Criminal Record Checks: Review

Current RCMP protocol for accessing criminal record checks

- Complies with federal privacy act and legislation
- Vulnerable Sector Verification (i.e. VSV) requires individual requesting the check to provide police with letter from sponsoring organization confirming they are working in a position of trust with minors or vulnerable adults
- Restrictions on 3rd Party criminal record check providers (e.g. private companies can access a CPIC but not a VSV)
- Fingerprinting required in some cases to verify identity
- Three levels criminal history available to law enforcement officers including Criminal Name Index, Criminal Record Synopsis and Criminal Records II, along with the VSV
- Rules for keeping, sharing and purging of young offender records are more restrictive than adult records
Two Possible Responses to a Criminal Record Inquiry

1) “No criminal record identified. Only verifiable by fingerprinting”

This response means no criminal record, but police will not verify 100% without fingerprinting.

2) “There may or may not be a criminal record in existence. Only verifiable by fingerprinting”

This response means that the applicant’s name is associated with a criminal conviction which can only be confirmed by fingerprinting to avoid cases of mistaken identity.
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<th>INITIAL SCREENING</th>
<th>RE-CHECKS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Under 18 Years Old CPIC (Police Services)</td>
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<td>Adults born before January 1, 1986 VSV (Police Services) \ <em>See “Who Needs A VSV?”</em></td>
<td>Adults born before January 1, 1986 (If initial VSV is on file) CPIC (Police Services) \ or EPIC (SterlingBackcheck)</td>
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THERE IS **NO NEED TO DO ANOTHER VSV “IF”**

The volunteer or employee has been continuously working for your organization since an original VSV was done. Just a CPIC or EPIC re-check is required. If there has been a gap in the volunteer or employee serving with your organization, but a VSV was completed since January 1, 2012 (or within the past five (5) years). Just a CPIC or EPIC check is required when they begin working with your organization again.

✔️ A new (or existing) worker can provide proof that either:
  - A VSV has been completed within the past 5 years (or since January 1, 2012), or
  - A VSV has been completed previously, with proof of continuous volunteer service,*

Then just a CPIC or EPIC is required when they commence working with your organization.

* Proof should be in the form of an original VSV clearance or a Vulnerable Sector Verification letter [robertsonhall.com/pdf/VSV_Letter.pdf](http://robertsonhall.com/pdf/VSV_Letter.pdf)

Other resources available on our website...

🔹 A sample *Church Commendation Letter* recommending volunteers to your parachurch or camp organization is also on our website [robertsonhall.com/pdf/Home_Commendation_Letter.pdf](http://robertsonhall.com/pdf/Home_Commendation_Letter.pdf)

🔹 A *Sample Request From Agency* letter to present to police services when a VSV is required [robertsonhall.com/pdf/Sample_Request_Letter.pdf](http://robertsonhall.com/pdf/Sample_Request_Letter.pdf)

🔹 Criminal Record Checks: Who Should We Screen? [robertsonhall.com/pdf/Who_Should_We_Screen.pdf](http://robertsonhall.com/pdf/Who_Should_We_Screen.pdf)
INITIAL Checks available through EPIC for any adult applicant born January 1, 1986 or later

RE-CHECKS available through EPIC for any worker, if re-checked every five (5) years, or less

There are two components to the EPIC check:
1. A search of the convictions in the National Repository of Criminal Records
2. A search of locally-held police information across Canada, including pending charges and “persons of interest”

With SterlingBackCheck EPIC screening, you can set up your own convenient account and invite staff and volunteers to go on-line and have their checks done individually. You’ll be notified when they have finished the process.

Some of the benefits include:
✓ Convenient on-line process with no travel to police station
✓ Paperless, secure and forgery proof
✓ Comprehensive, consistent national process
✓ Permanent electronic storage of results
✓ Checks can be shared with multiple organizations
✓ No finger printing required

NOTE: Robertson Hall provides this convenient access and preferred pricing as a benefit for its client organizations. It is not privy to any results and receives no financial consideration from your ordering of criminal record checks.
Robertson Hall also has a variety of practical excerpts available on the subject of abuse prevention, including:

- 7-Point Abuse Prevention Checklist
- Top Ten FAQ About Abuse Prevention
- Abuse Case Studies Claims Examples, to help with your training
- What is a Position of Trust? Who is a Vulnerable Person?
- Sample Vulnerable Sector Screening Request Form
- Criminal Record Checks: Who Do We Screen?
- Sign-In/Sign-Out Procedures
- Good/Better/Best Guide to Off Premises Activities and Transportation
- The Ten Commandments of Youth Abuse Prevention
- Resource Directory, including sample prevention plans, trainers and third party screening providers

Go to www.robertsonhall.com and click on Church Protection Plus, Resources, Abuse Prevention Newsletter
Abuse Prevention Plan Checklist

The following seven (7) items are generally acknowledged by experts as essential elements in establishing an effective formal abuse prevention plan and are required by your insurance company in order to qualify for abuse coverage:

1. Targeted recruitment of personnel
2. Employee and volunteer applications including ministry agreements and release for background references and criminal record checks
3. Personal interview
4. Background reference checks
5. Criminal Record Checks for all new workers 16 and over, prior to eligibility including:
   - Criminal Record Check for existing workers
   - Camping and similar short-term mission organizations
   - Employment
   - snug fit in years
   - Churches and other organizations
   - Churches and other organizations
   - Churches and other organizations
   - Churches and other organizations

Off-dwelling contact during sponsored programs should be subject to a written employee and/or "access" role at all times (refer to Goodwill/Best Guidelines on Page Nine). Prohibiting corporal punishment.

Appropriate health communication and social networking (refer to Page Eleven).

Addressing health, safety and sanitation issues for infants and toddlers in nursery programs, including protocols for illness, infections and emergencies, cleanliness of change tables, washrooms and floor surfaces and safety of toys, crib, etc.

Avoiding activities that could easily lead to allegations of abuse or harassment, such as individual photography of children, unsupervised gatherings, while traveling alone by bus or rent a room or at another overnight event should only be allowed when all supervision and volunteers are fully screened.

Having all volunteers sign a confidentiality statement confirming they have read, understood and are willing to comply with policies and procedures.

Keeping documentation on file for each volunteer (refer to FAQ#125 on Page Nine).

Obtaining signed parental consent and permission for participation in overnight events

Sufficient qualified supervision of children outside and in public places (e.g., parks, playgrounds, libraries, amusement parks, etc.)

Incident reporting forms must be completed for all non-injury or suspected abuse

Internal and external auditors to ensure Abuse Prevention Plan compliance (refer to Page Twelve).

Additional modifications or additions to your facility which can assist in preventing and discouraging abuse include:

- Windows in classrooms and brazen open door policy for Sunday school and boys' and girls' clubs
- Designated monitors circulating periodically from room to room for surveillance and to protect against false allegations
- Controlled accessibility and signing infants and pre-school age children in and out of group activities

TRAINING

For all staff members and volunteers who regularly work with children and youth to assist in the prevention of abuse through the following means:

- Initial formal training, including in-house video and/or live sessions for online training and distribution of brochures or pocket guides containing a summary of prevention policies and procedures for all volunteers for their reference.

- Educating workers about their legal obligations to report suspected abuse and to recognize and identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and intimidation.

RESPONDING to all allegations or complaints of abuse in an appropriate manner, including the appointment of individual(s) designated to respond to allegations in the following manner:

- Completing incident reporting forms for suspected abuse or injury
- Satisfying statutory legal obligations for reporting all cases of suspected abuse to police authorities and/or child protective agencies
- Consulting a lawyer for advice

- Follow up with refresher courses or sessions that reinforce the operation procedures, principles and reporting requirements (refer to Items 3, 3 and 3 in the 2-Point Checklist).

- Incidents can be done at any time including during ministry staff, teacher or volunteer meetings. Many churches consult an annual review of their prevention plan for workers at the beginning of their children's and youth program year in September or October.

- Reviewing the ongoing suitability of existing workers (including updated criminal record checks (refer to Section 3 for frequency of re-checks)).

- Don't try to triage suspected abuse incidents. Just as you don't want to call the fire department when a building is on fire, you also don't want to report abuse. The responsibility to report suspected abuse in the law in Canada.

ABUSE PREVENTION DECLARATION FORMS

If you're a church organization, policyholder of Robertson Hall Insurance and haven't already done so, please complete an Abuse Prevention Declaration Form in order to qualify for the most comprehensive Abuse Liability coverage for Christian Organizations. (Please refer to FAQ#9 for these forms).

- $9,000.00 General Liability for Abuse, Misconduct and Harassment Claims
- $5,000.00 Professional Liability for Organizations and Leaders
- Occurrence, Not Reporting Costs (see Helpful Guide: $200.00)
- No Correctional Liability for Legal Liability Limits
- Civil Defense Costs covered in excess of Limits
- Covers All Civil Damages Insured by Law, with no exclusions

CAMP - SCHOOL - CHURCH - CHARTY

- Criminal Defense Costs Reimbursement for Wrongful
- Accusations
- No Faith-Based and Counseling Costs for Victims
- Legal Advice / Media Relations Expenses for Suspected Abuse

If you don't have an Abuse Prevention Declaration form on file, please contact Robertson Hall. We have Declaration Form versions available for:

- Churches and Charitable Organizations
- Education Organizations, Including Day Camps, Schools, Colleges, etc.
- Camp and Retreat Organizations
The top ten list of most frequently asked questions

#10 How do we get started?

Until a decade ago, there were no real abuse prevention resources available to churches and parachurch ministries. There is now a wealth of resources available to help churches and parachurch ministries with abuse prevention. Here are the top ten tips for getting started:

1. **Identify the risk**: This requires the collection and scrutiny of any information about the organization’s activities with adults and children. This information should be shared with the organization’s leadership and all employees.

2. **Protect sensitive information**: Federal and provincial privacy legislation requires that personal information be protected. This includes information about individuals who have donated to the organization, whether they are volunteers, staff, members, or visitors.

3. **Avoid inappropriate relationships**: Staff, volunteers, and members should avoid any relationships that could be perceived as inappropriate.

4. **Be aware of the signs**: Staff, volunteers, and members should be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect.

5. **Describe what abuse and neglect look like**: Staff, volunteers, and members should be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect.

6. **Provide training**: Staff, volunteers, and members should be provided with training on abuse and neglect.

7. **Establish clear policies**: Staff, volunteers, and members should be provided with clear policies on abuse and neglect.

8. **Report suspected abuse**: Staff, volunteers, and members should be encouraged to report suspected abuse.

9. **Support victims**: Staff, volunteers, and members should be provided with support for victims of abuse.

10. **Review and update policies**: Staff, volunteers, and members should review and update policies on abuse and neglect.

What about vulnerable adults?

Vulnerable adults are the focus of abuse prevention, and are any persons who are fragile and vulnerable to abuse or neglect. This includes adults with physical or emotional disabilities, children or youth with emotional or social needs, and other adults at risk of abuse or neglect. It is important to take care of vulnerable adults in a way that is respectful and safe.

The Canada Evidence Act Section 6.1 (1) The definitions in this subsection apply in this section. “Vulnerable person” means persons who are at risk of death or injury. “Vulnerable person” means persons who are at risk of death or injury. “Vulnerable person” means persons who are at risk of death or injury.

How do we manage off-premises activities and transportation?

At least 2 supervised adults, with the total number of screeners determined in a reasonable manner, are required to supervise off-premises activities. Unpaid volunteers must be supervised off-premises activities. Unpaid volunteers must be supervised off-premises activities. Unpaid volunteers must be supervised off-premises activities.

Should age: Children requiring assistance should be accompanied to enter the washrooms, which should be equipped with a mirror. The washrooms should be equipped with a mirror. The washrooms should be equipped with a mirror.

School age: Children requiring assistance should be supervised by a responsible adult, and the washrooms should be equipped with a mirror. The washrooms should be equipped with a mirror. The washrooms should be equipped with a mirror.
Other Resources
Aside from Screening, here are some other tips to keep in mind with respect to your Premises, Operations and Training...

Use Jesus’ example and go two by two, including your ministry to children, youth and vulnerable adults

Remember to screen a few extra people, to create an extra pool of safe volunteers, to fill in as necessary from time to time.

For example if a part-time volunteer is fully screened, they can go into the nursery if there’s an unexpected abundance of children at the last minute, or for a summer day camp or special event during the year. Even if they’re not regular weekly kid’s church workers, you will find volunteers more willing to commit if they don’t have to do it weekly!
Use the same rule of thumb with your nursery as in a day care setting. This will help your volunteers to understand the reason for the measures you're putting in place, including screened supervision, proper intake and release of children, restricting contagious children and regular sanitation of change tables, cribs, other surfaces and toys. It is what people expect in society whether in a day care, school or youth organization and no parent should be left with the feeling that a church or Christian charity should maintain lower standards.

Keep a clipboard for your attendance sheet if you have a small nursery. Include the names of regulars on the sheet with an attendance schedule/history over many weeks. That way, parents can initial infants, toddlers and pre-Grade 1 children in and out easily on the same form. At the end of the event, if workers are left with one or two children who haven’t been picked up, they can take the clipboard with the kids and find the parents to sign them out. Sample recommended attendance forms are available.
Helpful Tips continued…

With respect to special events/off site events, remember that your organization is held to the same standard as activities and field trips taking place in a school setting. Examples of good procedures include parental permission forms for off-site events and cautioning volunteers to avoid driving alone with kids to reduce the possibility of false allegations (i.e. school teachers and daycare workers never put themselves in that position in this day and age!)

Make good use of the Training Resources available for your workers, including the sample prevention plans, pocket guides, onsite training and convenient on-line training from organizations like Plan to Protect.
Helpful Tips continued…

With respect to Social Media and teenagers, ask this question:

If this young person was my son or daughter, how would I like the church and leaders of the youth group to communicate with him or her?

We have a Social Media article called “Keeping Online and Out of Court” to assist you in identifying practical steps to help keep your organization’s communications (emails, blogs and tweets!), website content, streaming media and wireless networks appropriate, safe and secure. It also contains important information about Privacy Breaches and Cyber Liability.
If you’re a client organization policyholder of Robertson Hall Insurance and haven’t already done so, please complete an Abuse Prevention Declaration form in order to qualify for the most comprehensive Abuse Liability coverage for Christian Charities in Canada, including the following coverage features:
• $5,000,000 General Liability for Abuse, Molestation and Harassment Claims
• Vicarious Liability Protection for Organization and Leaders
• Occurrence Form / No Deductible
• No Restriction on Stacking of Policy Limits
• Civil Defense Costs covered in excess of Policy Limits
• Covers all Civil Damages Insurable by Law, with no exclusions
• Criminal Defense Cost Reimbursement for Wrongful Accusation
• No Fault Therapy and Counselling Costs for Victims
• Legal Advice / Media Relations Expense for Suspected Abuse
If you don’t have an Abuse Prevention Declaration form on file, please request one today from Robertson Hall. We have Declaration form versions available for:

- Churches and Charitable Organizations
- Education Organizations, including Day Cares, Schools, Colleges, etc.
- Camp and Retreat Organizations
In Summary

The story of all of those who play a role as leaders and workers in the prevention of abuse should always be… no story!

- No story filling the media or internet about abuse taking place at our church or charity
- No story about innocent children, teenagers or vulnerable adults being victimized
- No story of directors and organizations being defendants in a multi-million dollar lawsuit for lack of due diligence
- No story of our workers being falsely accused
- No story about our organization and leaders losing our reputation, good will and support in the communities we serve.

We hope this presentation assists you in making abuse prevention effective and easy(er)... so that your organization’s testimony will be many more years of doing good work for the communities you serve… with no abuse stories!
Thank you!

Disclaimer: The information contained in this seminar has been compiled by Robertson Hall Insurance Inc. to assist churches, charitable organizations and their leaders in better understanding insurance and legal issues and to help in reducing or eliminating foreseeable and preventable risks associated with their ministries, programs, operations and events. However, your organization may have insurance requirements and risks that are unique to your premises or operations which are not addressed by this seminar and should be specifically reviewed with the appropriate qualified professional. This publication may not be reproduced in any way without the written consent of Robertson Hall Insurances Inc.