



THE PEOPLES CHURCH, TORONTO
374 Sheppard Ave. East, Toronto, Ontario, M2N 3B6

Children's Ministry Safety Policy and Procedures

Revised February 2012

Screening Requirements for Ministry Volunteers and Employment

Six-Month Rule	Yes
Application Form	Yes
References	2 or more
Confidential Interview	Yes
Criminal Background Check	Yes
Signed Release and Declaration of Intent	Yes



Table of Contents

Policy 1: Ongoing Supervision of the Children’s Ministry Policies

- 1.1 Annual Review of Safety Program
- 1.2 Waiver of Policies
- 1.3 Modification of Policies
- 1.4 Activities Covered by these Policies

Policy 2: Operating Policies of All Children’s Ministries

- 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.1.1 Definitions
 - 2.1.2 Statement of Purpose
 - 2.1.3 Child Safety Takes Priority
 - 2.1.4 A Higher Standard
 - 2.1.5 Supervision of Children while on church premises
 - 2.1.6 Enforcing Policy
- 2.2 Ministry Team Selection
 - 2.2.1 Six-Month Rule
 - 2.2.2 Application Form
 - 2.2.3 Confidentiality of Information
 - 2.2.4 References
 - 2.2.5 Confidential Interviews
 - 2.2.6 Criminal Background Check
 - 2.2.7 Signatures Regarding Release and Intent
 - 2.2.8 Signed Statement of Faith and Lifestyle
- 2.3 Survivors of Abuse
- 2.4 Supervision of Ministry Team
 - 2.4.1 Harassment
- 2.5 Family Protection

Policy 3: Supervision of Children

- 3.1 Adequate Supervision of Ministry Children
 - 3.1.2 Occasional Observers
- 3.2 Ministry Team to Child Ratios
- 3.3 Drop off and Pick-Up Policy
- 3.4 Special Events and Overnight Trips
- 3.5 Driving
- 3.6 Touching Policy
 - 3.6.1 General Guidelines
 - 3.6.2 Special Needs Touching Policy
 - 3.6.3 Discipline vs. Corporal Punishment
- 3.7 Diapering and Washroom Guidelines
 - 3.7.1 Diaper Changing
 - 3.7.2 Washroom
- 3.8 Health and Safety Guidelines
 - 3.8.1 Child Abuse

Policy 4: Communication

- 4.1 Internet, Social Media, and Phone
- 4.2 Use of Photography and Videography
- 4.3 Protection of Information

This section is for the use of the Director of Children's Ministry only



Policy 1: Ongoing Supervision of the Children's Ministry Safety Program

The Board of Directors of The Peoples Church will appoint one person, the Director of Children's Ministry, to supervise the child safety program. This program shall govern all children, under the age of 13 years old, under the responsibility of The Peoples Church.

1.1 Annual Review of Safety Program

Each ministry lead will review compliance with safety policies and potential risks annually in a brief written report that will be given to the Director of Children's Ministry.

The report should include:

- 1) A listing of any new programs or program changes and the additional risks these changes may incur.
- 2) A brief summary of policy violations and the program leader's response to these violations.

Any patterns of violations that suggest changes to policy should be identified.

The Director of Children's Ministry will summarize the reports received from program leaders and submit an overall report annually to his/her reporting supervisor.

1.2 Waiver of Policies

Church policies may be waived occasionally for exceptional circumstances. The goal of The Peoples Church is to promote safety while maintaining practical flexibility in children's ministry. Waiving policies will only be authorized by The Peoples Church leadership team and the Director of Children's Ministry.

1.3 Modification of Policies

Changes in these policies must be approved by The Board of Directors and the Executive Pastor and the Director of Children's Ministry. These policies may be modified or withdrawn by The Peoples Church at any time. These policies are not intended to create an implied or express contract with any person. They are not intended to create a legally enforceable or binding promise or representation.

1.4 Activities Covered by These Policies

All activities of The Peoples Church that require the ministry team acting within the scope of their duties to have custody of persons less than 13 years of age shall follow these policies.

This policy does not apply to the following programs: any group renting our facilities and providing child care for their own needs.



Policy 2: Operating Policies of all Children's Ministry

2.1. Introduction:

To be read by all members of the ministry team and applicants.

This policy is referred to in the Application form

2.1.1. Definitions

Child(ren): A person under the age of 13.

Worker: An adult volunteer 18 years old and over who has been approved by the selection process.

Leader In Foundational Training (LIFT) or Teens Impacting Kids (TIK): Volunteers between the ages of 12 and 18 years of age. LIFT or TIKs must work alongside another worker, staff, or ministry lead, over the age of 18.

Ministry Lead: A worker with supervisory responsibilities who oversees other children's workers, LIFTs, or TIKs.

Staff: A person 16 years old or over hired by the church to care for children or supervise and administrate ministry.

Ministry Team: Inclusive of workers, LIFTs, TIKs, ministry leads, and staff.

Occasional Observer: Individuals who visit and observe a ministry program on rare occasions. This term includes parents assisting their own children. Their access to child(ren) will be limited and they will not be allowed or asked to take children to the washroom.

Director of Children's Ministry: A person hired by church to oversee all activities and personnel related to the ministry.

2.1.2 Statement of Purpose

As a church, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing of children is vital. This policy is intended to ensure that church activities involving children are consistent with the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition of nurturing vulnerable children.

The primary purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and wellbeing of children by providing clear instructions about the operation of children's ministries at The Peoples Church. The Board of Directors and the Leadership Team of The Peoples Church sincerely request the cooperation of the children's ministry team in our church who must abide by the stringent guidelines of this policy.

2.1.3 Child Safety Takes Priority

The greatest priority of the ministry to children at The Peoples Church is to help children obtain a thorough understanding of the Gospel and ministry of Jesus Christ. Abuse, sexual exploitation, or endangerment directly contradicts this priority and the values of The Peoples Church.

The ministry team must keep this priority in mind: ministry team members do not have a right to serve in the ministry. They merely have an **opportunity** to serve when selected by the church. This means that the ministry team should err on the side of caution as they make subjective decisions involving the well-being of children.

2.1.4 A Higher Standard

As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we must strive to be worthy of a very high standard of trust. For this reason, our ministry team must avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behaviour. The ministry team must diligently avoid any conduct that appears wrong to a reasonable observer, even if no actual misconduct is taking place.

2.1.5 Supervision of Children while on the premises of The Peoples Church, Toronto

Unless a child(ren) is under the supervision of the Children's Ministry in a designed program, all children should be in the direct supervision of a parent or guardian. At no time should a child(ren) be found alone in any part of the building, including being sent to the washroom with no accompaniment.

2.1.6 Enforcing Policy

Staff and ministry leads are charged with the diligent enforcement of these policies. Violation of these policies is grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or re-assignment from children's work at the discretion of the church.

2.2. Ministry Team Selection

The following guidelines will be used as The Peoples Church reviews applicants for positions in children's ministry.

2.2.1 Six-Month Rule*

Applicants must have been a regular attendee of The Peoples Church for at least six months. This time allows applicants to interact in the body of the church and understand the ethos of The Peoples Church. This will help staff better evaluate the suitability of the individual for children's work.

*In some situations this rule is not feasible and may be waived (such as church employees or interns who are not church attendees) please see policy 1.2 for details.

2.2.2. Application Forms

Applicants must complete and sign an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.

2.2.3. Confidentiality of Information

The church will exercise a high level of confidentiality for all information received in the applicant selection process*. The applicant's information will be stored with limited access afforded only to church staff and others with a need to know.

*In accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990 c. F31, section 41(1).

2.2.4. References

Trained workers or staff will check **at least** two references for each applicant. The references will be done by phone, in person, or email. Whenever possible, the three references on the application form, should include: ministry leader reference, a co-worker reference (employment or volunteer) and another non-family member.

2.2.5. Confidential Interviews

All applicants must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do. Interviews will be conducted by the Director of Children's Ministry or by other persons designated and trained in the practice of this specific type of interview. A team of interviewers may be used. Ministry policy and guidelines should be discussed during the interview.

2.2.6. Criminal Background Check

Each new ministry team member will be required to have a police check with the police services of the region in which they reside. The individual will pay for any required service fees unless justifiable reasons have been identified for the church to cover this cost for them.

2.2.7. Signatures Regarding Release and Intent

All applicants must agree by signature that they understand the policies pertaining to their positions and that they agree to abide by them. This requirement will be met by having applicants sign the printed "Release of Information and Declaration of Intent" section included in the application.

2.2.8. Signed Statement of Faith and Lifestyle

All applicants must agree by signature that they understand and agree upon our statement of faith and lifestyle.

2.3. Survivors of Abuse

Any applicant who is a survivor of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse needs the love and acceptance of The Peoples Church family. A person's experience with abuse and his/her recovery process may be pertinent to his/her suitability as a ministry worker. Applicants who are survivors of abuse should discuss this in confidence with the person who conducts the confidential interview. Several factors will be considered to ensure the safety of the candidate and the children with which they may potentially be working .

2.4. Supervision of Ministry Team

It is the responsibility of the ministry to provide ministry team members with proper supervision. Ministry team members must submit to the authority of the ministry staff or lead to whom they report or is designated to support. Ministry team members must sign-in/out and identify themselves according to each program's procedures before and after their scheduled period of work.

2.4.1. Harassment

Harassment is improper behaviour, by a person, that is directed at and is offensive to any worker. Improper behaviour is that which the person knew, or ought reasonably to have known would be offensive. It includes objectionable conduct, comment or display that demeans, belittles, or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment. Harassment within the meanings of the Canadian Human Rights Act is on the basis of the following prohibited grounds of discrimination: race, colour, religion, age, sex, marital status, disability or conviction for an offense for which a pardon has been granted. Incidents of harassment must be reported to the Director of Children's Ministry. When proven, it is subject to disciplinary action which could include termination.

2.5. Family Protection

Families work well together and should be encouraged to serve together. However, for the protection of this family unit, the presence of at least one other volunteer, not related to the family, is necessary.



Policy 3: Supervision of Children

3.1. Adequate Supervision of Ministry Children

To provide adequate supervision for children, one of the following must be in place:

- 1) A minimum of two unrelated workers are present for supervision.
In the event of an emergency, or, in an unexpected circumstance where worker numbers are low, one ministry worker is present with windows having clear lines of visibility in place, or the door open with a designated worker, ministry lead, or staff circulating periodically from room to room.
- 2) LIFTS or TIKs between the ages of 12 and 18 must be assigned to work alongside another worker over the age of 18, or staff. Ministry workers and staff must be 18 years of age or older to work alone. There must be at least a five year gap between LIFTS or TIKs and the children they serve.

3.1.2 Occasional Observers

Occasional observers will be given a visitor identification that, in the eyes of the child, differentiates them from ministry personnel. The names of the occasional observers will be recorded.

- 1) Occasional Observers will not be asked to assume responsibility for children
- 2) They will not be allowed or asked to take children to the washroom
- 3) They will be paired with a qualified worker who will be their host
- 4) They will not interact with children other than their own
- 5) Sign out their child when leaving the room with him/her

3.2 Ministry Team to Child Ratios

Safety and security are primary concerns at The Peoples Church. Ministry team to children ratios promote positive learning and maintain protection to the ministry team and the children. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of children showing up for an event. By no means can a ministry team member be alone with a child.



Ministry Team to Child Ratios

Program	Workers	Children	Ratio
Infants	2	4	1:2
Toddlers	2	6	1:3
Preschool (3-6 years)	2	16	1:8
Primary (7-9 years)	2	20	1:10
Junior (10-14 years)	2	20	1:10

3.3 Drop off and Pick up Policy

Each program will develop a safety procedure for drop-off and pick-up. This includes a method of ensuring that a child is only picked up by the person who dropped them off or by someone who is 13 years of age or older, who is approved by the person who dropped them off. Children must be dropped off at the door of the room of their program by the adult who brought them, unless written pre-authorization.

At no time during the program should any child be at large in the church by themselves.



3.4 Special Events and Overnight Trips

All off-campus activities will be pre-approved by the ministry lead with parents being notified at least 48 hours prior to the outing. Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in field trips and special events. Forms must be kept in the ministry lead's possession during trips and events with a photocopy of the completed forms filed in the Department Office. The originals are to be kept on file for a reasonable period of time.

All trips and outings will be supervised by a minimum of two approved, unrelated staff or workers.

When planning local special events, it is preferred that parents drop off and pick up their children at the event location. For out of town events and all camp off-site events, it is preferred that a commercial carrier be employed.

3.5 Driving

All staff and workers transporting children during church activities must be preapproved by the ministry lead, provide a copy of their valid driver's license, and current automobile insurance in accordance with the church insurance policy. They must have a minimum of 5 years driving experience.

The number of occupants in the vehicle will not exceed the number of seat belts and each child will be in age appropriate safety restraints. Seat belts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times.

Children will not be left unattended in a vehicle.

Permission from parents must be given for workers to drive children. There must be at least 2 unrelated workers or staff in the vehicle at all times. Children may not be transported one-on-one.

3.6 Touching Policy

The Peoples Church has implemented a touching policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them.

Touching behaviour should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers, our behaviour must foster trust at all times.

3.6.1. General Guidelines

The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone working with children.

- 1) Physical affection should be **appropriate to the age of the child**.
- 2) Touching should be **initiated by the child**. Do not force affection upon a reluctant child.
- 3) Touching and affection should only be given when **in the presence of other members of the ministry team**.
- 4) Ministry team members are responsible to **protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others** whether by adult, youth, or child. If such touching or other questionable behavior should occur by others, it must be discussed promptly with the Director of Children's Ministry.

Appropriate Touch

Love and caring can be expressed in the following appropriate ways:

- 1) Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him/her carefully.
- 2) Taking a child's hand and leading him/her to an activity.
- 3) Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs comforting or quieting.
- 1) Taking both of the child's hands as you say, "You did such a good job" (or I'm so glad to see you. We've missed you! etc.)
- 2) Patting a child on the head, shoulder or back to affirm him/her.
- 3) Holding a child by the shoulders or hand to keep his/her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour.
- 4) Gently holding a child's chin to help him/her focus on what you are saying to him/her.
- 5) Holding a child who is crying.

Inappropriate Touch

You must avoid:

- 1) Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging.
- 2) Tickling of any form.
- 3) Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when touching the child's clothes while assisting a child with toileting as outlined in washroom guidelines. Please see policy 3.7.2).

As a reminder and a safeguard for inappropriate touch, no ministry team member should be alone with a child (Please see policy 3.2).



We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. As Christians, we are called to be vigilant in protecting the children in our midst and in preventing child abuse in the community of faith.

3.6 Touching Policy (Continued)

3.6.2 Special Needs Touching Policy

We understand the specific needs of children in our ministry. All methods of restraint or waivers to these policies must be discussed with the parents and ministry lead, and will be communicated to the appropriate staff or worker.

3.6.3 Discipline vs. Corporal Punishment

Discipline is not something you do to a child; it is something you do **for** a child. The word discipline comes from the root word disciple, which means training that molds character, behavior and values. Rather than seeking to merely maintain control or keep children quiet, our goal is to shape their character in such a way that they will become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Expectations of children's behavior must reflect their age and level of comprehension. Similarly, discipline must reflect their age and level of comprehension.

Disciplining to inflict pain is a form of corporal punishment. Hitting, slapping, spanking, shaking, squeezing, or any other activity which could be considered physically abusive, either individually or as a group, is not permitted.

No ministry team member shall:

- 1) Strike a child or use physical punishment of any manner.
- 2) Deprive a child of basic needs (food, shelter, or toilet).
- 3) Lock a child in any room.
- 4) Restrain a child, unless it is for their own safety or if the safety of another person is at risk.
- 5) Use any words or actions that would be humiliating or degrading to the child or which would undermine a child's self-respect (e.g. yelling, hurling insults, threatening or belittling).

No "corporal punishment" will be tolerated in the environment of The Peoples Church. Serious concerns about the response to a child's behaviour should be reported to the Director of Children's Ministry. Parent(s) are to be informed and involved whenever a child misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehaviour increases.

3.7 Diapering and Washroom Guide

We strongly recommend that parents take their children to visit the washroom prior to dropping their child off.

3.7.1 Diaper Changing

Diaper changing must have written consent from the parents and must **always take place in a such a way that another nursery worker can easily see** the child that is being changed, as well as the other children and workers in the room.

Workers under the age of 18 or men who are assisting in the nursery **should not change diapers**.

3.7.2 Washroom

When taking child(ren) to the washroom, the ministry team member should **escort** the child(ren) to the washroom, ensure the room is safe, and **prop the outside door open**. The ministry team member should **remain outside** the washroom door **and wait in public view** for the child(ren) before escorting him or her back to the classroom. The ministry team member should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary.

Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.

If preschool or children with special needs, need assistance in the washroom, a ministry team member may enter the washroom cubicle to assist only under the following guidelines:

- 1) **A second ministry team member** must be within visual contact.
- 2) In light of the fact that most abusers are male, and for the protection of male volunteers, it would be wise for **men to avoid** assisting boys or girls of any age in the washrooms.
- 3) The outside washroom **door must be propped open** if only one adult is present. The ministry team member must stand in the open cubicle doorway.



3.8 Health and Safety Guidelines

Illness

A child or ministry member who is ill and could therefore expose other children and members of the ministry team to illness, **should not be received into the room**. Some signs of illness are: unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth, eyes, or throat.

Emergencies

- 1) The Ministry team are not to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medication, the parents must give it. No medication will be left in the room or with a worker or child.
In extreme cases (i.e. nut allergies, ventilators, etc.) arrangements should be made with written instructions and permission of the child's parent.
- 2) Procedures should be reviewed annually for fire emergencies. These procedures are to be posted in a visible place in each room, stating the planned route of escape to the nearest fire exit.
- 3) A first aid kit must be kept on hand and all ministry team members are to review the location and contents regularly.
- 4) The Director of Children's Ministry must be notified of any emergencies that occur.

Emergency Evacuation

The ministry team must adhere to and know the evacuation procedure of the program in which they are involved in.

Lockdown

When given instructions to lock down, workers must:

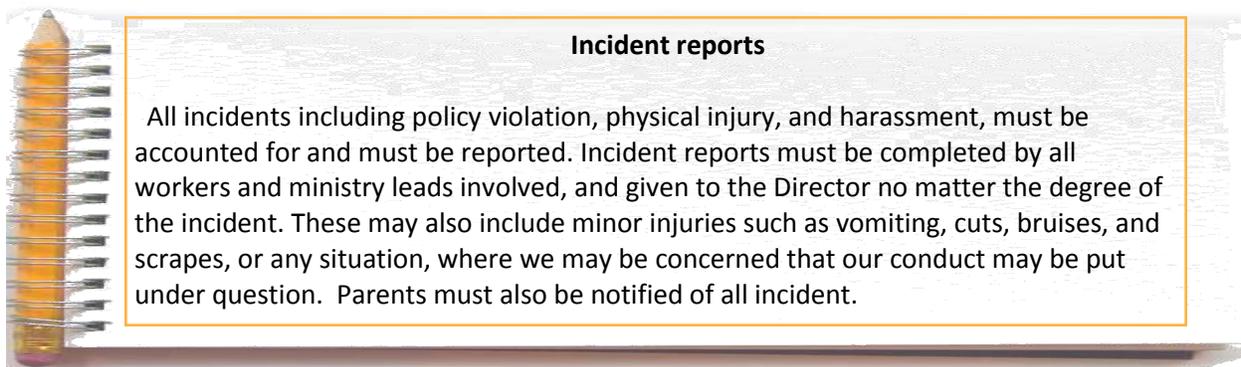
- 1) Close and lock all windows and doors.
- 2) Cover windows if possible.
- 3) Turn off all the lights.
- 4) Group children in area out of sight from outside view from the windows and doors, and remain silent.

Snacks and Food

We must maintain a nut free environment. Therefore, any snacks must be free of any nut essence. To reduce this risk, no homemade food is permitted.

First-Aid Training

Ministry team members who supervise children are encouraged to maintain current certification in basic first-aid and basic CPR (or their equivalent). New staff members must get this certification within 90 days of their start date. For staff attending, the cost will be covered. Nursery and preschool ministry team members may also want training in infant and toddler CPR.



3.8.1 Child Abuse

We believe that all children have the right to be protected from any type of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual) and should have safe and healthy environments in which to grow, learn, and play. We believe that it is the duty of all ministry team members to ensure that children receive the care that will ensure their protection when abuse is suspected or threatened. It is each person's legal responsibility to report any suspicions of child abuse encountered. Confidentiality for suspected abuse and persons involved must be protected. Response and reporting of such cases must adhere to policies held by the Director of Children's Ministry.

(please refer to policy 3.6.3 for more information)



Policy 4: Communication

4.1 Internet, Social Media and Phones

Ministry team members within Children's Ministries are representative of the ministry both on and off-line. Responsible use of the Internet and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and similar sites are permitted.

Responsible use of the Internet and social media also includes:

- 1) No written reference to your involvement with the ministry.
- 2) No written reference to any particular child(ren) involved in the ministry.
- 3) No pictures or videos of ministry children.

Contacting any child(ren) within the ministry in any on-line form is **not** permitted. The one exception to this is email. If an email is sent to a child's or LIFT/TIK's email address, parent(s) (or guardians) or a ministry lead must be copied (cc.ed). Please do not accept any requests from children to be 'friends' or to communicate with them via social media.

We encourage leaders to understand and connect with children outside of program's time slots. Nevertheless, some precautions should be taken. **Children should only be contacted via their family land-line or parent's cell phone.** Despite the increasing number of children with their own cell phones, preference should be made to either email children under the conditions above, or to use a family phone. Texting a child on their phone by a ministry team member is not permitted.

4.2. Use of Photography and Videography

Use of photographs and video cameras can be considered an invasion of privacy, and can easily place children in a vulnerable position for child abuse. There are many risks wherein the image itself could be used inappropriately by others, especially on the Internet.

Any photographs and videos of the children may not be distributed, publicly displayed, or posted on the Internet without proper consent of the ministry staff and the parents of the child(ren).

Use of cameras in the vicinity of child subjects, must have permission from the ministry staff before use. On the occasion of events or activities in which a gathering of ministry children is involved, restrictions and constraints may be in place and should be observed.

4.3. Protection of Information

Any personal information about other individuals you receive as part of the children's ministry team, must be protected.

These may include:

- 1) Name
- 2) Address
- 3) Email address
- 4) Phone number
- 5) Medical conditions
- 6) Family situations
- 7) Financial information including banking or insurance information
- 8) Information that should not belong to the public domain

To protect such information, these guidelines must be followed:

- 1) Do not disclose information to a third party who is not a part of the ministry team or a staff of The Peoples Church (unless authorized by a guardian/parent/Director).
- 2) Return or destroy any confidential information upon leaving the children's ministry.
- 3) Be mindful of giving out private/confidential information that should not be seen or published in the public domain.
- 4) Beware of who may be around you, seeing, or having access to the private/confidential information. Names, contact information including email, should never be left visible or quickly stolen by people who may be passing by. This includes registration forms, sign-in/out sheets, lanyard lists, health forms, etc.
- 5) If you are uncertain about the nature of the information, please verify with the ministry lead, staff, or Director of Children's Ministry.