

# **RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY FOR THE PARISH**

*Adapted from Volunteer Canada, [www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca)*

It is important for an organization to admit that some degree of risk is inevitable in their programs. It is how they handle the risk that is important. The existence of a Risk Management Policy indicates that risks will be identified and analyzed on an ongoing basis.

*Take a look at the following guidelines for reducing the risk in your ministries. Put a check beside the measures your church can implement as part of its Risk Management Policy.*

## **Guidelines for Avoiding Compromising Situations and Reducing Risk**

- It is preferable to meet with a group rather than be alone with an individual.
- It is preferable to have more than one adult present when working with vulnerable people (if the adult cannot be in the same room, it is best to have them close by in the same building).
- It is preferable to meet in an open, public space rather than a closed, private space. A church hall is better than a secluded room, a church office is better than a person's home, a living room is better than a bedroom.
- When meeting, an open door is better than a closed door, a door with a window is better than a solid door.
- It is always wise to make others aware of your activities and your whereabouts.
- It is best to schedule regular meetings with a supervisor to discuss the ongoing nature and actions of the ministry.
- Volunteers should not spend extended time alone with vulnerable care-seekers without consent and knowledge of the ministry leader/supervisor.
- When, and if, programming requires a volunteer to be alone with a vulnerable care-seeker every effort must be made to protect the person's privacy.
- Volunteers should not take others in their vehicle without letting the ministry leader/supervisor know that this occurred.
- Any physical contact between adults should occur in "public" and be sanctioned by the ministry leader/supervisor.
- Volunteers should not take money or property from a care-seeker for their volunteer ministry.
- Volunteers must not act outside the set boundaries of their ministry position description.
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## **Guidelines for Reducing Risk When Working with Children**

- Adults (age 16+) should not spend extended time alone with children without consent of the child’s guardian and the knowledge of the ministry supervisor
- When, and if, programming requires an adult to be alone with children (for example overnight camps or field trips) every effort must be made to protect the child’s privacy. Girls and boys must not change together and adults must change separately from the children. Adults should not sleep in proximity to children.
- Adults who form a relationship with children through our faith community’s activities should not seek out opportunities to spend time with the child “off site”. If off site interactions occur the appropriate people should be informed.
- Adults should not help children with toileting. The parent or guardian must give permission for toileting or changing help to be given for younger children who cannot manage alone.
- Children should not be taken in an adult’s vehicle without parent/guardian permission and the knowledge of the ministry leader/supervisor.
- Any physical contact between adults and children should occur in “public” and be sanctioned by the ministry leader/supervisor and the parent/guardian. For example hugs and kisses for younger children or physical ‘rough housing’ with older kids.
- Parents/guardians of children enrolled in programs should be encouraged to ask questions and stay abreast of the nature of the adult/child interaction. They should be encouraged to talk with their children about the programs and the volunteers and staff they encounter.
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### **‘RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY’**

These guidelines are intended to provide a general overview. It is recognized that churches may not be able to implement these all of these guidelines. It is important the churches adopt risk reducing measures that are appropriate to its volunteer ministries, and ensure that volunteers are aware of the church’s Risk Management Policy as it applies to their position.

### **A ‘BEST PRACTICE’ FOR CHURCHES**

Give a journal to each volunteer who works one-on-one or in private with others and require the volunteer to make notes on each meeting. The notes should include date, time, duration, location as well as the content of each meeting.