

"A Safe Environment for All" **Van Es Camp and Conference Centre**

Purpose

Van Es Camp and Conference Centre is a camping facility operated for the district churches of the Moravian Church in Canada. For years it has been a haven for our children and adults to enjoy the beauty afforded to us by our loving God and a place to share together in friendship, fellowship and learning the teachings of our Lord. The intent and purpose of this policy is to ensure that Van Es Camp and Conference Centre remains a safe place for each of us. With the following guidelines and in conjunction with ongoing education, we will strive to:

- Protect all children from any form of abuse,
- Prevent injury in any way,
- Protect all leaders, camp staff and volunteers from false allegations of abuse or negligence.

Definitions

"Abuse" - includes physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

"Physical Abuse" - is any non-accidental act that violates the dignity of the image of God in another person, inflicting dehumanizing pain or injury. Physically abusive behaviour also includes physical neglect, which means not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care.

"Emotional Abuse" - is any attempt to control another person's life through words, threats, fears, and/or deprivation in such a way that it impairs a person's God given sense of self worth.

"Sexual Abuse" - is any sexual experience forced on one person by another which may or may not involve physical contact between people. Sexual abuse also includes any role-inappropriate sexual encounter, even if consensual at the time.

"Staff Members" - includes all staff members, paid or unpaid, ordained or lay members and participants, leaders or teachers, volunteers, consultants and employees in place during Van Es Camp and Conference Centre sponsored events. Without limiting this definition in any way, those transporting children and youth from camp sponsored events are considered to be staff members. During any events sponsored by area churches, individuals or other rental groups, the responsibility for staff other than paid employees of the Van Es Camp and Conference Centre falls upon the area churches, individuals or other rental groups utilizing the facility.

Policy Statement

Van Es Camp and Conference Centre is committed to providing a safe environment for all who participate in activities at or facilitated by Van Es Camp and Conference Centre.

Van Es Camp and Conference Centre will not tolerate, and will seek a means to eradicate any behaviour by its staff members that constitutes abuse.

Access to Information

All area churches in the Canadian Moravian District will be advised that this policy exists and will be forwarded a copy which can be held on their files. As well, a copy of the policy will be provided to any individual requesting it.

A copy of the policy will also be maintained at the Van Es Camp and Conference Centre office where anyone attending the camp while staff members are in attendance, can request access to it for review.

Before Working with Children

All new staff members will review this policy and will sign an application form that includes a statement that they have read the policy (a sample is attached) and understand the contents.

All new volunteer staff members other than Pastors of any area church must provide at least two references (a sample form is attached). These forms will be processed by the camp registrar on behalf of the camp board.

All new volunteer staff members 18 years of age and older must have a police security and child welfare check completed prior to the commencement of their duties. These forms will also be processed by the camp registrar on behalf of the camp board.

All current and/or new paid staff members will have the same requirements as noted above except that all forms will be processed by the chairperson of the board or their designate. Van Es Camp and Conference Centre will assume the cost of processing any security checks for paid staff members in place as of October 1st, 2004. Any paid staff members hired after that date will be required to provide security checks at their own cost.

If any area pastor or member of their Joint Boards knows of any reason why a person may not be suitable for a position, further investigation should take place. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

Final approval or denial of the appointment of a volunteer staff member will take place after the camp registrar receives the results of the criminal history and child welfare check for any staff members over the age of 18 years. The results of any security checks will be held on file and considered valid for a period of two years. Reference checks must be completed yearly.

Final approval or denial of the appointment of a paid staff member will take place after the chairperson of the board or their designate receives the results of the criminal history and child welfare check for any paid staff member over the age of 18 years. The results of these security checks will be held on file and considered valid for a period of five years.

Process if Abuse is Alleged

When a child or youth comes forward with an allegation of abuse, it is important to take his or her word seriously. The following advice is given to any staff member who receives this information:

- Do not deny the problem, stay calm and listen to the allegation from the child/youth
- Give emotional support reminding the child/youth they are not at fault and they were right in telling you the problem
- Complete an incident form (see attached)
- Notify the director of the camp or supervisor of the event

If abuse of any kind is observed or a direct disclosure is made or if it is suspected that a child is at risk, staff members, parents or concerned individuals will immediately speak to the director of the camp or the supervisor of the event regarding the issue. It is important to keep this information confidential at all times.

- Whenever the camp director or supervisor of the event receives information regarding abuse, they are to apprise the chairman of Van Es Camp and Conference Centre or their designate.
- If the accusation is against the camp director or supervisor of the event, the issue will be shared confidentially with the chairman of Van Es Camp and Conference Centre or their designate.
- The action or response to an accusation is to be initiated by the chairman of Van Es Camp and Conference Centre or their designate.
- Any child abuse or suspected child abuse will be reported to Alberta Social Services and or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as required by law. Failure to do so is an offence. The chairman of Van Es Camp and Conference Centre or their designate will assist staff members in making this report.
- If the person accused is a staff member, the procedures outlined below in this policy will be followed.
- If a person serving under call is accused, the *Policy on Sexual Misconduct of Persons serving under Call or Appointment by the PEC in the Moravian Church, Northern and Southern Provinces* will be followed.

Where Abuse is Alleged or Injury Occurs in Non-Abuse Situations

The chairman of Van Es Camp and Conference Centre or their designate will report the matter to a lawyer obtained by the Van Es Camp and Conference Centre. The lawyer should be present when answering any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies.

Van Es Camp and Conference Centre staff should not attempt an in-depth investigation on its own. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.

Van Es Camp and Conference Centre staff should not prejudge the situation. It is important that staff of Van Es Camp and Conference Centre;

- Take the allegations seriously,
- Reach out to be supportive of the victim and the victim's family
- Treat the accused with dignity and support. If that person is a staff member, they should be relieved temporarily of their duties until the investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements should be made to maintain or suspend their income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated. This will be a matter for the Board of Van Es Camp and Conference Centre to decide in consultation with their lawyer.

The Chairman of Van Es Camp and Conference Centre or their designate will be the spokesperson on behalf of the Camp;

- The spokesperson should use the text of the prepared public statement to respond to the press or to bring the news of the allegation to the area congregations
- It is important to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved
- Avoid spelling out the details of the allegation in a public interview or statement
- Consider the following statement with advice from the church's lawyer;

"It is always tragic when children are abused or exploited. Van Es Camp and Conference Centre has taken careful precautions to protect the children entrusted to our care. We are distressed by any accusation of child abuse. We will do everything in our power to address any needs in this situation. For the welfare of those involved all information has been directed to the Department of Social Services."

Document everything in writing including but not limited to, any accusations, any responses, police reports, legal advice, minutes of board meetings, results of inquiries and everything the Van Es Camp and Conference Centre has done in response to the allegation of abuse, or situation of injury (e.g. car accident).

Maintain indefinitely all files in a secure place in order to maintain confidentiality and privacy. The board members of Van Es Camp and Conference Centre must be advised where such documents are located.

GUIDELINES IN SUPPORT OF THE POLICY

Child Protection Procedures

Child Security

Staff members who work with children should ensure that these children are released only into the care of the child's parent or designate.

All staff members should avoid being isolated with only one child/youth of any age. If it appears that one child/youth may be left with the staff member in an isolated situation, where possible the staff member should ask the second last child and/or their parents to remain until the last child can also be released to their parents or designate.

When it is necessary that only one staff member be in a closed room with children, the door of the room should remain open at all times.

Any significant problem affecting a child must be reported to the child's parents immediately.

An emergency exit plan with maps and procedures should be visible in each area in which children and youth gather. All staff members should make themselves familiar with the emergency exit plan.

Transportation of Children/Youth

Anyone providing transportation to children/youth for Van Es Camp and Conference Centre sponsored events must:

- Be 18 years of age or older,
- Carry adequate insurance coverage
- Maintain the vehicle in good repair
- Have a valid full driver's license
- Have adequate working seat belts available for all passengers
- Maintain an environment that provides for safe driving (e.g. no talking on a cell phone, controlling passengers so that they are not a distraction to the driver, maintaining appropriate speed, etc.).

Class guidelines – To apply where any group of children gather

Van Es Camp and Conference Centre seeks to provide a safe, loving space where each child feels comfortable and fellowship and learning can take place.

Staff members between the ages of 13 and 17 may supervise a group of children. When staff members in this age group are involved in supervision of any sort, it is:

- Recommended that they do so under the supervision of a person 18 years of age or older.
- It is important that the open door policy be enforced
- It is preferable that at least two younger staff members work together

Family ministry teams often work well together, in order to protect such teams from false accusations; we recommend the presence of at least one other staff member not related to the family.

Children/youth should not leave their group except for illness, washroom visits or other compelling reasons. Staff members are to ensure that any child/youth that leaves the group should return promptly or be given over to the supervision of another staff member (e.g. staff nurse).

Discipline:

All discipline is to be carried out in love, not anger. The goal of discipline is to teach changed behaviour, never vengeance. The following guidelines apply for all programs involving children and youth.

When the behaviour of a child or youth is not appropriate, staff should try to:

- Distract the child/youth with another activity or another more acceptable behaviour
- Isolate the child/youth from others (time out)

Parents of a child are to be informed and involved whenever the behaviour of a child or youth is not appropriate, beyond a minor correction, or if a frequency of such inappropriate behaviour increases.

No corporal punishment is appropriate in any circumstances (e.g. no spanking, hitting, slapping or other physical punishment).

Abusive verbal punishment, such as yelling and insults, is not permitted.

Washroom guidelines

No staff member should be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom except as outlined in these guidelines. In no case should a staff member go into a cubical with a child and close the door.

If preschool children need assistance in the washroom, a staff member may enter an open washroom cubical to assist. As most allegations of abuse are made against males, it is wise for men not to assist boys or girls of any age in the washrooms.

Children requiring assistance in the washroom should not be sent to the washroom alone. A staff member should escort the child to the washroom, prop open the washroom door and stand outside the bathroom until the child is ready to return to their activities.

Displays of Affection

Physical contact with children and youth should be age and developmentally appropriate. Staff members need to be aware of and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural customs, family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs.

To ensure that all displays of affection represent pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love, the following guidelines are provided;

- Bending down to a child's level and speaking kindly; listening to the child carefully
- Taking a child's hand and leading the child to an activity
- Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs comforting and quieting

- Taking both of the child's hands as you affirm the child (e.g. "You did a great job"; "I'm glad to see you" etc.)
- Patting a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm the child
- Holding a child by the shoulders or hand to keep the child's attention while you redirect the child's behaviour
- Gently holding a child's chin to help the child focus on what you are saying to them
- Holding a preschool child who is crying

The following is inappropriate behaviour and should not occur:

- Kissing a child/youth or coaxing a child/youth to kiss you, extended hugging or tickling
- Touching a child/youth in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting with washroom visits as outlined above)
- Carrying older children/youth or having them sit on your lap
- Being alone with a child/youth

Youth Leaders or Counsellors

Youth leaders or counsellors will not date youth members attending at any Van Es Camp and Conference Centre sponsored camp or event regardless of their ages.

Displays of affection among youth leaders or counsellors and participants of any Van Es Camp and Conference Center sponsored camp or event should always take place in public and in the presence of other people and should be limited to actions such as:

- A brief hug
- An open arm around the shoulder
- An open pat on the back
- A handclasp or handshake
- A light touch to the forearm

Gift giving should be limited to small tokens given to all participants. Phone calls or letters of a personal nature should relate to matters that cannot be interpreted as sexual or of a "courting" nature.

**"A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL"
VAN ES CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTRE**

Application Form

Name: _____

Position: _____

Employee Position / Volunteer Position (Please circle whichever applies)

_____ I have been given a copy of "A Safe Environment for All"

_____ I understand the content of "A Safe Environment for All"

_____ I undertake to comply with the guidelines included in "A Safe Environment for All" safeguarding the safety of the children and youth entrusted to my care.

_____ I know of no reason why I would not be suitable for this position.

_____ I understand that Van Es Camp and Conference Centre must seek a Police Criminal History check and Social Services-Child Welfare check and will fully assist Van Es Camp and Conference Centre to obtain such checks into my history.

If you are unable to agree to any of the above statements, or if you have questions regarding the application process, please contact the chairman or any board member of Van Es Camp and Conference Centre.

Signature

Date

REFERENCE CHECK
Van Es Camp and Conference Centre

Applicant Name: _____

Reference Name: _____

Reference Address: _____

Reference Phone: _____

1) What is your relationship to the applicant? _____

2) How long have you know the applicant? _____

3) How would you describe the applicant? _____

4) How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children and youth? _____

5) How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults?

6) How would you feel about having the applicant work with your child or youth? _____

7) Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children and/or youth? If so please describe:

8) Do you have any knowledge of the applicant ever being convicted of a crime? If so, please describe: _____

9) Is there any other information that you believe is important for the board of the Van Es Camp and Conference Centre to know about this applicant? _____

Reference inquiry completed by:

Signature

Date

INCIDENT FORM

Who is making the complaint?

- Name _____
- Position (e.g. parent, pastor, person alleging abuse) _____

Alleged victim information:

- Name _____
- Age _____
- Sex _____
- Position within the Camping program (student, leader) _____

Alleged accused information:

- Name _____
- Age _____
- Sex _____
- Position within the Camping program _____

Date of alleged incident: _____

Time of day: Morning _____ Afternoon _____ Evening _____

Location of the alleged incident: _____

Witnesses to the alleged incident

Describe the complaint in detail

Did the alleged victim complain to the person accused about the matter under complaint? If so, how and when?
