

# Greenfield Park Baptist Church

## CHILD & YOUTH ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

Jesus  
Loves  
Kids

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:14

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Child abuse - it's a sensitive issue, an emotional issue. It's an issue that we would rather not think about, or at least not believe that we would have to face in a Christian organization.

Unfortunately, we must. Society - even the church - has become tainted by the presence of child abuse, and most of us have heard stories or experienced firsthand what happens to a congregation when abuse is discovered in the church. Worse, children's lives have been severely and permanently damaged because of abuse. That reason alone compels us to always be on guard, working to prevent child abuse before it occurs, and to respond properly if it does.

Through education on abuse prevention, we want you to be able to recognize signs of abuse. Even if abuse is not happening in your program, you should be able to detect the signs and take appropriate steps. Therefore, we recommend that volunteers be familiar with the GPBC "Child Abuse Prevention Policies" and attend any training sessions that GPBC has to offer.

The purpose of this program is to:

- Reduce the risk to children and youth
- Protect people involved from false or mistaken accusations
- Avoid unwholesome or unsafe situations
- Deal appropriately with abuse situations that do occur

The Board of Elders, Greenfield Park Baptist Church

## **SECTION 1- DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE**

To broaden the understanding of what child abuse is, our church defines abuse covered under these policies as the following: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.**

**1. Physical abuse:** Any non-accidental human act that results in physical pain or injury to a child\*\*—\*\*whether or not it leaves a cut, wound, mark, or bruise. Physically abusive behaviour ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, and biting to more severe forms like choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing, and shooting. In other words, physical abuse is any intentional means of inflicting pain or injury on another person. It is sometimes a single event but can also be a chronic pattern of behaviour.

**2. Sexual abuse:** The exploitation of a child or any sexual intimacy forced on a child for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Child sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a child who cannot understand sexual acts or resisting coercion, such as threats or offers of gifts. Sexual abuse may or may not involve physical contact.

**Examples** of non-physical sexual abuse include exposing oneself, displaying pornographic material, photographing a child for pornographic materials, obscene telephone calls, or internet contact (social networking sites, online chatting, email), and requests to engage in sexual activity (where no physical contact occurs).

**Examples** of sexual abuse involving physical contact may include fondling of body parts such as breasts, crotch, buttocks, or sexual organs; intercourse; and oral and anal sex.

**3. Emotional abuse:** Attempting to control a child's life through words, threats, and fear; destroying a child's self-worth through harassment, threats, and deprivation. Emotional abuse weakens a child's mental and physical ability to resist, cuts off his or her contacts with others, and causes a gradual loss of self-esteem, all of which reinforce a sense of helplessness and dependence on the abuser. This type of abuse can include personal and other types of social contact, such as telephone calls or internet contact (social networking sites, online chatting, email).

## **SECTION 2 - Screening Procedures**

To be considered for any volunteer position involving children/youth, an applicant must be an attending member in good standing of Greenfield Park Baptist Church for at least six months, unless approved by the Board of Elders.

All volunteers and paid employees involved in children/youth programs must have successfully completed a Longueuil Police Background Check – Vulnerable Persons prior to being in contact with the children/youth.

A "vulnerable person" is understood to be a person who, due to their age, disability, or other temporary or permanent circumstances:

- is in a position of dependency on others.
- is at a higher risk of abuse or assault than the general population from a person in a position of authority or trust in relation to them.

Anyone called upon to work with vulnerable people should undergo a background check due to a **duty of care\***.

### **This check includes:**

- Any conviction or charge for a criminal offense incompatible with the position held or sought.
- Any standing court order.
- Any conviction for an offense listed in Schedule 2 of the *Criminal Records Act*, R.S.C. (1985), c. C-47, for which a record suspension has been ordered (pardon).
- Any misconduct or information that may suggest that a candidate's past or current behavior poses a risk to the physical or moral safety of vulnerable people with whom they would be called upon to work.

All volunteers and paid employees involved in children/youth programs must sign the Code of Ethics form contained within this booklet and return it to the GPBC Elder responsible for Security.

Any information obtained will remain confidential.

Additional screening steps may be taken at the discretion of church officials, e.g., extra police background reviews for other ministry volunteers and paid staff, or an additional interview with the Elder responsible for the abuse policy.

Children Ministry Program Leaders must be official members in good standing of Greenfield Park Baptist Church and have successfully completed the screening process.

## **2.1 Policies That Govern the Screening Process**

### **2.1.1 Personnel Files**

Personnel files will be kept for all volunteers and staff. The files will be kept with the Administration Assistant, with access limited to those individuals who make decisions about placing applicants in available positions.

Only verifiable information will be placed in a personnel file. If information obtained is unsubstantiated, it should be labelled as such. Any supporting documentation of any charge or allegation of wrongdoing will clearly identify the source.

Personnel files of individuals who have left their teaching position or the church are to remain intact, along with any supporting documentation involving possible charges or allegations of wrongdoing.

These files will remain as part of the church's permanent records and can be shared, if warranted, with public officials, other churches, and programs involving youth.

## **SECTION 3 - Discipline Policy**

- Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, and pushing) is not permitted.
- Abusive verbal discipline (yelling, insulting, and threatening) is not permitted, nor is the use of any medication unless administered by the parent.
- Parent(s) are to be informed and involved whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehaviour increases.
- Concerns about a child's behaviour or the appropriate response to a child's behaviour should be reported to the program supervisor.
- An aide or a parent should be involved weekly in classrooms where misbehaviour is an ongoing problem.
- Expectations of children/youths' behaviour must reflect their age and level of comprehension. Similarly, discipline must reflect their age and level of comprehension.
- Children are to be reminded of the kind of behaviour that is acceptable for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.
- Whenever possible, leaders should try to avoid having to discipline a child/youth by choosing one or more of the following options:
  - - Distract the child/youth with another activity
    - Help the child/youth focus on another, more acceptable behaviour
    - Isolate the child/youth from others if another volunteer/staff member is available to assist
- For young children, time-outs should not last longer (in minutes) than the age of the child. For example, a three-year-old should not have to sit for a time-out any longer than three minutes.
- When nothing seems to be working, staff, volunteers, or leaders should get help before "losing their cool."
- Be sure all discipline is carried out in love, not anger. Remember, the goal of discipline is not vengeance, but changed behaviour.

## 3.1 POLICIES FOR SPECIFIC CHILD/YOUTH PROGRAMS

### 3.1.1 Nursery

- All leaders within the Nursery Program are required to sign the Code of Ethics form.
- Youth (12–17 years) may volunteer as “Helpers” for service, provided that an adult is present.
- At least two attendants (one must be an adult aged 18 years or older) should serve in the nursery whenever it is scheduled, even if only one child is present.
- An adult who is scheduled for nursery duty must have another adult to replace them should they be unable to serve.
- Only one adult member of a family should serve in the nursery at a given time. A parent and child may serve in the nursery provided there is another non-related (immediate family) person in attendance.
- A scheduled minor may not bring their friends to the nursery.
- Attendants may take children from the nursery only for good reasons, such as to use the bathroom or in case of illness.
- Any significant medical problem should **be reported immediately** to the child's parent(s).
- For children who do not require assistance in the bathroom, the attendant must remain outside the bathroom. For children who require assistance, the attendant must assist the child with the bathroom door ajar.
- The diapering of an infant or toddler must take place in the nursery under the observation of another attendant. One attendant should be over the age of 18.
- 2 Infants (0 to 8 months): normally two attendants (one adult and one Helper) must always be present.
- 4 Toddlers (8 months to 3 years): normally two attendants (one adult and one Helper) must be in the toddler section of the nursery.
- A parent who has not successfully completed GPBC’s screening procedures, and who accompanies their child in either nursery (birth–3 years), is not authorized to help supervise the other children.
- The Discipline Policy applies to the nursery and toddler programs.

(This Nursery Program Policy will be posted in the nursery)

## 3.1.2 Kingdom Kids

- All teachers serving in this program are required to sign the Code of Ethics form.
- Only one adult (aged 18 years or older) member of a family should be in a classroom at a given time.
- Four and five-year-olds require a teacher plus a Helper with a minimum age of 12 years or older.
- Bathroom assistance is conducted as in the nursery policy.
- Children should not leave the classroom except for illness, bathroom privileges, or other compelling reasons.
- Whenever the Kingdom Kids program is in session, the classroom door should allow for an unobstructed view of the room (e.g., either a door with a window affording a clear view of the classroom, or the door completely open).
- Church leaders will limit their online contact with young people under 15 years of age (social networking sites: Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter; online chatting, email, sharing of photographs).
- The Discipline Policy <sup>1</sup>applies to the Kingdom Kids program.

(This Kingdom Kids Program Policy will be posted in the Sunday School Hall)

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<sup>1</sup> Greenfield Park Baptist Church Child & Youth Abuse Prevention Policy, September 2025, Section 2- Discipline Policy.

### 3.1.3 Teen Group

- All leaders are required to sign the Code of Ethics form.
- Teen Group leaders may meet individually in a public place with a member of the Teen Group once or twice and thereafter only after informing the teen's parent(s).
- Teen Group functions must be supervised by two adults.
- Leaders or designated volunteers transporting a teen must have written consent from parents (form required each year).
- Appropriate displays of affection are often part of conveying support and encouragement. Displays of affection between Teen Group leaders and Teen Group members should be limited to actions like a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-handed pat on the back, or a handclasp. A Teen Group leader or member's right to refuse such a display of affection will be respected.
- Teen Group leaders will limit their online contact with young people under 16 years of age (social networking sites: Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter; online chatting, email, sharing of photographs).
- Teen Group leaders have a responsibility to address any known abuse they become aware of among teens (under 17) under their charge. This includes physical or emotional abuse that may be taking place either to or by the teen toward a member of their peers. The Teen Group leader should consult the responsible Elder (Teen) and/or the person responsible for our church abuse policy to determine what actions should be taken. For example: abuse of the teen would be reported to the police; abuse among teens would be reported to their parents.
- This policy covers contact via social networking sites: Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter; online chatting, email, sharing of photographs.
- The Discipline Policy<sup>2</sup> applies to the Teen Group program.

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<sup>2</sup> Greenfield Park Baptist Church Child & Youth Abuse Prevention Policy, September 2025, Section 2- Discipline Policy.

### **3.1.4 Vacation Bible School or Outreach**

(Involving children under 17 - When run by or involving volunteers or facilities from GPBC)

- All leaders are required to sign the Code of Ethics form.
- Classes and activities will have two supervisory people, at least one of whom is an adult.
- A helper must be a minimum of 14 years old.
- An adult leader or older helper (14 years or older) should not meet privately with a child without another adult leader or older helper present.
- Adults transporting a child in their vehicle must have written consent from parents (the Transport Authorization Form is required) for all children and/or youth involved in VBS or outreach programs.
- All program leaders will limit their online contact with young people under 16 years of age (social networking sites: Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter; online chatting, email, sharing of photographs).
- Bathroom assistance is conducted as in the nursery policy. Every attempt should be made to have rooms with an unobstructed view where possible.
- The Discipline Policy<sup>3</sup> applies to the Vacation Bible School and outreach programs involving the church.

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<sup>3</sup> Greenfield Park Baptist Church Child & Youth Abuse Prevention Policy, September 2025, Section 2- Discipline Policy.

## **SECTION 4 - CHILD ABUSE: THE LAW AND THE CHURCH**

Dealing with child abuse requires co-operation between the church and local legal authorities. While there may be disagreements at times, each has an important role to play.

### **4.1 Legal Duty to Report**

There are two duties to report under the Child and Family Services Act of Quebec:

- The duty to report situations where a person believes that a child is, or maybe, in need of protection.
- The duty to report situations where a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may have suffered abuse.

Abuse, for the purpose of reporting, includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, failure to protect a child from abuse, and failure to obtain medical treatment. In case of uncertainty about a duty to report, church representatives can consult with the Children's Aid Society or local CSSS agency by phone, on a confidential basis.

#### **4.1.2 Church Policies and Procedures for Reporting**

The church has both a moral and a legal responsibility to take reasonable measures to ensure that churches are safe places for children. Churches can face civil liability suits relating to negligence in the selection or supervision of personnel, even if church officials were not aware of the actual incidents of abuse committed by personnel associated with church programs.

Establishing clear policies and implementing them consistently is the best prevention and the best defense against any possible charges, including false allegations. Clear statements that abuse will not be tolerated can be accompanied by preventive measures, staff training, and reporting procedures that provide support and accountability for volunteer staff as well as hired personnel.

The church will name an Elder or Deacon whose responsibility is to oversee our policy. This Elder or Deacon should not be directly involved in Children's Ministries.

The church board can contact an independent abuse response team, which can assist church councils in dealing fairly with allegations in their church. In the case of child abuse, church officials must report reasonable suspicions to local authorities, who conduct the investigation.

In addition, the church has its own responsibility to prevent abuse and deal appropriately with abusers and members who have been abused.

Whatever measures are taken or not by legal authorities, the church can provide pastoral care, support for a child in need and the families involved, and appropriate disciplinary actions.

## **SECTION 5 - DISCLOSURE**

### **5.1 Recommended Responses to A Child's Report of Abuse**

The most reliable indicator of child abuse is the child's verbal disclosure.

Avoid asking leading questions. Listen carefully to what the child tells you. Respond in a supportive, non-judgmental manner. Disclosing abuse is a scary thing for a child, and they need to know they are supported. Do not express shock or criticize the child's alleged abuser.

Do not attempt to assess the truthfulness of the child's disclosure—that will be for a trained professional to decide. Assure the child you believe them and that you are sorry the abuse happened.

Tell the child that the abuse was not their fault, that they are not bad or to blame. Reassure the child that they did the right thing by telling you. Tell the child that you will support them as much as possible and then do so.

Do not promise not to tell anyone. Tell the child that you will do what you can to make the abuse stop; this means that you are required by law to report the abuse to someone who can help.

Do not frighten the child by talking about police involvement or medical examinations to verify the complaint; instead, share with the child that other people need to know about what happened, and they will talk to the child later.

### **5.2 Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

All suspicions or allegations of child abuse must be taken seriously and handled confidentially.

Do not investigate yourself or attempt to substantiate allegations. It is important to document exactly what you have been told and observed immediately on paper.

Reporting a reasonable suspicion of child abuse is mandatory by law. Before making a report to

the authorities, any concerns or suspicions should first be communicated to the Kingdom Kids Coordinator, who serves as the initial point of contact or witness to the alleged incident.

The Kingdom Kids Coordinator will immediately inform the Elder responsible for Children's Ministry and the Elder or Deacon responsible for the Abuse Policy, who will notify the Board of Elders and the Pastor, and ensure that all required steps are taken.

These individuals— comprising the Kingdom Kids leadership, the responsible Elder, and the Pastor—will function as a review committee to assess the concern. They may invite other members of the congregation for consultation or input as appropriate.

To ensure timely action, this process should take place as soon as possible, recognizing that **local police must be notified within 24 hours** once it is determined there is reasonable suspicion of abuse.

## **SECTION 6 - GPBC Response to Allegations**

Before any legal action is taken, the following steps must be followed:

- The Child Abuse Prevention Committee, consisting of three members of the congregation and the Pastor, is responsible for investigating all allegations.
- No member of the investigating committee can be a family member of those they are investigating or may have had personal involvement in the allegations
- The committee must keep careful and confidential documentation.
- A spokesperson for the committee will be responsible for reporting the abuse.
- Limit contact with the accuser or any children/youth of the congregation or suspend duty pending the outcome of the investigation.
- A full report of committee investigation shall be given to the council.

The council must decide if an attorney or the church insurance company should be contacted.

If the congregation or media become involved, one person shall be appointed by the executive to act as a church spokesperson.

GPBC will ensure that any victim receives immediate and appropriate pastoral care, as well as referrals to other professional counselling services.

## **6.1 Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Allegations of Child Abuse against a Church Leader**

A person who receives a report of allegations of child abuse against a church leader (paid staff, office bearer, appointed volunteer, or persons within our church community) and concludes that the allegations create a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred, should report the matter to local police or child-protection authorities within twenty-four hours of reaching that conclusion.

As soon as possible after notifying the appropriate authorities, the person who reports the matter should contact the person (hereafter, “designated person”) within the accuser's church who has been designated to receive any report of alleged child abuse. The person who reports the matter should describe the allegations of abuse and/or the circumstances that support the allegations to the designated person. In addition, the person who reports the matter should inform the designated person if the alleged abuse occurred in the church or in connection with a church-sponsored program.

The designated person should contact:

- The pastor, if the minor has not implicated the pastor.
- A member of the church's leadership team, if the minor has not implicated this team member.
- The church's legal counsel.
- The church's insurance agent.

If the alleged victim and alleged abuser are not members of the same church, each church should appoint a designated person. Together, the designated people should maintain contact about the progress of the investigation. Church officials may conduct their own investigation after civil authorities have begun theirs. However, church officials should not reveal the nature of the allegations to the alleged offender until the civil authorities have met with him or her.

If the alleged abuser admits wrongdoing against the victim at any stage of this process, the admission of guilt should be brought to the attention of the Board of

Elders of the church of the accused. The Board of Elders should deliberate and determine outcomes according to established church policy and procedures.

When the designated person determines that the authorities have concluded that the allegations merit serious investigation, or that there is the possibility of formal charges, the designated person should notify the Board of Elders of the alleged abuser's church.

The designated person should present to the Board of Elders a written document that specifies the nature of the allegations and any information that is known.

The Board of Elders should give the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations.

Considering the information presented, the Board of Elders should implement one or more of the following actions:

- Supervise contact at church between the accused and any minors.
- Prohibit contact at church between the accused and the accuser, or between the accused and any minor in the congregation.
- Suspend responsibilities from office, position, or duty, with pay when applicable and without prejudice, pending the outcome of the investigation.

If and when the designated person learns that the authorities have filed criminal charges against the accused, the designated person should report this information to the Board of Elders of the alleged abuser's church.

The designated person should present to the Board of Elders a written document specifying the nature of the allegations and any information that is known. The Board of Elders should give the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations. Considering the information presented, the Board of Elders should implement the following actions:

- Prohibit the accused from contact with minors at church.
- The accused will be temporarily suspended from the office, their position, or Church children's ministry duties (if they are paid staff: guidelines according to the Quebec Labour Code are applied) and will remain without prejudice pending the outcome of the charges.

When criminal proceedings have concluded, the Board of Elders should promptly revisit the matter, whether the result is conviction, acquittal, or dropped charges. If the criminal charges are dropped or prosecution does not result in a conviction, the Board of Elders should decide whether to rescind its earlier action and/or take additional action.

If the accused whom the Board of Elders has previously removed or suspended from office is found not guilty of the allegations, the Board of Elders should not reinstate the accused to his or her previous position of leadership until they, in consultation with the police and/or child protection authorities, legal counsel, and child abuse experts, deem it safe and proper to do so.

If the accused is found guilty, the Board of Elders may:

- Subject a determined abuser (hereafter “abuser”) to further suspension, deposition, or termination of employment; or
- Take such other action against the abuser as the circumstances may dictate.

A church leader

- who has made a confession of child abuse.
- who has been convicted of child abuse in a court of law; or
- whom the Board of Elders has adjudicated guilty of abuse of a minor should not be reinstated to the position from which he or she has been removed or suspended without the advice of the church's legal counsel.

The Board of Elders should notify the congregation when a church leader is removed or suspended from office, position, or duty pending the outcome of an investigation into any allegations of child abuse. This notice should be in writing and should protect the identity and confidentiality of the accuser. This disclosure should be pastoral, objectively factual, and not exceed the scope of the information known about the matter at that time. In addition, the Board of Elders should not attempt to state any legal conclusions about the guilt or innocence of any person unless and until the Board of Elders determines that a church leader is an abuser.

Subject to the best interests of the abused, the Board of Elders should notify the congregation in writing if they conclude that a church leader is an abuser. This notice should protect the identity and confidentiality of any innocent party, including the abused person. This written communication should be pastoral and objectively factual.

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## **SECTION 7 - Needs Assessment Checklist GPBC**

We have all paid employees, including clergy, who work with youth or children, sign the Code of Ethics.

We currently screen all paid employees, including clergy, who work with youth or children, e.g., personal interview, length of time before they can serve in Youth Ministries.

We currently screen all volunteer youth workers for any position involving work with youth or children, e.g., personal interviews, length of time before they can serve in Youth Ministries.

We conduct Local Police Background Checks – Vulnerable Sector (18+) on all paid employees and new volunteers working with youth or children.

We present our policies and train all staff who work with children or youth, both paid and volunteer, on how to carry out our policies to prevent sexual, physical, and verbal abuse.

We take our policies to prevent abuse seriously and ensure that they are enforced.

Our workers understand provincial laws concerning child abuse reporting obligations.

We have a clearly defined reporting procedure for a suspected incident of abuse.

We have a specific response strategy to use if an allegation of sexual abuse is made at our church.

We are prepared to respond to all members of our church and to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

We have insurance coverage if a claim should occur.

During church members' meetings and all meetings of the Board of Elders, the Deacon responsible for the policy provides a necessary update on the policy and informs members if there is any case that he is aware of that is currently under review.

**All information obtained under this policy is confidential and is stored in a manner where it will remain confidential. The information is only released should it become necessary. Files are destroyed after 100 years.**

# **ANNEX A -TRANSPORTATION CONSENT FORM**

(to be completed for each Driver)

GROUP: Children's Ministry, Kingdom Kids, Teen Group. Applies to children (we do not transport children 6 years and younger) 7 years to 17 years of age.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_

To \_\_\_\_\_

This consent form authorizes the designated volunteers of Greenfield Park Baptist Church to transport my child(ren) to and from activities involved with the above-mentioned group, and to take any action deemed necessary for the well-being of my child(ren).

Greenfield Park Baptist Church will ensure that your child(ren) will be transported by a volunteer who holds a valid driver's license without faults

CHILD(REN) NAMES:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PARENT OR GUARDIAN:

\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE:

(Copy to be left on file)

## **ANNEX B - CODE OF ETHICS**

For volunteers, pastors, and leaders in child and youth programs who believe that God is calling them to serve children or youth in this congregation.

- My first priority in teaching, supervising, or leading children or youth will be to seek the welfare of the children/youth physically, socially, educationally, and spiritually.
- I will also try to understand and respect the child's/youth's cultural background.
- I will give the parent(s) full information about the program I am teaching, supervising, or leading and what time it begins and ends.
- I will not do anything that will damage a child's or youth's trust. I will try to protect the child/youth from all forms of abuse while they are in my care.
- If I suspect that a child/youth may be hurt by the abusive actions or attitudes of another person, I will report that suspicion to a responsible person so that it can be investigated properly.
- If I wish to talk to the child/youth alone, it will be within the sight and sound of other people.
- I will limit online contact with underage children/youth (social networking sites, online chatting, email) in respect of the spirit of this policy.
- I will answer a child's/youth's questions openly and honestly.
- I will work with the children/youth to set some agreed guidelines for acceptable behaviour within the group. I will expect the children/youth to act based on those guidelines, and if a child/youth consistently breaks them, I will seek help from parents and others to assist me in responding to the child/youth.
- If a child/youth is distressed, I will try to offer comfort and help. I will encourage the child/youth to find the appropriate help for their needs.
- I will pray for each child/youth regularly and let them know that I care about them.

Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Distribution; copy to Signataire, **ORIGINAL** to be **left on file**)