

DALSTON - CROWN HILL UNITED CHURCH POLICY FOR RISK MANAGEMENT

Reference: “**Faithful Footsteps:** Screening Procedures for Positions of Trust and Authority in the United Church of Canada: A Handbook.”

Statement of Commitment: As a congregation within the United Church of Canada, Dalston - Crown Hill United Church is committed to providing a safe environment for worship, work and study for all staff, volunteers, and ministry personnel who work with individuals in our faith community and especially those who are vulnerable. This commitment is demonstrated by our staff, volunteers and ministry personnel showing respect for personal boundaries, protecting others from harm and abuse while enabling those in their care to learn and grow in the Christian faith without fear of exploitation.

Theological Statement: As followers of Jesus, we are called to show Christian love for one another and to the world. (John 13:34, 35) We are also called to share our gifts and resources and to build a community of faith resting upon the firm foundation of mutuality and respect. (Acts 3:44-77) We recognize that as a Christian faith community, we have a primary responsibility to care for those of our society who are marginalized, less powerful or more vulnerable within our community. (Deuteronomy 10: 17-19; Isaiah 61:1, 2)

DEFINITIONS:

1. Risk Management

Risk management is “taking care to consider the possibility that something could go wrong and taking steps to stop, minimize, prevent or eliminate the circumstances which may lead to injury, abuse or harm to programme participants. Risk management means accepting the fact that harm is possible, either by the deliberate act of an abusive person, or through carelessness or accident.” (Faithful Footsteps Guide Book p.6)

2. Vulnerability and Risk Levels

The following factors determine the level of vulnerability and level of risk for programmes and activities associated with Dalston-Crown Hill United Church:

- a) **The age and dependency level of the participants:** Younger and older people and those with a greater dependency can be more vulnerable than others.
- b) **The nature of the programme or activity:** Does the function place people in a one-on-one situation such as a pastoral visit conducted with a single person living at home? Does it involve a person being alone in the church building?
- c) **The setting of the programme or activity:** Does the room in which the event is held have windows? Does the event take place in one of our church buildings or at some other venue?
- d) **Leadership concerns:** What is the relationship between the group or activity leader(s) and the participants? Is there potential for abuse of power? Is a participant ever left alone with a leader?
- e) **No one is totally invulnerable:** Depending upon the circumstances, anyone can find himself or herself in a position of vulnerability.

Depending on the circumstances, an individual’s and / or group’s vulnerability and risk level can be either increased or decreased.

3. Individual Activity: This term refers to situations such as a musician practising alone or a volunteer is working alone in one of our buildings

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

The following Guidelines for Risk Management apply to all groups, programmes, or individual activities of the Dalston-Crown Hill United Church regardless of the risk level assigned to them:

1. Be familiar with the location of exits, emergency lighting, the first aid kit, telephones and fire extinguishers.
2. Groups or individuals present in the church building should check the calendar of church activities posted on the bulletin board in each church building so as to be aware of other activities that may be happening at the same time.
3. Whenever possible, the building should be locked when meetings or activities are held.
4. At night, no one is to be left alone in the building for the purpose of turning off the lights and locking up.
5. Be aware of and follow general rules of common sense for personal and group safety.
6. In the event of an accident or other abnormal incident involving a participant in a meeting or activity, immediate and appropriate action is to be taken to deal with the situation. An incident reporting form, located with each first aid kit, is to be filled out as soon as possible and filed as directed on the form.
7. As a congregation, most of our programmes and committees are open to guests. Because of confidentiality and privacy concerns, it may be necessary to close some programmes or committee meetings to guests.
8. Participants in our programmes and activities are encouraged to provide feedback about any concerns regarding their sense of personal safety.
9. Visual images of any participant in church activities may only be shown to the public when permission has been granted by the person involved or a parent/guardian except for in our church buildings (e.g. power point, picture displays). A release sheet authorizing or refusing the publication of visual images for the general public will be kept by the church secretary. All permission forms must include a statement of acceptance or refusal for release of visual images.

LEVELS OF RISK:

Three levels of risk have been identified within our faith community. They are: Low Risk, Medium Risk, and High Risk.

LOW RISK GROUPS OR ORGANIZATIONS:

The following groups and organizations associated with our congregation have been assessed as Low Risk. They are placed at this level because there are no children, youth or other vulnerable people currently participating in these groups and organizations. **When children, youth or other vulnerable adults become involved with meetings or activities of these groups, the risk level is increased.**

Property Management Committee
 Committee of Trustees
 Ministry and Personnel Committee
 Worship Committee
 Mission and Outreach Committee
 Finance Committee

United Church Women
 Adult Study Groups
 Senior Choir
 Church Council
 Communications Committee
 Music Committee

Guidelines for Low Risk Groups:

1. Be aware of and adhere to the **General Guidelines** for all groups, programmes or individual activities.

MEDIUM RISK GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS:

The following groups and organizations associated with our congregation have been assessed as Medium Risk. They are placed at this level because there is a potential for children or youth and other vulnerable people to be involved with their meetings or activities.

Christian Education and Faith Formation Committee
 Fellowship Committee
 Visioning Committee

Guidelines for Medium Risk Groups:

1. Be aware of and adhere to the **General Guidelines** for all groups, programmes and individual activities.

2. Leaders are to make sure that all participants are aware of the guidelines and other guidelines that may be applied, as deemed necessary, to specific meetings and activities.

3. All participants are to travel to and from meetings and activities which occur off the church property on their own and at their own risk. Shared travel (car pooling) implies that passengers do so at their own risk.

4. Participants 12 years and under, will be required to be accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult or provide a permission slip as determined by the appropriate committee or organization.

HIGH RISK GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS:

The following groups and organizations associated with our congregation have been assessed as High Risk. They are placed at this level because the participants in their activities include children, youth, and other vulnerable people.

Pastoral Care and Membership Committee	Sunday School
Vacation Bible School	Youth Group
Confirmation Class	Youth Choir
Special Programmes involving Children and /or Youth	

Guidelines for High Risk Groups:

1. Be aware of and adhere to the General Guidelines for all groups, programmes or individual activities.

2 a) On-Site Activities:

- At all on-site activities involving children, there must be a supervisor and at least one other adult in close proximity.
- Doors to classrooms and other meeting / gathering spaces should be left partially open.

b) Off-Site Activities:

- More than one responsible adult must accompany a high risk group to any off-site activity unless an exception is approved by an appropriate official or officer of the church.
- Participants must be informed at least one week in advance of any plan to hold an off-site activity or meeting.
- Any off-site activity or meeting that involves participants 12 years of age and under must be cleared through the Church-School Co-ordinator or another appropriate official or officer of the church congregation. For such participants, appropriate notification and **permission forms** are to be kept by the group leader or co-ordinator. Each group is free to develop its own permission form but all permission forms must provide the following information: description of activity, date of activity, place and time of the activity, names of the activity supervisors and other responsible persons in charge, transportation arrangements, and name of child/children, signature of parent or legal guardian and the date of signing.
- All participants travel to and from off-site meetings and activities on their own and at their own risk. Shared travel (car pooling) implies that passengers or, in the case of 12 years of age and under, their parents or legal guardians agree to share the car pool at their own risk.

3. There is a greater need to screen volunteers in situations when there is only one adult providing leadership to a group or organization involving youth and children.
4. The operation and evaluation of each High Risk group or activity will be regularly assessed through teachers and / or other leaders associated with the group or activity. If these measures are felt to adequately reduce the level of risk, then a police records check would not normally be required of those fulfilling a leadership role within these groups or activities.
5. Visits made by members of the Pastoral Care & Membership Committee, the minister, or other official representatives of the congregation to vulnerable individuals should be properly documented indicating the date and time of the contact, the purpose of the contact and any unusual or disturbing comments or actions that were made during the time of the visit.
6. Visitors who represent the congregation in pastoral visiting should wear a Dalston-Crown Hill United Church nametag.
7. Visitors who represent the congregation in pastoral visiting must be aware of the Guidelines for High Risk Groups.
8. Any courtesy car drivers are required to receive from their car insurance carrier permission to use their cars for this purpose. The church's liability insurance does not cover courtesy car drivers.
9. The minister(s) of the pastoral charge are expected to exercise the principles of risk management whenever they come into direct contact with members and adherents of the congregation and with the community at large.

RISK MANAGEMENT FOR HEALTH EMERGENCY ISSUES

REFERENCE: "Are You Ready For A Health Emergency?"

United Church of Canada March 2006

Respiratory infections are generally passed through direct contact and airborne droplets spread from coughing and sneezing. Within the church the following are some common practices that make transmitting infections easier:

- Shaking hands – with greeters, and after a service
- Passing the peace
- Communion services, if a common cup and loaf are used
- Nursery and toddler rooms
- Sunday School rooms
- Coffee hour and other social times
- Visitation to hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, and shut-ins

ACTION PLAN FOR MANAGING A HEALTH EMERGENCY

Note: A person who is in a contagious condition should stay at home.

As the situation warrants, the Dalston – Crown Hill United Church will implement the following protocols:

Congregation and Worship:

1. Have alcohol-based sanitizer available for use by greeters, the minister, and members of the congregation.
2. An alternative to passing the peace will be to bow with hands together.
3. Use individual cups and bread cubes for communion services, with one or two people administering the elements.

Sunday School:

1. Stock Sunday School rooms with a box of tissues and a wastepaper basket; clean tables after each class using soap and water.
2. Sanitize toys each week.

Food-Related Activities:

1. Wash hands before handling any food.
2. Practise good food-handling techniques.
3. Use a dishwasher or hot, soapy water, hot-water rinsing plus bleach solution rinse to clean communion ware or any other dishes.
4. Use disposable items where possible. Individual communion cups are available through the United church Resource Distribution.

Visitation:

1. Abide by restrictions put in place by hospitals and nursing homes.
2. Develop a protocol for visitation by phone.

Special Notes:

1. It is understood that our policy regarding Risk Management will always be in a state of flux as situations, programmes, groups and personnel change within our congregation. For this reason, this policy is to be reviewed by the Church Council Executive at least once a year and updated as necessary.
2. This document is to be shared with every group and organization that is affected by it. In addition, it is to be provided to every member of the Church Council and a copy available in each church building in a Policy Handbook.

January 2009