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# PROTECTION POLICY

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JUNE 9, 2024  
HEART LAKE BAPTIST CHURCH  
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## Introduction

### Purpose

This document is intended to:

- Protect the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in the care of Heart Lake Baptist Church
- Protect staff (paid or volunteer) who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults
- Provide a basis for educating the congregation
- Meet legal and insurance requirements of Heart Lake Baptist Church concerning children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

The primary focus of the Protection Policy is to assist in developing and maintaining a safe and nurturing environment in which our children, youth and adults may be drawn closer to Jesus our Lord. Furthermore, an objective of the Protection Policy includes protecting the integrity of those ministering by providing them with an environment conducive to effective ministry. It is our desire to glorify God in all we do (including this protection policy) and promote spiritual development and growth.

### Biblical Perspective

As a body of believers at Heart Lake Baptist Church we are responsible for ensuring that the children, youth, and adults under our care participate in ministries characterized by safe, nurturing, and loving environments. It is our moral duty to create an atmosphere where children, youth and adults are provided with opportunities to experience spiritual growth and social development free from impropriety. The Bible establishes a mark of moral excellence for us to follow. We can expect no less in creating ministry environments.

The Scriptures listed below reflect the standard set before us by God:

- Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matt. 18:14)
- Avoid every kind of evil. (1 Thess. 5:22)
- Love your neighbor as yourself. (Matt. 22:39)
- Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. (Rom. 12:8-10)
- But among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. (Eph. 5:3)
- Love...always protects. (1Cor. 13:4 -7)
- Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. (Col. 3:12)



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## Standard

We want children, youth, and adults to both feel and be safe and secure in our ministries. Therefore, it is the position of the Council of Heart Lake Baptist Church that we hold to a zero-tolerance position on the issue of abuse, neglect, and harassment.

To accomplish the above, the Church must implement and proceed to monitor its effectiveness.

## Protection Policy Implementation

Council will designate an “Overseer” for the Protection Policy to ensure the implementation and maintenance of the Protection Policy. Individuals not complying with the Protection Policy shall be removed from ministry immediately.

Specific ministries or persons that require this policy are:

- Church Council & Elders (including the pastors)
- Deacons
- Service Monitors and Floaters
- Children & Youth Groups Leaders and Assistants
- Representatives of the church (e.g., Mission team, Home, or Hospital Visitors)
- and other positions as conditions and activities change

Ministry leaders shall implement procedures outlined in the Protection Policy and ensure staff in their areas of ministry adhere to the procedures. Ministry leaders shall report progress to the Overseer and ensure all their ministry’s documents are filed on a regular basis. Documents will be stored by the Overseer in a locked filing cabinet at a central location in the church. Records are required to be kept on file indefinitely.

The Overseer shall report progress to Council and provide access to the documents for a yearly audit or as requested.

**Note:** Refer to Guidelines for Best Practices for all forms and procedures related to the Protection Policy.

## Definitions Of Abuse and Harassment

**For the purposes of this document staff refers to both paid and volunteer staff.**

To assist staff to have a clear understanding of the definition of what constitutes abuse and harassment in its various forms, the following section has been added. This section attempts to define abuse (emotional, physical, child neglect and sexual), and harassment.



## What is Abuse?

**Types:** Emotional, Physical, Sexual, Lack of Care (Neglect)

### **Emotional Abuse:**

Emotional Abuse is a chronic attack on a person's self-esteem; it is psychologically destructive behaviour by a person in a position of power, authority, or trust. It can take the form of name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, berating, intimidating, isolating, hazing, or ignoring the needs of such person.

### **Physical Abuse:**

Physical abuse is when a person in a position of power or trust purposefully injures or threatens to injure a person. This may take the form of slapping, hitting, shaking, kicking, pulling hair or ears, throwing, shoving, grabbing, hazing or excessive forms of punishment.

### **Neglect:**

Neglect is chronic inattention to the necessities of life such as clothing, shelter, nutritious diets, education, good hygiene, supervision, medical and dental care, adequate rest, safe environment, moral guidance and discipline, exercise, and fresh air. Neglect includes the inattention to emotional needs and developmental needs.

### **Sexual Abuse:**

In general, it includes any form of sexual contact or exploitation that is used for the sexual arousal or gratification of the offender, the minor, or third party. Sexual abuse can include touching or non-touching behaviors.

## What is Harassment?

### **Definition:**

While it is difficult to specifically define harassment, as any definition will contain a certain subjective or interpretive element, harassment is inappropriate and can have legal implications.

Harassment is simply the unwelcome treatment of one person to another that results in intimidation, embarrassment, shame, fear, or stress. Harassment may result in (but is not limited to) interference of a person's quality of service or work.

Harassment can take many forms whether physical, verbal, sexual or emotional, and most often involves a combination of these elements. One of the defining characteristics of harassment is that it usually takes place where one person is in a position of power over another or has the trust of another and then abuses that relationship.

Harassment is not expressing a strong difference of opinion on issues or beliefs or challenging one another as to one's understandings and lifestyle within a biblical context. Christ calls us to speak the truth in love; meaning in a gentle, persuasive, and dignified manner, while respecting the individual's right to freely choose their own path.



## Response Plan to Allegations

### Alleged Abuse (under 18 years of age)

- i) If a child reports abuse to staff or if a staff member suspects abuse, the law requires that staff member to make an immediate report to the Children's Aid Society (C.A.S.).
- ii) In such an instant, the staff member will not investigate or make attempts to substantiate or disprove claims. C.A.S. will conduct the investigation.
- iii) Following the report to C.A.S., the reporting staff member will inform the Senior Pastor and complete the Incident Report.
- iv) The Senior Pastor shall inform Heart Lake Baptist Church Council.
- v) The identity of the reporting staff member will remain anonymous to the congregation and known only to C.A.S. and Council (including the Senior Pastor).
- vi) Council will contact our insurance agent to satisfy the statutory conditions of the insurance policy.
- vii) If a staff member is accused of abuse that individual will be removed by Council from his/her position immediately pending the outcome of the investigation. This will not be viewed as indicative of guilt, but rather as a precaution. It is essential to keep in mind that in such a case both parties involved in the investigation be treated with Christ-like love and compassion.

### Alleged Abuse (18 years of age or older)

- i) The individual who receives information or suspects abuse will encourage the alleged victim to access counseling and protection through the local police and pastoral or counseling services.
- ii) Pastor/Council will listen to and support the alleged victim but will not act outside of the church on his/her behalf; that is, the alleged victim must be the individual to lay charges with the police. Physical, emotional, and spiritual support will be provided during this time, if requested.
- iii) It is a requirement to report suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult to police.
- iv) If a staff member is accused of abuse, that individual will be removed by Council from his/her position immediately pending the outcome of the investigation. This will not be viewed as indicative of guilt, but rather as a precaution. It is essential to keep in mind that in such a case both parties involved in the investigation be treated with Christ-like love and compassion.

### Alleged Harassment:

#### **The Complaint Process**

The individual complainant has the right to decide how to deal with harassment. However, incidents for which criminal charges could be laid, needs to be dealt with accordingly. In cases of sexual assault, obscene phone calls, intimidation, and criminal harassment (where there is a fear for safety), the complainant needs to report the incident to the police and act under the Criminal Code.

The individual who feels they are being harassed needs to report it or the lack of action may be interpreted as acceptance. Incidents of harassment would need to be documented. Keep a



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written record of the incident(s) including what the harasser did and said, who saw what, your response and to whom you reported anything.

### **Internal Resolution**

Not all incidents of harassment require formal complaints to deal with the situation and may be resolved in an informal manner.

Informal resolution options:

- When an individual feels they are being harassed, he/she should communicate their disapproval and objections immediately to the harasser, either personally or in writing, and request the harasser to stop.
- If the harassment does not stop, or it is not comfortable to address the harasser directly, take this concern to an Elder and/or Senior Pastor for discussion and advice. All conversations with the Board of Elders or Senior Pastor with respect to allegations of harassment are to be kept confidential.
- The Elders or Senior Pastor will work with both parties to come up with an appropriate course of action which may include obtaining an apology from the harasser, informing the congregation (if agreed), and suggesting counseling and/or education for the harasser.
- If it is determined in the Board's opinion that no harassment has taken place or that some form of harassment has taken place and has been dealt with and no further action deemed necessary, the confidentiality of all parties will be maintained.
- If the harassment is conduct that is grossly unbecoming to a member of Heart Lake Baptist Church, the Elders may choose to invoke discipline procedures as outline in Section II in the By-Law.
- If the complaint involves sexual harassment or abuse by a pastor, the matter shall be dealt with according to the By-Law of this church and its policies.

## **Staff Selection/Screening Process**

### **Screening Process for Staff 18 years of age & older**

To be considered for service an individual must complete all five of the following:

- Must regularly attend Heart Lake Baptist Church for six months
- Initiate Interview – discuss ministry opportunities with the Ministry Leader
- Submit Application – Application is submitted to Ministry Leader and reference calls will be completed by leader prior to working in ministry
- Submit Vulnerable Sector Police Records Search - It is required to resubmit the Vulnerable Sector Police Records Search every 5 years. Confidentiality is important and the report will be separately filed indefinitely.
- Complete annual Protection Policy training.



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## Screening Process for Youth Volunteers (Gr. 6 to Age 17)

- Youth volunteers are required to attend an interview with Ministry Leader,
- Complete an application form including references
- Older youth volunteers (Age 16-17) are encouraged to complete annual Protection Policy training.

Young people interested in volunteering will be assigned to work alongside screened staff 18 years of age and older. It is recommended that there be at least a 5-year gap between the youth volunteer and the child/youth they serve. When the youth turn 18, they must complete the above process for Staff 18 years of age & older, which includes a new form, reference check, Vulnerable Sector Police Records Search and that they complete annual Protection Policy training.

### **Note:**

References may not include family members and preferably comes from a variety of sources including people from church, work, neighborhood, or friends. References must not be completed by family members.

Individuals that have been accused, or convicted, or are under the suspicion of crimes against children and/or youth, or who have been convicted of violent crimes or other relevant crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programs where children or youth participate. Anyone convicted of child abuse will be prohibited from having access to children or youth. Church leadership may designate an individual to be responsible to be informed whenever the convicted person attends church activities and to accompany the convicted person while on church property. Clear written guidelines will be provided to the individual listing restricted areas and access points on the church property.

## Proper Displays of Affection

### Appropriate Touch:

Recognizing that children and youth need appropriate displays of affection that reflect pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love, appropriate touch with children will be age and developmentally appropriate. All touch must be done in view of others.

We encourage staff to:

- Hold a preschool child who is crying
- Speak to a child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears
- Hold a child's hands when speaking, listening, or walking him or her to an activity
- Gently hold the child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour
- Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting or quieting is needed
- Pat a child on the hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her
- Give a child a high five or fist bump



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Appropriate touch for Staff working with youth and vulnerable adults may with permission include:

- one-arm hugs
- shoulder-to-shoulder hugs
- touch on the back or shoulder

### Inappropriate Touch:

Recognizing that the innocence of children, youth and vulnerable adults must be protected, staff will never be left alone, and the following actions are deemed inappropriate and will not be permitted:

- Do not kiss or coax a child, youth, or adult to kiss you
- Do not engage in extended hugging and tickling
- Do not engage in chest-to-chest hugging
- Do not physically hold when talking to or disciplining
- Do not touch any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (prohibited except in cases of diapering and assisting preschoolers as outlined in washroom policies)
- Do not carry older children and do not allow them to sit on your lap
- Avoid prolonged physical contact with any child or youth

Staff must be cognizant of conduct that could be misinterpreted:

- Wrestling
- Horseplay
- Tickling
- Aggressive game of sports
- Extended backrubs

