

POLICY NAME: SAFEGUARDING POLICY		POLICY NUMBER: 4004
CREATED BY: Staff & Elders	Version: V2.0	YYYY.MM.DD Date: 2024.08.13
RELATED POLICIES, REFERENCE: Safeguarding Protocols		

Policy Statement:

Hillside Community Church (Hillside) has zero tolerance for abuse or neglect. Hillside’s goal is to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse: ensuring all persons connected to Hillside experience an environment of safety and justice. This is accomplished by becoming a community that understands various forms and common dynamics of abuse, and clarifies appropriate and healthy boundaries through education and the hard work of holding each other accountable. We all must take ownership of the Hillside community as we together walk with God who loves justices and hates oppression.

Hillside’s approach must be responsible, consistent, and prudent. Employees and volunteers have a duty under the law to ensure that reasonable care is exercised and appropriate action taken to protect children and youth from harm or risk of harm. Accordingly, those who have reason to believe that a child or youth has been, or is likely to be, physically, sexually, or emotionally harmed must promptly report the matter to the authorities (i.e. the Ministry of Children and Family Development). The Safeguarding Team is empowered on behalf of Hillside Elders to ensure vulnerable individuals in the Hillside community are protected by enacting the Safeguarding Protocols. Hillside will ensure all employees and volunteers understand these protocols clearly and will exercise great care to protect the privacy and personal agency of victims of abuse. Hillside will also take great care to protect from speculation and slander those against whom allegations have been raised.

Safeguarding Protocols:

The Safeguarding Protocols are the responsibility of the Safeguarding Team and any changes or amendments will be reviewed by the Hillside Elders prior to their implementation. These protocols include:

1. Healthy Boundaries; including response to boundary violations
2. Environmental Safeguards; to protect
 - a. vulnerable individuals and
 - b. staff and ministry workers from false allegations
3. Responding to Abuse; including caring for survivors
4. Screening and Training of Pastors, Elders, Staff, and Volunteers
 - a. Signed Applications
 - b. Criminal Record Checks
 - c. Background reference checks
 - d. Personal Interview
 - e. Six-month waiting period for new attends to be eligible for volunteering with children or youth

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Safeguarding Team:

Hillside Elders have empowered The Safeguarding Team, governed by the Hillside Safeguarding Policy, to be responsible to equip the community of Hillside Church to effectively prevent and respond to abuse and to oversee Hillside's adherence to The Safeguarding Protocols. Members of the Safeguarding Team shall serve for a two-year, renewable term and this team shall be comprised of between five and six members, one of whom will serve as Chair. Included in this team are those Hillside Staff who are the senior leaders responsible for the formal ministries for and children and youth. They will serve as *ex officio* members of the team and may not serve as Chair. The team will include at least 50% women. Elders shall approve the members of the team.

The responsibilities of the Safeguarding Team are to:

1. implement and oversee compliance with the Hillside Safeguarding Policy and Protocols;
2. maintain rigorous familiarity with the Hillside Safeguarding Policy;
3. brief all staff, volunteers, and members on the application of the Policy and Protocols on a regular basis;
4. receive, document, and respond to any policy violations or concerning behaviour;
5. lead in responding to any allegations of abuse in cooperation with the relevant parties as described in the Protocols and in accordance with the law;
6. conduct or coordinate screening of pastors, officers, staff, and volunteers;
7. engage in continuing education on a regular basis and help leaders with an ongoing education plan for the whole church; and
8. report quarterly to the Hillside Elders on the progress and work of the Safeguarding Team

Principles:

As a community, Hillside Church is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for abuse survivors, and holding abusers accountable. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cry (Psalm 9:9, 12). Our community seeks to embody God's priority of justice for the vulnerable that comes with his Kingdom.

By its very nature, our community includes vulnerable children, youth, and adults; sadly, predatory individuals often seek out such environments and it has been demonstrated that abuse in all its forms is almost always perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Abusers utilize a variety of tactics to gain trust, deceive victims and their community, and keep the abuse secret.

Abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime). It takes place when someone in a position of power and trust violates or exploits someone who is often powerless to stop it. Abuse is sadly a common reality in this world. As Christians we cannot face abuse if we are in denial about its reality. Instead, Jesus calls us to be "wise as serpents" (Matthew 10:16). We all must take responsibility to become educated about abuse and take responsibility to uphold our Policy.

Definitions

Abuse: In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g., pastor, elder, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable (e.g., a child, someone who is sick, elderly, or disabled, student, supervisee, intern, immigrant, etc.). That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc.

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Child neglect: is failure to provide for a child's basic needs: food, clothing, adequate shelter, supervision, and medical care.

Emotional Abuse: A pattern of controlling behaviours such as shaming, insulting, degrading, intimidating, threatening, humiliating, and/or domineering. Bullying is a common term for acts that typically constitute emotional abuse.

Financial Abuse: The illegal or improper use of a vulnerable person or his/her financial resources for another's profit or advantage. Some examples of financial abuse may include: the taking of money or property; forging a signature; getting a person to sign a deed, will or power of attorney through deception; coercion or undue influence; or, illegally or improperly adding names to bank accounts or safety deposit boxes. The elderly in particular are often targeted for financial abuse.

Intimate Partner Violence (Domestic Violence): A pattern of behaviour where a person in (or who has been in) an intimate relationship uses tactics of control, belittling, isolation, fear, stalking, and/or intimidation to dominate, harm, degrade, or otherwise undermine the worth and agency of the other person in the relationship. Intimate partner violence can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, social, or financial.¹

Healthy Boundaries: Refers to Hillside's agreed definition of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable interactions within the Hillside community. These govern both physical and verbal interactions. The autonomy of the individual to establish their own personal boundaries is of first priority, as is Hillside's corporate agreement to respect those decisions. Specifically, healthy boundaries preclude belittling, threatening, objectifying language, and comments, jokes, or stories that are sexual or sexualizing in nature. Further, there are certain physical interactions that are recognized to be always unacceptable within the community of Hillside: these are described within Safeguarding Protocols.

Improper Discipline: Any disciplinary behaviour that falls under the definition of abuse; for clarity, no corporal punishment is ever acceptable within a Hillside Ministry context.

Physical Abuse: Non-accidental physical injury (ranging from bruises to severe fractures or death) by way of bodily contact (such as slapping, punching, pushing, beating, kicking, shaking, or striking with an object) or non-injurious contact with the goal or effect of intimidating, threatening, or controlling.

Sexual Abuse: When a person in a place of power and/or trust, engages in sexual behaviour with a child or an adult under their supervision, authority, mentorship, or spiritual care, including:

- 1) Sexual Penetration;
 - a) any act or attempted act of vaginal or anal penetration, however slight, by a person's penis, finger, other body part, or an object, and/or any oral-genital contact.
- 2) Sexual Contact;
 - a) any intentional touching of a person's breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, or other intimate part; this includes touching over or under clothing and making the person

¹ For more information and examples an excellent resource is The Duluth Model at <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/>

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- touch their own body and includes contact with non-sexual areas of the body for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator (such as with certain paraphilic disorders));
- 3) Non-Contact Sexual Acts;
 - a) observing a person's nudity or sexual activity, or allowing a person to observe sexual activity;
 - b) recording, photographing, transmitting, showing, viewing, streaming, or distributing intimate or sexual images, audio recordings, or sexual information of persons; or
 - c) exposing one's genitals or inducing a person to expose their own genitals within a power dynamic (boss-employee, doctor-patient, teacher-student, pastor-congregant, adult-child) communicating sexual desire or sexually stimulating content toward a person

A child cannot consent to any sexual behaviour with an adult or older child. An adult under the authority, care, or mentorship of a leader cannot consent to sexual activity. Even when both people are adults and the contact is not forcible, any crossing of sexual boundaries within a power structure is not an "affair" or a "relationship" but an egregious abuse of power. Adult sexual abusers often develop an emotional and spiritual connection and then exploit it. While not always recognized as a crime according to provincial laws, this is a serious violation and Hillside Church will treat it as such. If any staff person wishes to pursue a consensual romantic relationship with someone under their spiritual care or a power hierarchy within Hillside Church, they must contact the Elders or a Pastor for the sake of transparency and to discuss any appropriate boundaries given the power dynamics or other factors.

Sexual Assault: Sexual contact or behaviour that occurs without the consent of the victim. Sexual harassment generally violates civil laws—all have a right to work or learn without being harassed—but in many cases is not a criminal act (see more on harassment below). Sexual assault usually refers to acts that are criminal. Some forms of sexual assault include:

- 1) penetration of the victim's body, also known as rape;
- 2) attempted rape;
- 3) forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetration of the perpetrator's body; and
- 4) fondling or unwanted sexual touching.

Consent is demonstrated through words or overt actions indicating a freely given agreement to the sexual act or contact. Silence or the absence of an explicit "no" does not equal consent. Physical submission by the victim - such as "freezing" or "fawning" - does not equal consent. Consent also implies the ability to say no in a mutual relationship: Children, certain vulnerable adults (based on functioning related to factors such as intellectual disabilities, age, mental health, or other vulnerabilities), or those within a substantial power differential (e.g. with a religious leader, mentor, teacher, or supervisor) are unable to consent to sexual activity. Other circumstances such as intoxication or unconsciousness also render a person unable to give consent to sexual activity.² Deception or manipulation of a person also render that person unable to consent.

Sexual Harassment: The Canada Labour Code establishes an employee's right to employment free of sexual harassment and requires employers to take positive action to prevent sexual harassment in

² For more discussion on consent see <https://www.rainn.org/articles/legal-role-consent>.

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the work place. The Code defines sexual harassment as any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any employee; or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by that employee as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion.

Beyond the legal definition, harassment, sexual or otherwise, can also occur in a community, conference, or event when the people involved are not employees of the church. In accord with our values, sexual harassment is not restricted to what is defined as sexual harassment under the law. Hillside Church considers any unwanted sexualized behaviour or sexualized behaviour within a power differential to be a serious form of harassment (including unwanted touch or communication, other unwanted sexual attention, or any behaviour that objectifies or degrades.) Other common forms of harassment include bullying and acts of discrimination. Harassment can include discrimination against a specific group of people based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.

Spiritual Abuse: A form of emotional abuse (i.e., a pattern of coercive or domineering behaviours) using religion. Many acts of abuse in a religious environment will have a spiritual dimension.

Examples include:

- 1) use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition, or sacred texts to cause harm;
- 2) compelling a person to engage in religious acts against his or her will;
- 3) abuse that occurs in a religious context or is perpetrated by a religious leader;
- 4) invoking of divine authority to manipulate a person into meeting the needs of the abuser;
- 5) using spirituality or spiritual authority to dismiss a person's perspective, agency, or value;
- 6) attempts to use the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality to put their leadership or decisions beyond questioning or accountability; and
- 7) attempts to spiritualize or justify harm using the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality.

Stalking: Stalking (also called criminal harassment) occurs when one person is followed, watched, communicated with, or subjected to any form of behaviour from another person such that they begin to fear for their safety or for the safety of those known to them. Stalking/criminal harassment often involves repeated conduct over a period of time between the perpetrator and the victim. Although stalking/criminal harassment may not result in injury, it can be a precursor to violent acts. Stalking/criminal harassment is not a sign of love. It is a form of abuse that is based on power and control. It is also a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada. It can frighten you and take away your sense of security and personal safety. It can even lead to physical harm.³

Revision History:

³__For more information visit <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/bcs-criminal-justicesystem/reporting-a-crime/what-is-a-crime/crime-examples/criminal-harassment> and <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/bc-criminal-justice-system/ifvictim/publications/hsh-english-stalking.pdf>

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V1.0	Creation of Policy	2023.09.25
V2.0	Revision of Policy	2024.08.13