

Unity Centre's Policy and Procedures Regarding Child Safety 2003

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE CONGREGATION OF UNITY CENTRE OF PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

Unity Centre of Practical Christianity has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children and youth who participate in church programs. Abuse of children or youth is a criminal act and a violation of human dignity. It is a violation of God's moral law within the trusted context of relationship. It is criminal behavior that causes emotional, physical and spiritual trauma to victims, and has destructive consequences for abusers. This policy is to take appropriate steps to prevent abuse from occurring.

THE SPIRITUAL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

Mission Statement of the Unity Centre's Children's Church

**Our mission is to support youth
in enhancing their creative and loving relationships
with self, others and God.**

Our aim is to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we can help our children to experience God's love within them. We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in our ministry to all ages. We recognize that as a church, we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care and we take our responsibility to them seriously.

Everyone who teaches, helps or cares for children or youth under the auspices of Unity Centre of Practical Christianity is required to follow the policies, procedures and guidelines defined in this document. They are designed to protect and promote growth in faith for each child, youth and adult. Their purpose is to assist church leaders in the recruiting of volunteers and, to the greatest extent possible, to provide for the safety of those served by these volunteers.

PLAN FOR WELL-BEING: THREE IMPORTANT REASONS

In making sure Unity Centre of Practical Christianity is a safe place, we will be:

1. Safeguarding preschoolers, children and youth of our church from abuse.
2. Protecting the church staff and volunteers from potential allegations of abuse.
3. Limiting the extent of legal risk and liability due to any such abuse.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Unity Centre of Practical Christianity makes the following commitments to protect our children, youth and those who minister to and with them:

1. **SCREENING:** We will screen all paid employees, including pastors and volunteers who work with preschoolers, children or youth.
2. **POLICE RECORDS CHECK:** All paid staff will undergo a police records check.
3. **STAFF TRAINING:** We will train all of our staff who work with preschoolers, children or youth, both paid and volunteer, to understand the nature of child sexual abuse, and how to carry out policies to prevent sexual abuse including clearly defined reporting procedures for suspected incidents.
4. **POLICY STATEMENT:** We take seriously our policies to prevent sexual abuse and will see that they are enforced.

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5. **A VOLUNTEER MINISTRY COVENANT (sample page 12)** will be signed by all volunteers agreeing to comply with church policies and guidelines.
6. **THE TWO ADULT RULE:** A minimum of two adults will be present during any activities involving children or youth. We consider two adults in the Children's Church area with windowed doors to comply with this rule even though the classes meet in adjoining rooms.
7. **THE SIX MONTH RULE:** Volunteers will be permitted to work with preschoolers, children or youth only after they have been active members or active adherents of Unity Centre of Practical Christianity for a period of six months.
8. **CHECKING REFERENCES:** The minister, Administrative Assistant or a person designated by the Board of Directors will check references for volunteers applying for any position involving work with preschoolers, children or youth. We reserve the right to ask for a police records check. This will always be required in those instances where an applicant's credentials cannot be verified.
9. **CHILDREN'S CHURCH DIRECTORY:** A directory of names and addresses of volunteers, parents and children will be carefully maintained by the Youth Ed Director with a copy held by the Administrative Assistant.

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1. VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

Volunteers will be recruited by the minister, youth education director or volunteers helping to administer a particular program.

1a) **APPROVAL:** All names of potential volunteers will be approved by a minister, and Board of Directors or an Education committee empowered by the Board of Directors. If the pastoral staff is aware of any reason why a person would not be suitable for a volunteer position, further investigation and discussion will take place and a final approval, or denial, of the name will be made. If there are medical reasons for a potential volunteer to not be suitable as a leader/helper, he/she will be paired with another volunteer.

1b) **NEW PERSON REPORT:** In the case of a potential volunteer who is new to the church family, a confidential dialogue will take place to determine interest, experience and the children/youth ministry readiness of the individual. This dialogue will be conducted by a member of the Board of Directors or the Education Committee or the minister. A confidential report will be given at the next Board meeting to determine suitability of the candidate. If required, further dialogues will take place. New potential leaders for any program will not be assigned to work alone, but will be paired with leaders who are familiar with the program.

1c) **PARENT VOLUNTEERS:** From time to time, parent volunteers are needed to assist in a particular program's event. When a parent who is not an active participant in the church congregation volunteers, he/she is to be screened by the coordinator of the program and teamed with a leader who has been approved by the Board of Directors. Under no circumstances is a parent volunteer to be alone with a child or group of children and out of sight of other leaders. (PROCEDURE #6)

1d) **APPLICATION:** *The Unity Centre of Practical Christianity's Children's Ministry Information Form* (yellow – sample page 14-15) must be filled out by potential volunteers. It is a vital part of protecting the church from legal action in the case of an alleged wrongful act filed against the church. This form must be completed by the volunteer prior to being approved by the Board of Directors or Education Committee. The completed forms are confidential and will be kept on file at the church. The form asks for two personal references. These references will be contacted by a member of the Education Committee or a minister and asked to comment on their knowledge of the volunteer. A careful record will be kept on file of the person making the contacts, the date of the calls and a summary of the reference's comments. (This form is attached to the Children's Ministry Information Form.) All hired and volunteer staff of Unity Centre of Practical Christianity may be asked to have a police check done at the expense of Unity Centre.

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2. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURES

The methodology implemented in children's ministry must reflect the physical, social, mental, and spiritual development of children in the age grouping of a particular program. The curriculum content and program development must be familiar to the leaders in the program. The extent to which a leader is familiar with the development needs of the group and the goals of the curriculum will determine the effectiveness of the program.

WE value the volunteers and make every effort to develop their skills as leaders and their knowledge of the development needs of the children they serve. Our efforts to develop a leader's skills and knowledge include, but are not limited to, seeking our appropriate workshops or providing in-house seminars on child/teen developmental issues, curriculum development, creative classroom control, children with special needs and team teaching.

Mentors are an effective way to develop, one-on-one, the leadership skills needed in a position. Where possible, leaders-in-training and new leaders will be paired with a veteran leader, who will pass on wisdom, experience and knowledge relevant to the leadership responsibilities of the position.

3. PERSONAL SAFETY PROCEDURES

We are concerned about the safety of children, families and volunteers we serve. In an effort to lessen the possibility of abuses occurring and to maintain conduct, which is above reproach, we have developed the following standards for our children's ministry.

3a) SUPERVISION RATIO

Our goal in the classroom is to provide an environment of acceptance and love in which learning can take place. Room allocation is geared to the needs and size of a particular class/group.

For teaching classes:

There will be a minimum of 1 adult teacher for every Sunday School class. When the class size goes above the registered size on a given Sunday, an extra helper will assist the teacher. These volunteers will be on a Sunday School supply helper list or will be a teacher who is not scheduled to teach on that particular Sunday.

Whenever there is only one adult leader in a classroom with children, the door will remain slightly open or there will be a window allowing anyone passing to look in without interrupting the teaching process.

3b) NURSERY

We do not currently provide nursery services. The prayer room on the upper level is available for use by families with small children during worship services and workshops. The parents will be able to view and hear the service while taking care of the needs of their children. The parent(s) will be responsible for their own children and will not leave their children unattended at any time.

3c) RECORD KEEPING

Complete records are to be kept for each Sunday School class. These records are to include names of children, addresses, phone numbers, parent name(s) and any allergy/medical information including health card numbers, that are important for leaders to know. The records are to be handed into the church office at the end of each class season – June of each year. They will be filed in the office in their original form under the title of each class. The files will be kept for a period of 30 years. List of classroom attendance are to be maintained each week. The names of leaders/volunteers are to be noted each week as well.

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3d) RESTROOMS

Parents are encouraged to take their children to the washroom prior to the beginning of the service. Should a child need to go to the washroom during the service, parents are encouraged to go with the child. No child should be sent to the washroom alone. If parents determine a child is old enough to go to the washroom alone without an adult, it is recommended that they send two older children together. Parents/Guardians must take responsibility to monitor their children. When this is not possible, it is recommended that the child use the washrooms located nearest to the sanctuary or meeting room.

Sunday School teachers of children under the age of 10 are encouraged to have the whole class stop at the washrooms on the way to the classroom, remain at the washroom area until everyone is finished and then proceed to the classroom. The bathroom in the Children's Church area has access directly off of the children's classrooms.

3e) SLEEPOVERS

If a sleepover is to be held for the children or youth, additional adult supervision is required.

Groups, which are co-ed, must have adequate adult supervision of both genders. The supervisors should not all be members of the same family. Additional adults may be recruited for the event. A minimum of 2 adult supervisors of each gender is recommended.

3f) SICK CHILDREN

Children who are not feeling well should not be received into the classroom. Some signs of illness are unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose, and eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat, complaining of sore ears or throat, and rash. Children with these or similar symptoms should be returned to the parent(s) or guardian(s).

3g) EMERGENCIES

Workers are not to give or apply any medications to children except for bandages for minor cuts/abrasions or ice packs for bumps. If a child needs medication, the parent must administer it. No medications will be left in any classroom or the prayer room with the following exceptions: children who carry inhalers for asthma or medication for serious allergies.

Emergency procedures in the event of a fire will be reviewed semi-annually, in September and in April, and when new volunteers are added. Workers will be trained in these procedures. Evacuation procedures are to be posted in each room.

First aid boxes will be kept on hand and all workers are to review their locations and contents in the early fall and early spring term.

3h) PARTIES AND FIELD TRIPS

Children's programs are encouraged to provide opportunities for the group to go outside of the church building and into the community around. The community provides a variety of outing possibilities to enhance the curriculum being taught in a program and to serve the community. The following are procedures for outings and parties, which are off the church property.

There must be sufficient supervision at all outings. This would include the regular leaders within a program and parents of the children or approved volunteers. Parents helping with the outing do not need to fill out a Unity Centre of Practical Christianity Ministry Information Form.

All outings must have a signed and dated parental waiver from each parent/guardian. The waiver must state the nature of the outing, the time of departure and return, the destination (including the name of the host, address

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and phone number), the mode of transportation and the cost to the child if any. If the outing involves transportation, the leaders should leave a list of the drivers' names, license numbers and children in particular vehicles. This list should be left in the church office on the bulletin board where it can be easily found. Once a child has been assigned to a particular vehicle, he/she is not to switch vehicles.

Parties in home must provide additional non-related adult supervision when the children are present in the home.

3I) WORKER BEHAVIOR

Workers must always be above reproach in their words and conduct. They are to behave in a loving manner, demonstrating the principles of respect, honesty and trustworthiness.

All workers must fill out and keep up-to-date a Unity Centre Children's Ministry Information Form. This form is to be reviewed annually.

Workers must not in any way be involved in any of the following activities with older children: extended hugging, kissing, sitting on a lap, inappropriate touching or being alone with a child.

In the event that a child approaches an adult leader with the intent to hug or kiss, or unexpectedly does so, the adult leader should accept the affection, but should quickly as possible, in a non-rejecting manner, encourage a more appropriate form of physical contact. Appropriate expressions for ages 0 – 3 include picking up the child, comforting the child, holding the hand of the child, changing diapers. Appropriate physical contact with children ages 4+ could include a handshake, pat on the back, a quick hug of encouragement with hands located in shoulder area and a "high five".

Workers who are not feeling well should not lead a group of children. Notification, if possible, to a team member should happen as soon as possible so that others workers can step in and assist in the supervision of children. When notification is not possible until the last minute, adjustments should be made in the program to allow for doors to be open and the group meeting to take place in a higher traffic area where others can check on the group without interrupting the session.

4. STAFF AND VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

It is our goal, not only to provide for the safety of our children and youth, but also to support and provide, to the best of our ability, a system of procedures that will protect the staff and volunteers from being falsely accused of wrongful acts. This is accomplished by:

- a) Screening potential leaders to determine where a volunteer would be best suited to use their gifts, abilities, interests and experiences.
- b) Providing leadership development that will further prepare the volunteer for leadership within a group/class.
- c) Adhere to the Procedures in section 3: Personal Safety Procedures
- d) Maintaining the records of groups/classes for a period of 30 years in their original form
- e) Providing coverage for all staff and volunteers under Unity Centre's Insurance policy with periodic reviews to insure that the Policy covers all areas of our church ministry.

When a staff person or volunteer is accused of an alleged wrongful act, the church congregation will provide spiritual and moral support to the person(s) involved.

5. CHILD ABUSE: PREVENTION AND PROCEDURES

- **Physical Abuse:** This is the use of physical force by the caretaker (parent/guardian, babysitters, or foster parent) of the child, which results in any injury to the child. This injury is sometimes described as a non-accidental injury by health professionals.
- **Physical Neglect:** This is the chronic or episodic withholding of necessary or essential physical care from the child with resulting injury or damage to the child. Necessary physical care can include food,

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nutrition, shelter, clothing, medical care, safety, supervision, sensory stimulation (particularly to young infants)

- **Emotional Abuse:** This is the acting out by the parent or caretaker of the child of their negative or ambiguous feelings towards the child, resulting in some degree of emotional damage to the child. This kind of behaviour may consist of constant chastising, belittling, verbal tirades, ridicule, humiliation, or the out and out rejection of the child's sense of self-worth and dignity.
- **Emotional Neglect:** This is the chronic or episodic withholding of necessary emotional care and support from the child, which result in some degree of emotional damage to the child. This kind of neglect might consist of withholding affection and love from the child; it might also include the withholding of affirmations of the child's self-worth, trust and belongingness. In extreme forms, emotional neglect can involve the complete withdrawal of any verbal and/or non-verbal interactions with the child, manifesting the complete rejection of the child.
- **Sexual Abuse:** This is the sexual exploitation of a child by a caretaker or other family member, or any adult, resulting in damage or injury to the child sexually, either psychologically or physically. Forms of sexual exploitation include behavior of a sexual nature, touching of a sexual nature and sexual intercourse.

5a) The Responsibility to Report

- **Public responsibility to report a child in need of protection CFSA s.72(2)**

Every person who believes or suspects on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be in need of protection must report promptly the belief and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society.

- **Special responsibility imposed on professionals and officials to report abuse CFSA s.72(3)**

A professional or official who in the course of his/her duties with respect to a child has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse shall report forthwith the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society even if he/she has already reported a previous incident.

5b) What constitutes 'abuse' for the purpose of professional reporting? CFSA s.72(1)

A child suffers 'abuse' in any of the following circumstances:

- The child has or is at risk to suffer physical harm and there is a pattern of neglect either inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by the person's failure to adequately
 - Care and provide for the child, or
 - Supervise and protect the child;
- The child has been or is at risk to likely be sexually molested or sexually exploited by the person having charge of the child, or by another person where the person having charge of the child:
 - Knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation, and
 - Fails to protect the child.
- The child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical harm or suffering, and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child:
 - Does not provide treatment or
 - Refuses to provide treatment
 - Is unavailable to consent to treatment, or
 - Is unable to consent to the treatment
- The child has or is likely to suffer emotional harm or there is a pattern of neglect by the parent or the person having charge of the child, demonstrated through the actions of the child as:
 - Serious anxiety, or
 - Severe depression, or

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- Serious withdrawal, or
 - Serious self-destructive or aggressive behavior, or
 - Seriously delayed development
- And the child's parent or the person having charge of the child:
 - Does not provide services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm,
 - Refuses to provide services or treatment
 - Is unavailable to consent to such services or treatment.
 - Is unable to consent to such services or treatment
 - The child has been abandoned, the child's parent has died, or is unavailable to exercise his or her custodial rights over the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care and custody, or the child is in a residential placement and the parent refuses, or is unable, or unwilling to resume the child's care and custody.
 - The child is less than 12 years old and has killed or seriously injured another person, or caused serious damage to another's person's property, services and treatments are necessary to prevent a reoccurrence and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide or refuses, or is unavailable or unable to consent to those services and treatments.
 - The child is less than 12 years of age and has on more than one occasion injured another person or caused loss or damage to another person's property, with the encouragement of the person having charge of the child, or because of that person's failure or inability to supervise the child adequately.

5c) Professional confidentiality CFSA s.72(3),(7),(8)

Should civil action be brought against a person who made a report, he/she will be protected unless he/she acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds for his/her belief or suspicion.

6. HOW TO REPORT

6a) Reporting abuse: An alleged victim less than eighteen years of age, and alleged perpetrator not acting on behalf of the church.

Any report of abuse by a child to a Sunday School teacher, person on the pastoral staff or other member of the church will be reported to the local Children's Aid Society (CAS). The report will be made immediately by the person who was initially proved with the information. If there is doubt as to the validity of the information, the report will be made to the CAS. The decision to investigate the report will be made by the CAS.

When a Sunday School teacher, person on the pastoral staff or other members of the church has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be suffering from abuse or is at risk to suffer abuse, the person who suspects the abuse will report to the CAS with the information immediately. The decision to investigate will be made by the CAS.

6b) Reporting abuse: An alleged victim less than 18 years of age, and alleged perpetrator acting on behalf of the church (Sunday School teacher, person on the pastoral staff, etc.)

A report of abuse within the church will be reported directly to the Children's Aid Society immediately by the person who receives the information. IF there is doubt as to the validity of the information, the CAS will be notified and the decision to investigate will be left there.

When someone in the church suspects that someone who is acting on behalf of the church in a leadership role is behaving abusively towards a child or children, the person with the suspicion will directly report it to the CAS. The CAS will make the decision for further investigation.

The Individual who receives the Information of abuse from a child or alleged victim, or suspects another person of abuse will then also contact either the chairperson of the Board of Directors or a member of the pastoral staff.

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The person who has been contacted will then arrange a meeting with the rest of the above-mentioned people. If it is appropriate to the situation, the Youth Education Director will also be invited to the meeting. This group will meet to assess whether or not it is appropriate for the alleged perpetrator to continue in his/her role with the church at that time.

Any further discussion with the parties involved will be done under the direction of the investigating body (CAS).

6c) Reporting abuse: Alleged victims eighteen years of age or older.

The individual who receives the information will encourage the alleged victim to access counseling and protection through the local police and pastoral or counseling services. No one will be informed of the allegations without the consent of the alleged victim. The church will listen to and support the alleged victim but will not take action outside of the church on his/her behalf; that is, the alleged victim must be the individual to lay charges with the police, but the church will provide physical and emotional support during this time if requested.

If the incident involves an alleged perpetrator acting on behalf of the church (Sunday School teachers, pastors, etc.) the alleged victim will be informed of the church policy to assess the appropriateness of the alleged perpetrators continuing role in his/her role in the church. This assessment will be made at a meeting of the Board of Directors, the Youth Education Director and the pastoral staff. With the knowledge of the alleged victim, one of the above people will be informed for the purpose of contacting the remaining people and coordinating a meeting.

6d) Reporting Accidents/Injuries

Occasionally, during the course of regular program activities injury occurs. These may be minor or major in nature. After appropriate support and assistance is given to the injured child or leader, a written Incident Investigation Report (pink – sample page 13) should be filled out by the program coordinator or appropriate person on the pastoral staff. A description of the incident, contributing factors and the treatment given should be noted. Witnesses to the incident should be listed with addresses and phone numbers for follow-up purposes.

The Incident Investigation Reports should be reviewed by the Board of Directors. A member of the Board should be appointed to investigate the incident and bring recommendations back to the Board to prevent a recurrence of the accident. These Reports are to be kept in the church office for future reference.

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MINISTRY COVENANT

for

UNITY CENTRE OF PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY'S CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Committed to spiritual learning, loving and living, I resolve live by the principles of Love as taught by Jesus Christ and to be in service at Unity Centre of Practical Christianity in the following ways:

1. HEART AGREEMENT

I will honor my commitment to work with the youth
by being at church on time
having the day's lesson planned
staying prayed up

2. I will support the mission statement of Unity Centre of Practical Christianity's Children's Church: **Our mission is to support youth in enhancing their creative and loving relationships with self, others and God.**
3. I understand that Unity Centre of Practical Christianity is responsible for the well-being of children and youth entrusted to my care.
4. I will co-operate fully with Unity Centre's staff in the fulfillment of my duties related to the Children's Church.
5. I have read and become familiar with the policy and Procedure for the Protection of the Congregation of Unity Centre of Practical Christianity.
6. If I fail to live a life consistent with the principles of Love as taught by Jesus Christ or do anything to compromise the integrity of Unity Centre of Practical Christianity or the safety of the preschoolers, children or youth in my care, I will withdraw from my position in the children's church.

Signature of Volunteer

Signature of Youth Ed Director

Signature of the Minister

Date:

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**UNITY CENTRE OF PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY'S
INCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT (pink)**

Event: _____

Claimant: Name: _____ Age: _____

Date of incident: _____ Time: _____

Description of Incident:

Contributing Factors:

Medical Treatment:

Location of Treatment:

Witnesses _____ address and phone number _____

Action taken to Prevent Recurrence:

Legal Counsel: Yes _____ No _____
Name of Legal Counsel if application

Report to Insurance Company: Yes No

Investigated by (Name/Title)

Date

Signature:

Reviewed by: (Name)

Date

Further Comments on back

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Unity Centre of Practical Christianity's
Children's Ministry Information Form (yellow)

A. BASIC INFORMATION

Name:

Address:

Telephone number: home: work:

Best time to call: home: work:

B. MINISTRY

What areas would you like to volunteer to become involved? (Check all that apply)

TEACHING

- Preschool
- Grades 1-5
- Teens

HELPING

- Babysitting
- Preschool
- Grades 1 - 5
- Teens

OTHER

- Music - instrument
- Music - vocal
- Storytelling Plays
- Crafts Games

Other: Please specify _____

Why do you want to volunteer in this area?

Are you open to attend relevant seminars or workshops and use resource materials that Unity will be offering on working with children and program materials? Yes / no

C. EXPERIENCE

What previous experience have you in children/youth ministry? (Be specific)

D. PERSONAL DATA

Are there any condition or personal circumstances, which would hinder you from performing certain types of activities in the position(s) for which you are applying? (e.g. allergies, asthma, diabetes, fainting, seizures, unable to lift children, etc.)

Please read and sign the following statement.

I have read and agree to adhere to the best of my ability, the Policy and Procedures Regarding Child Safety.

Date:

Signature:

Please fill out references names on attached sheet.

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References: List 2 persons not related to you who can comment on your suitability for working with youth.

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	HOW LONG?
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Reference Check

For: _____ Position: _____

Reference: _____ Phone: _____

My name is (reference checker name). I am phoning to obtain a reference for (volunteer's name) who has expressed an interest in the volunteer position of _____ at Unity Centre. He/she has given us your name as someone who would be familiar with his/her qualifications for this position.

1. What is your relationship to this person "(work, social, volunteer, etc.)? _____
2. How long have you known him/her _____
3. What characteristics would enable this person to work with our young people?
4. Do you have any concerns relating to this person being involved with children?
5. Additional comments regarding suitability for working with our youth
6. Would you agree that this person would be a valuable addition to our youth education department?

Reference Checker name:

Signature:

Date:

Note: two copies of this should be attached to each application – one for each reference.

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KENDELL:

You need to develop a form for keeping records of the students and of the classes.

CHILDREN:

1. Names of children
2. Addresses
3. Phone numbers
4. Parent/guardian name(s)
5. any allergy/medical information including health card numbers
6. Birthdays

CLASSES:

1. Date
2. Teacher
3. Students

This records will be kept on file at the church for 30 years.

