

International Office Power Abuse Policy The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

As a community, The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) is committed to creating a healthy church culture that safeguards and protects all its members and adherents, especially children and youth, from experiencing any kind of power abuse. We are committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors, and holding abusers accountable. Power abuse and its impact prevent people in our churches from fully experiencing the transforming presence of God and is contrary to the mission of God to restore all things. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cries for help.

Power abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime), when someone in a position of power and trust violates or exploits someone who is often powerless to stop it. God rejects leaders who domineer, serve themselves, and abuse power to prey upon the vulnerable. Jesus taught that leaders must use power in ways that serve, heal, bless, and protect (Ezekiel 34, Jeremiah 23, John 10, Mark 10:42-43).

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada is committed to being educated about power abuse and taking responsibility to uphold our policy. All persons within our Fellowship should experience an environment of safety and justice and one that is free from any form of power abuse.

Healthy Church Culture:

The first defence against the abuse of power is the development of a healthy church culture.

- A healthy church culture must be consciously and purposefully developed, nurtured, and reviewed.
- Healthy churches acknowledge the existence of brokenness, sin, and failure in appropriately vulnerable and honest ways.
- The quality of relationships founded on the commitment to biblical servanthood and moral faithfulness within the church community is essential to creating safe environments and protecting one another.
- Churches with healthy cultures also recognize that power imbalances do exist in any structure where there are hierarchies, and they ensure that policies exist to both curb wrongful use of authority and provide safe environments to report abuse.
- Healthy churches model an absence of coercive and/or controlling behaviours by leadership.
- Healthy churches do not evade responsibility when faced with difficult situations and address improper behaviours.
- Healthy churches share and distribute power and responsibility so that no person (or persons) monopolizes control. Leadership is inclusive, collaborative, and consultative.

It is always the responsibility of the person in the position of greater power to maintain appropriate boundaries with others. The following behaviours are unacceptable by any leaders, pastors, or staff:

- Any abuse of power as defined by this policy.
- Coercive and controlling behaviour that marginalizes and dismisses the views and opinions of others.
- Sexual harassment of any kind, including unwanted sexual attention, comments, or unwanted physical touch.
- Behaviour or words that discriminate against anyone based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.
- Any words that belittle or threaten.
- Any attempts to put themselves or any other leader above the standards of this policy.
- Any attempts to enforce secrecy regarding violations of this policy.
- The unnecessary sharing of confidential information about others.

Accountability Relationships

Churches in affiliation with the PAOC are self-governing with the inherent right to sovereignty in the conduct of their own affairs, including financial accountability, hiring practices and the management of staff. Credential holders with the PAOC are voluntarily submitted to the provisions of the PAOC General Constitution and By-Laws, specifically By-Law 10 for matters of doctrine, morality and ethics. Any alleged violation by a credential holder relative to doctrine, morality or ethics should be directed, signed and in writing, to the appropriate district superintendent.

Any alleged violation of power abuse by a leader, whether credentialed or not, within a PAOC church or related ministry, not related to matters of doctrine, morality or ethics, will be directed to the safeguarding team and / or board of the church or related ministry to which the accused leader is accountable.

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada holds all credential holders to the high moral standard. Any sexual act outside of a marriage between one man and one woman, is contrary to God's moral law and subject to discipline according to By-Law 10. Inappropriate sexual conduct including sexual harassment is also subject to discipline in accordance with By-Law 10.

Definitions

Power Abuse: In general, power abuse occurs when a person holding 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, disabled, student, staff, intern, immigrant, etc.). That exploitation or

violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, and spiritual, etc.

Harassment: The Canada Labour Code establishes an employee's right to employment free of sexual harassment. The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada considers any unwanted sexualized behaviour within a power differential to be a serious form of harassment. Stalking is also a form of abuse and is defined by the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime. 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.

Clergy Sexual Power Abuse: Sexual abuse by a pastor, officer, or other leader holding formal spiritual authority with a person under their spiritual care and/or supervision, whether an adult or a child. It is an abuse of power, whether or not this is criminalized by provincial or territorial law.

Emotional Power Abuse: When a person holding power and trust uses a pattern of controlling and domineering 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 Power Abuse: The illegal or improper use of one's authority to unduly influence or coerce people with respect to their financial resources for personal or corporate advantage.

Spiritual Power Abuse: a form of emotional abuse, meaning a pattern of coercive or domineering behaviours using religion, usually by a person who holds power and trust. Some acts of power abuse in a religious environment will have a spiritual dimension.

Examples include:

- Use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition, or sacred texts to harm.
- Compelling a person to engage in religious acts against his or her will.
- Abuse that occurs in a religious context or by a religious leader.
- Invoking divine authority to manipulate a person into meeting the needs of the abuser or church.
- Using spirituality or spiritual authority to dismiss a person's perspective, agency, or value.
- Attempts to use the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality to put their leadership or decisions beyond questioning or accountability.
- Attempts to spiritualize or justify harm using the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality.

Administrative Policy

This International Office Safeguarding Policy provides the overarching principles of safeguarding for the PAOC. It is complemented by District Safeguarding Policies and Local Church Safeguarding Policies. The International Office Safeguarding Team does not engage in local matters, it is however available for consultation with local or district safeguarding teams.

International Office Safeguarding Team

The International Office Safeguarding Team, a committee of the General Executive, is responsible for supporting the districts and local churches of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada in proactive practices of prevention and response to power abuse.

The International Office Safeguarding Team is comprised of:

Craig Burton: craig.burton@paoc.org
 Priscilla Cochrane: priscilla.cochrane@paoc.org
 Patti Miller: pmiller@evangel.qc.ca
 Olu Jegede: olujegade2@gmail.com
 Kerry Halliwell: kerry.halliwell@paoc.org

Duties of the International Office Safeguarding Team:

- Maintain rigorous familiarity with the Power Abuse Policy of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.
- Receive, document, and respond to any policy violations or concerning behaviour by District Superintendents, District Safeguarding Teams, or national staff.
- Assist in responding to any allegations of abuse by District Superintendents, District Safeguarding Teams, or members of the General Executive in co-operation with local churches and/or District Safeguarding Teams and/or District Executives
- Ensure the PAOC International Office HR policies and procedures include reference to the Power Abuse Policy.
- Develop and maintain resources available to all churches and credential holders.
- Provide any necessary ongoing training with respect to Power Abuse.
- Ensure reports have been made to proper authorities when applicable.

Healthy Boundaries

Maintaining healthy boundaries is how we will live out Jesus' command to love our neighbour as ourselves and love one another as Jesus loves us (Mark 12:31; John 13:34). See Appendix 1 for direction regarding the maintenance of healthy boundaries.

Responding to Power Abuse

The International Office Safeguarding Team and General Executive is committed to providing a timely and effective response to any allegations or findings of power abuse by General Executive members or national office staff. Allegations against pastors or other participants in the General Executive and its committees shall be directed to the appropriate Safeguarding Team.

In responding to abuse, the International Office Safeguarding Team and General Executive will always prioritize the safety and needs of victim(s) and other vulnerable persons according to trauma-informed principles.

Independent Consultation and Investigation

The International Office Safeguarding Team may make a recommendation to the General Executive regarding the wisdom of independent consultation or investigation for the sake of transparency in certain cases. Each case will be assessed to see if this is warranted.

When the General Executive engages an independent investigation, it will be conducted by an organization or persons completely independent of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and experienced in investigating cases of power abuse.

Upon completion of an investigation, the independent investigating body will deliver to the General Executive a report that will consist of its investigative findings, analysis, and recommendations. Any personnel decisions will be made in view of the recommendations of the report, by the General Executive, according to the constitution, values, and employment practices of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and in communication with the International Office Safeguarding Team. Decisions regarding pastors shall be made in communication with the local and/or district teams, boards, councils, and/or executives.

Retaliation

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual or group who is involved in any activity in this policy, such as reporting concerns or giving evidence, or co-operating in a criminal or independent investigation. Retaliation can take many forms, including, but not limited to, shunning, violence, threats, or intimidation that would discourage some persons from engaging in activities required or encouraged by this policy.

Reports, concerns, or questions about retaliation should be immediately reported to the International Office Safeguarding Team or a member of the General Executive. All individuals and groups of individuals engaging in retaliation will be held accountable under this policy.

Resources

Please visit <https://paoc.org/ministry-toolbox> for further information on the rightful use of authority, abuse prevention, and policies.

Appendix 1 – Healthy Boundaries

Show respect in physical touch, space, and visibility:

- To be healthy, touch must always be welcomed by the other person (whether they are an adult or a minor). If you are not sure just ask - e.g. “Can I give you a hug?”
- Touch within a significant power difference should be observable to others (e.g. between an adult and a child or a pastor and the employee they supervise).
- Be considerate of others and give them appropriate space: Notice the body language of others and be aware of your impact on others.

Set an example in conduct towards minors:

- Set an example in upholding all boundaries with minors.
- No one should be alone with a child who is not their own child (including giving rides, and online interaction and messaging).

Show respect in your use of words:

- Determine to use words that convey the respect that is always due to others.
- Avoid any language that belittles, threatens, or objectifies.
- Avoid sexualized comments including jokes, stories, experiences, or sharing sexualized content (such as images, video, or other media) or engaging in any other sexualized communication in-person or online, especially with a minor, vulnerable adult, or in a power differential (e.g. pastor-member, boss-employee).

Show respect in agency and personal boundaries:

- Healthy people do not seek to control others, but rather encourage and empower others to take healthy agency in their own life (e.g. making decisions for someone or taking control of an aspect of their life such as directing their finances or career or social life).
- Avoid volunteering inappropriately intimate information or asking someone to reveal intimate details or personal information when the person is not ready or comfortable doing so.
- Give agency to others (e.g. “Where would you be comfortable meeting up?”).
- Always respect the “no” of others in setting personal boundaries.