



**The Western District  
of The Alliance Canada**

# **Protecting People and Ministry Through Documentation**

Created by: Cindy Bartlett, Ministry Safety & Risk Consultant  
Date: January 2026  
WCD Operations: Safe Church Ministry



## Why Documentation Is Essential

*(Adapted from Plan to Protect)*

Maintaining comprehensive and accurate documentation is a fundamental responsibility of churches committed to due diligence and the fulfillment of its duty of care. Effective documentation safeguards the organization from legal and reputational risk while supporting transparency, accountability, and operational effectiveness. It provides a verifiable record of policies, procedures, decisions, and actions taken to protect the safety and well-being of all individuals under the church's care, including staff, volunteers and elders.

As there is **no statute of limitations**, all documentation must be retained **indefinitely**.

### Legal Protection and Compliance

Documentation serves as critical evidence in legal and regulatory matters, demonstrating that the church has taken reasonable and appropriate steps to meet its obligations. In the absence of proper records, it becomes difficult to substantiate compliance with insurance requirements, standards of care, and recognized best practices. Maintaining a complete and accurate history of documentation is essential to demonstrating that risks have been identified, preventative measures implemented, and incidents addressed appropriately.

#### Documentation for Legal Protection and Compliance Includes:

- **Formal Written Abuse Prevention Plan/Policy** A board-approved document outlining the organization's commitment to maintaining a safe environment, clearly defining abuse, promoting awareness, and affirming zero tolerance for abuse or neglect.
- Current Insurance policies
- Registration and attendance records, including sign-in and sign-out sheets for participants and volunteers
- Code of Conduct and Confidentiality Agreement (recommended)
- **Staff files**, including (but not limited to):
  - Employment application
  - Interview records
  - Reference checks
  - Criminal record checks
  - Abuse prevention training records
- **Volunteer files**, including:
  - Ministry or volunteer application
  - Interview records
  - Reference checks
  - Criminal record checks Abuse Prevention Training

### Accountability and Transparency

Accurate and complete documentation promotes accountability by providing a clear and objective record of roles, responsibilities, decisions, and actions. It establishes timelines and

clarifies expectations, reducing uncertainty and preventing misunderstandings among staff, volunteers, leadership, and Board of Elders.

**Documentation Supporting Accountability Includes:**

- Volunteer schedules
- Volunteer ministry descriptions outlining roles and responsibilities
- Driving logs, where applicable

**Risk Management and Incident Response**

In the event of an allegation, complaint, or incident, well-maintained documentation enables the church to respond in a timely, thorough, and appropriate manner. These records help establish what occurred, who was involved, the steps taken in response, and any corrective or protective actions implemented. Such documentation is essential in mitigating legal exposure and safeguarding the church's reputation.

**Documentation for Risk Management and Incident Response Includes:**

- Informed Letters of Consent and waivers
- Incident and accident report forms
- Investigation records and outcomes
- Care and safety plans

**Training and Continuous Improvement**

Comprehensive documentation supports effective training, evaluation, and continuous improvement. By reviewing documented records, churches can identify gaps in policies or procedures, strengthen safeguards, and enhance organizational effectiveness and a culture of safety.