

## Risk Management

(The following material is a portion of and is quoted from the booklet Faithful Footsteps Screening Procedures for Positions of Trust and Authority in the United Church of Canada: A Handbook. The Camp Director and Assistant Camp Director, in particular, are asked to review the Handbook in its entirety.)

The term "risk management" may seem very intimidating, but it need not be. It means taking care to consider the possibility that something could go wrong and taking steps to stop, minimize, prevent or eliminate the circumstances which may lead to injury, abuse or harm to camp participants. Risk management means accepting the fact that harm is possible, either by the deliberate act of an abusive person or through carelessness or accident.

### Assessing the Risk

The programs and activities of a camp have many different levels of risk attached to them, depending on several factors:

- *The Participants:*  
How vulnerable are they? How old are they? How dependent are they? Are they ever alone with the leader/staff/volunteer?
- *The Setting:*  
Is the room safe? Is there a window in the door? Is it an off-site public space or in a private home?
- *The Activity Itself:*  
Is the activity carried out in a group or one-on-one? Is it a physically active event? Is it an activity that demands privacy (i.e. hospital visiting, counselling)?
- *The Supervision Provided:*  
Is there documentation kept on the events? Are spot checks conducted on programs on a regular basis?
- *The Nature of the Relationship Between Participant and Leader:*  
Is there a significant power differential between participants and leaders? Are leaders in a position of trust? Does the activity itself depend on the fostering of a close and personal relationship (i.e. friendly visiting, mentoring, counselling)?

### Risk Assessment Matrix

It is important to identify positions according to their level of risk.

- *Low Risk:*  
There is minimal or no contact with children or other vulnerable people. Programs take place in large groups.
- *Medium Risk:*  
There are activities with vulnerable people, but no private or one-on-one sessions.
- *High Risk:*  
The position presents opportunities to be alone with children or vulnerable persons or the

position presents opportunities to exert influence over youth or seniors.

Some activities are of higher risk in some factors than others. This Matrix can be used to visually represent an assessment of the risk level of various activities which may be part of a position's job description.

|              |                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |            |   |   |
|--------------|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|------------|---|---|
| Position     | Risk Assessment: 0.0 (Rating) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |            |   |   |
| Risk Factor  | Assessment                    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    | Risk Level |   |   |
| Participant  | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | L          | M | H |
| Setting      | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | L          | M | H |
| Activity     | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | L          | M | H |
| Supervision  | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | L          | M | H |
| Relationship | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | L          | M | H |

For each risk factor, circle the number which best describes your assessment of the level of risk for this position: (1 = lowest . . . . . 10 = highest)

Calculation Method of Risk Management

The assessments listed below are based on the following assessment count-level relationship:

- 1 - 3 = Low
- 4 - 7 = Medium
- 8 - 10 = High

The Risk Assessment Number beside the job description [e.g. "Camp Director, Risk Assessment: 7.4 (Medium High)] is calculated by simply averaging all assessment sections of that specific job description ("Participant", "Setting", "Activity", "Supervision" and "Relationship").

Risk Assessments

Current (for the specific camp) risk assessments must still be completed for each camp function once personnel, settings and schedules are finalized.

Options for Reducing Risk

Once a risk assessment is completed, there are various options to consider for reducing the risks:

- *Eliminate the activity:*  
You may decide the risks are too high for the activity to continue.
- *Modify the activity:*  
You may make changes to how the activity is carried out.

- *Transfer the liability:*  
You may choose to have the service or program offered by someone else with professional expertise.
- *Assume the risk:*  
You may decide that despite potential risks the program is essential to the nature of your camp and so continue to offer it.
- *Minimize the risk you assume:*  
If you choose to continue to offer programs with significant risk, you could adopt other measures to reduce and avoid the risks and potential losses.