
CHILD PROTECTION

POLICY STATEMENT:

All children have the right to safety and protection. The Society, through its employees, volunteers, delegates, and partners, is in contact with children across Canada and in countries around the world, in a variety of ways and in a wide range of settings. The best interest of the child is essential to all the work we do.

The Society is dedicated to taking the necessary steps to ensure that its personnel, in Canada and internationally, is made fully aware of and understands the importance of ensuring child protection.

It is incumbent upon all Society employees, volunteers, delegates, and partners not to condone or tolerate behaviour which constitutes any types of violence against children.. There is a duty upon all individuals to prevent violence against children by discouraging inappropriate activities and addressing and reporting all incidents, including when such incidents may be by third parties (i.e. suppliers).

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to protect children through defining what constitutes violence against children and to provide direction for reporting when any of these types of violence are directly known or reasonably believed.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, delegates, and partners whose contract would require them to have contact with children.

DEFINITIONS:

Child – For the purposes of this policy, any human being under the age of 19 years.

Child protection – all responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop violence against children.

Violence Against Children – any acts of omission or commission that cause physical and/or emotional harm to a child. Types of violence against children are:

- ***Child abuse*** – any form of physical, emotional and/or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that could cause physical injury or emotional damage to a child, whether done in person or through the use of technology (including but not limited to computers, the Internet, cell phones, cameras, web cameras and other media).

Forms of child abuse:

- i. ***Physical abuse of a child*** – occurs when a person physically hurts or threatens to hurt a child, or by any means deliberately creates a significant risk of physical hurt to a child.
 - ii. ***Emotional abuse of a child*** – occurs when a person repeatedly or severely attacks a child’s self-esteem through use of language, gestures or other behaviour that is degrading, isolating, humiliating, terrorizing, rejecting or corrupting, or that ignores a child’s need for basic emotional care, or where a person by any means deliberately creates a significant risk of emotional harm to a child.
 - iii. ***Child sexual abuse*** – occurs when a child is used by an older or more powerful child or adult for sexual stimulation or gratification. It can involve contact or non-contact, (see definition of child exploitation below), and includes the development of sexual relationships with children not condoned under local or Canadian law, or using language, gestures or other behaviours that are sexual in nature with children.
 - iv. ***Child neglect*** – inattention to the basic necessities of life such as shelter, education, medical care, supervision, safe environments and clothing, and includes acts or omissions that deny a child basic necessities that are the responsibility of the Society to provide in any given situation.
 - v. ***Child exploitation includes:***
 - a) the actual or attempted abuse of a position of authority, differential power or trust in relation to a child, with a view to profiting sexually, monetarily, socially or politically from the use of the child;
 - b) intentionally viewing, downloading or distributing any sexualized, demeaning or violent images involving children; or
 - c) taking a photograph or other image of a child or making representations of a child in a way that can reasonably be interpreted as sexualized, demeaning or violent.
- ***Bullying and harassment of a child*** – occurs when a person’s behaviour is insulting, intimidating, humiliating, malicious, degrading or offensive to a child, potentially including the misuse of power or position. The behaviours can occur directly (in person) or indirectly (using technology or through other messages), and undermine the child’s right to dignity. Harassment occurs when these types of behaviours are based on discrimination such as against age, sexual orientation, gender, family status, disability, race, colour, ethnicity, religion, marital status, etc., as defined in federal and provincial/territorial human rights legislation.

PROCEDURE AND APPLICATION:**A. Obligations:**

This policy is a reminder to all individuals of their obligation to uphold the Society’s *2.1- Code of Conduct* and Fundamental Principles, and to adhere to policies and procedures aimed at promoting the highest level of care for our clients.

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- i. **Employees, Volunteers, Delegates, and Partners** are responsible for:
- becoming familiar with this policy and the process to follow for dealing with known or reasonably believed situations of violence against children;
 - cooperating with any efforts to investigate matters arising under this policy;
 - taking reasonable measures for ensuring the safety of the children with whom they work;
 - not engaging in or contributing to violence against children in any way;
 - taking all reasonable measures to avoid, in the course of their duties for the Society, spending time alone with a child in isolation, away from the observation of others, unless specifically authorized by an immediate superior or in circumstances where the safety of the client is at risk and immediate contact is demonstrated to be in the best interests of the child. Refer to Annex B – Procedures for Effective Child Protection Practices, Section A, for more information;
 - publishing or presenting, electronically or otherwise, a child’s personal information, images or location, or exchanging such information through an electronic social networking facility, only where it reasonably supports the needs of a program, and when a signed permission has been given by the legal guardian, and without posing a risk to the safety of the child. Refer to Annex B – Procedures for Effective Child Protection Practices, Section B, for more information.
- ii. **Supervisors** are responsible for:
- ensuring their employees, volunteers, delegates, and partners are aware of their personal legal obligations to immediately report a known or reasonably believed situation of child abuse according to provincial/territorial child protection legislation, in accordance with Annex A – Reporting Disclosures of Child Abuse;
 - ensuring their employees, volunteers, delegates, and partners are aware of the process to follow for known or reasonably believed bullying and harassment of a child, in accordance with D. below;
 - implementing this policy, under the direction of the applicable member of the EMC or designate, in consultation with People Services;
 - cooperating with any efforts to investigate matters arising under this policy.
- iii. **Human Resources** is responsible for:
- ensuring all employees, volunteers, delegates, and partners read and formally acknowledge the contents, processes, and procedures of this policy and annexes;
 - ensuring appropriate next steps are taken from an organizational standpoint once known or reasonably believed acts of violence against a child have been reported and addressed as per B.,C., and D. below.
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B. Reporting Child Abuse within Canada:

Further to *2.1- Code of Conduct*, employees, volunteers, delegates, and partners must be aware of their personal legal obligations to immediately report any direct knowledge or reasonable belief of past or present incidents of child abuse to child protection services and/or the police according to legislation. The following steps must be taken:

- i. Report the direct or suspected child abuse according to provincial/territorial child protection legislation instructions (refer to Annex A – Reporting Disclosures of Child Abuse);
- ii. In writing, report the incident to the supervisor and/or People Services following B.i. above for appropriate next steps;
- iii. Potential breaches of *2.1- Code of Conduct* must also be reported at this time, if the alleged offender is bound by *2.1 – Code of Conduct*.

C. Reporting Child Abuse Outside of Canada:

Further to *2.1- Code of Conduct*, delegates and partners must be aware of their personal legal obligations to follow the laws regarding child protection in the country in which they work. If a delegate or partner has direct knowledge or reasonable belief of past or present incidents of child abuse, the following steps must be taken:

- i. Report the direct or suspected child abuse according to the country's child protection legislation instructions;
- ii. In writing, report the incident to the supervisor and/or People Services and/or Clearview Connect;
- iii. Potential breaches of *2.1- Code of Conduct* must also be reported at this time, if the alleged offender is bound by *2.1 – Code of Conduct*.

D. Addressing Bullying and Harassment of a Child:

In the case that an employee, volunteer, delegate, or partner possesses direct knowledge or reasonable belief of bullying and harassment of a child, s/he must take the following steps:

- i. Stop the inappropriate behaviour and protect the targeted child while hearing both sides. Refer to Annex B – Procedures for Effective Child Protection Practices for more information;
- ii. Report the bullying and harassment incident to the parents or caregivers and where it applies, to the school or organization in charge of the safety of the child;
- iii. Notify her/his supervisor and/or People Services for appropriate next steps. Potential breaches of *2.1- Code of Conduct* must also be reported at this time, if the alleged offender is bound by *2.1 – Code of Conduct*;
- iv. Where there exists reasonable doubt as to whether the incident constitutes child abuse versus bullying and harassment of a child, report the incident in accordance with the directives outlined in Annex A – Reporting Disclosures of Child Abuse.

E. Confidentiality:

Reports of violence against children will be received in a confidential manner. Information contained in a report resulting from B.ii, C.ii, or D.iii. above may be shared with individuals as may be necessary or in accordance with legal requirements.

BREACH OF POLICY:

If an employee, volunteer, delegate, or partner fails to report a known or reasonably believed situation of violence against a child, s/he may be subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or engagement with the Society.

Intentionally accusing someone of any types of violence against a child, known to be false, is a serious offence and is subject to disciplinary action. The Society reserves the right to discipline those whose reports or complaints are frivolous or vexatious.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. All individuals within the Society have the responsibility to apply the Fundamental Principles and follow their legal obligations in ensuring and protecting the health and well being of all children associated with the Society. The best interests of the child will drive all decisions and actions.
2. The Senior Director of People Services, is responsible for advising stakeholders, maintaining, monitoring, and revising this policy, and for ensuring the maintenance of a confidential record of violence against children as required, in consultation with the General Counsel or designate.
3. Members of the Organizational Leadership Team (OLT) are responsible for applying and implementing this policy in each of their respective areas.

INQUIRIES:

Questions regarding the application or interpretation of this policy are to be referred to People Services .