



CANADIAN  
RED CROSS

# Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments for Children and Youth

A Risk Management Road Map  
to Prevent Violence & Abuse



*Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments for Children and Youth, 1st Edition  
A Risk Management Road Map to Prevent Violence & Abuse*



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Written by:

Judi Fairholm, R.N., B.Sc.N., M.Ed.

Gurvinder Singh, M.A.

Sarah Smith, B.A.

Design by:

Sarah Reid, B.Des.

Layout by:

Tamara Wee, B.A.

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[Respect Education@redcross.ca](mailto:RespectEducation@redcross.ca)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	5
<i>Illustration: Road Map to Safe Environments</i> .....	6
STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE .....	7
Definitions .....	8
<i>Chart: The Typology of Violence</i> .....	9
<i>Box: The U.N. World Report on Violence Against Children</i> .....	10
Types of Maltreatment.....	11
Comparison Between Types of Violence .....	14
How and Why Abuse Happens.....	15
Power .....	16
<i>Box: A Few Facts About Child Abuse</i> .....	17
STEP 2: RECOGNIZE THE VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH.....	19
<i>Illustration: Resiliency Factors</i> .....	21
STEP 3: DEFINE PROTECTION INSTRUMENTS .....	23
International Framework .....	24
<i>Box: Other International Child Protection Instruments</i> .....	25
National Framework.....	26
Provincial and Territorial Framework.....	26
Civil Liability .....	27
<i>Box: Duty of Care and Liability</i> .....	28
STEP 4: CREATE A PREVENTION TEAM .....	29
<i>Box: Best Practices for Creating a Prevention Team</i> .....	31
STEP 5: COMPLETE A RISK ASSESSMENT .....	33
<i>Box: Key Questions for Risk Assessments</i> .....	34
<i>Box: Consequences of Not Assessing and Addressing Risks</i> .....	35

Risk Management Checklist: Questions to Help Create Safe Environments .....	36
STEP 6: DEVELOP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES .....	39
Key Areas for Policy and Procedure Development .....	42
<i>Box: Ten Elements of Screening</i> .....	43
<i>Box: Key Inclusions for Codes of Conduct</i> .....	44
<i>Box: The Importance of Confidentiality</i> .....	45
<i>Box: Values that Guide a Child Protection Policy</i> .....	46
<i>Box: Strategies to Improve Visibility and Safety</i> .....	50
Accountability .....	54
<i>Box: Strategies to Ensure Accountability</i> .....	54
STEP 7: EDUCATE ADULTS, YOUTH AND CHILDREN .....	55
<i>Box: The Economic Benefits of Prevention</i> .....	56
Effective Training .....	57
<i>Box: Safe Learning Environments and Abuse Issues</i> .....	57
Educating Children and Youth .....	58
Educating Personnel .....	58
<i>Box: The Benefits of Training on Safe Environments</i> .....	59
Educating Parents/Caregivers .....	59
STEP 8: RESPOND TO DISCLOSURES OF VIOLENCE, ABUSE, BULLYING AND HARASSMENT .....	61
Anonymous Allegations .....	64
Reporting .....	64
<i>Box: Characteristics of an Effective Reporting Mechanism</i> .....	65
STEP 9: MEET THE CHALLENGES .....	67
Barriers: Societal, Organizational, Individual .....	68
Barriers for Children and Youth .....	69
Responses to the Barriers .....	69
STEP 10: MAINTAIN SAFE ENVIRONMENTS .....	73
CANADIAN RED CROSS .....	77
Respect Education: Violence & Abuse Prevention .....	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	82

# INTRODUCTION

All children and youth deserve to be safe. There are no exceptions. Individuals, families and organizations all have an important role in achieving this.

The *Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments for Children and Youth* manual is a guide for developing, implementing and monitoring risk management strategies within organizations to help keep all personnel and participants, especially children and youth, safe from violence, abuse and harassment.

Creating safe environments requires that adults take responsibility to ensure safety wherever young people spend time. This process starts with recognizing situations and behaviours that create unsafe environments and being committed to making the required changes. It means examining our personal and organizational values and determining the best interests of the child.

The issues of violence, abuse, harassment and bullying can create fear about how to respond and how to cope with the risks of liability and criminal charges. The best antidotes to these fears are awareness of the problem, knowledge of the issues, risk management, and preventative actions.

The *Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments* can be seen as a comprehensive road map or risk management strategy that supports organizations in a step-by-step process. Each step of the road map is tied to all of the other steps, so the success of one depends on the achievement of all of the others. How much time each step, or the whole process,

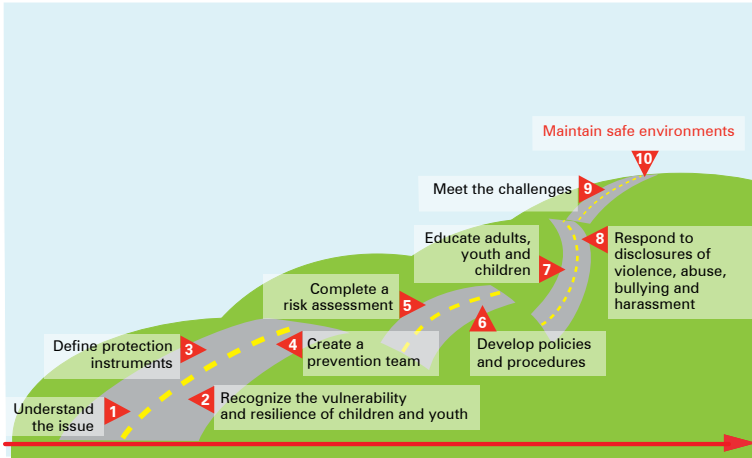
.....

A good plan is like a road map: it shows the final destination and usually the best way to get there.

H. Stanley Judd

takes is up to each organization—however, the goal for all is to reduce risk as soon as possible.

Illustration: Road Map to Safe Environments



Understanding the prevention of violence, abuse, harassment and bullying in a comprehensive manner is foundational to creating safe environments. As we learn more and realize that there are concrete steps we can all take—as individuals and organizations—to prevent hurt against children, our inclination to see the problem in one dimension shifts to a wider perspective. We begin to see that by tackling the problem one step at a time on many fronts in a coordinated way, the risk of harm becomes less and less. We begin to see that this complicated problem is, in fact, preventable.



No violence against children is justifiable, **and all violence against children is preventable.**

Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro

1

# STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE

Violence touches everyone. As the smallest, weakest and least powerful members of society, children are the most vulnerable to all forms of violence—physical, sexual, and emotional. Violence against children can occur in any setting: in homes and families, schools, institutions, workplaces and communities.

Not only are there painful psychosocial and health-related costs of violence against children, but also staggering legal, criminal and economic burdens. For the most part, violence against boys and girls remains a secret, hidden behind closed doors, and occurs in places where children should be safe.

Although the problem of violence against children is complex, it is something that can be stopped. Prevention is possible for children, families, organizations and communities.

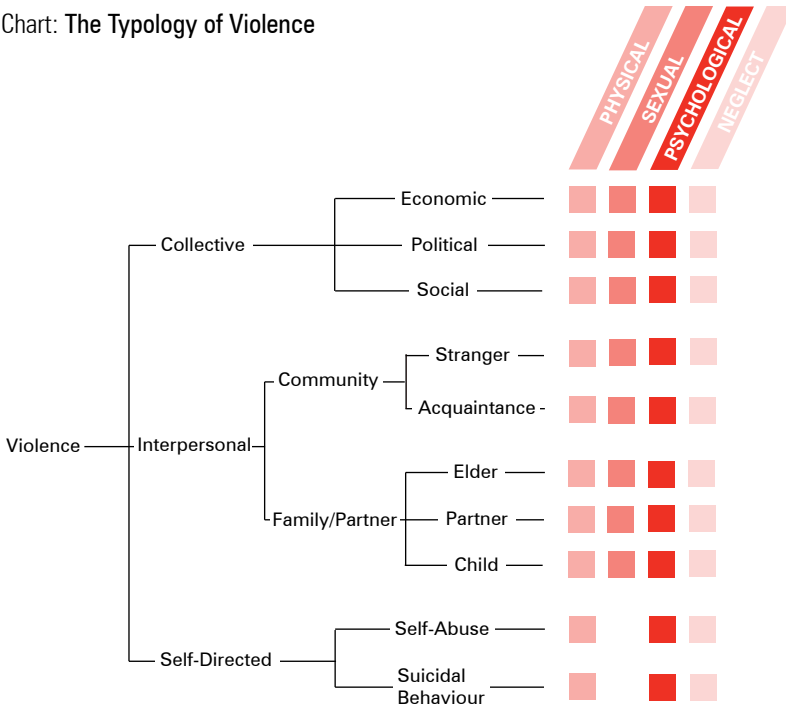
## DEFINITIONS

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2002) defines violence as **the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.**

There are different types of violence. The World Health Organization has developed a chart that describes each of the types—self-directed, interpersonal and collective. Each one is unique but also shares many qualities with the other types.



Chart: The Typology of Violence



Krug, Dahlbert, Mercy, Zwi, and Lozano, 2002

The United Nations (UN) *World Report on Violence against Children* (Pinheiro, 2006) defines violence against children as: **all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse.**

Child abuse is defined as **any form of physical, emotional and/or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that causes physical injury or emotional damage to a child.** Child abuse can be committed by individuals, institutions, communities, and/or societies. A common factor in all forms of child abuse is an abuse of power.

## 1

Child refers to **every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier** (*UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 1, 1989).

### THE U.N. WORLD REPORT ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The *World Report on Violence against Children* is the most comprehensive global study on the problem. It examined the scope of the problem around the planet and proposed measures to eliminate it.

The study found that abuse, violence and exploitation of children are global problems that are impacting children, families, communities and whole societies.

There is a growing body of evidence that shows violence—in all its manifestations—can be prevented using evidence-based, comprehensive models.

The study's recommendations include:

1. Strengthen national and local commitment and action
2. Prohibit all violence against children
3. Prioritize prevention
4. Promote non-violent values and awareness-raising
5. Enhance the capacity of all who work with and for children
6. Ensure the participation of children
7. Create accessible and child-friendly reporting systems and services
8. Ensure accountability and end impunity
9. Address the gender dimension of violence against children

The study calls on all institutions to adopt comprehensive measures to prevent violence against children. It emphasizes that the problem of abuse can no longer stay secret, hidden behind closed doors.

## TYPES OF MALTREATMENT

In all contexts children may be at risk of maltreatment in the form of emotional, physical or sexual abuse, exploitation, neglect or bullying and harassment.

Emotional abuse is **when a person in a position of power, authority or trust repeatedly attacks a child's self-esteem verbally or non-verbally through any of seven different methods:**

TYPE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE	EXAMPLES
Rejecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To refuse to acknowledge, hear or make time to support a child or provide basic needs</li> </ul>
Degrading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To insult, criticize, mock, imitate, call names and otherwise belittle a child</li> <li>◆ To deprive a child of their sense of dignity and self-worth</li> </ul>
Isolating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To separate a child from others; to cut a child off from normal social experiences, which results in extreme aloneness</li> </ul>
Terrorizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To coerce or intimidate a child into a state of extreme fear, including by threatening violence against children themselves, their loved ones or pets, or favourite objects</li> </ul>
Corrupting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To constantly show or encourage anti-social, harmful, destructive or illegal behaviours</li> </ul>
Ignoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To fail to provide sensitive, responsive support to a child</li> <li>◆ To deprive a child of essential emotional needs</li> <li>◆ To only interact with a child when necessary; to be psychologically distant</li> </ul>
Exploiting/ Adultifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To make use of a child for one's own advantage or profit; to make age-inappropriate demands</li> </ul>

In 2003, there were 56,846 investigations that involved emotional abuse in Canada.\*

Health Canada, 2005

\*Excludes Québec. For further information, please see Trocmé et al., 2005.

1

Family violence is **any action in a family that causes physical, sexual or emotional harm to another person in the family**. This includes hitting, humiliating, or isolating anyone in the family.

.....  
72,238 cases involving physical abuse were investigated across Canada in 2003.\*  
Health Canada, 2005

Physical abuse is **when a person in a position of power or trust deliberately hurts or threatens to injure a child or youth**—this includes hitting, throwing, pushing, grabbing, pulling, etc.

Neglect is **chronic inattention to the basic necessities of life** such as clothing, shelter, nutritional diet, education, good hygiene, supervision, medical and dental care, adequate rest, safe environment, moral guidance and discipline, exercise, and fresh air.

Sexual abuse is **when a young or less powerful person is used by an older or more powerful child, adolescent or adult for sexual gratification**. Secrecy shrouds both contact and non-contact types of sexual abuse.

CONTACT

- ◆ Touched in sexual areas
- ◆ Forced to touch another’s sexual areas
- ◆ Embraced/held in a sexual manner
- ◆ Anally or vaginally penetrated, including with any object
- ◆ Physically and sexually tortured

NON-CONTACT

- ◆ Shown sexual videos and pornography in person, via Internet, by cell phone photos, etc.
- ◆ Being flashed/exposed to sexual body parts, in person or through technology like a web cam
- ◆ Forced to listen to sexual talk, including obscene telephone calls
- ◆ Forced to pose for seductive or sexual photos or videos
- ◆ Forced to look at the sexual body parts of another person
- ◆ Forced to watch sexual acts
- ◆ Teased about sexual body parts
- ◆ Subjected to intrusive questions, comments, or observations, verbally, or through notes, email, chat rooms or text messages
- ◆ Made the object of voyeurism / unwanted watching

\*Excludes Québec. For further information, please see Trocmé et al., 2005.

Exploitation is **using children/youth for the benefit of the more powerful person** with no regard of the harm being caused to the young person.

Cyberspace is host to more than 1 million images of tens of thousands of children subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation.

ECPAT, 2005

Harassment is **behaviour that is insulting, intimidating, humiliating, malicious, degrading or offensive and is discriminatory** based on federal/provincial/territorial human rights legislation.

Discrimination is **treating people differently or negatively** based on age, sexual orientation, sex, family status, disability, race, colour, ethnicity, religion, marital status, or pardoned conviction.

Bullying describes **hurtful and harmful behaviours between children under the age of twelve plus humiliating behaviours** between youth and between adults that are not addressed under human rights and child protection legislation. Bullying can be physical, verbal and relational; direct and indirect. There are often three types of stakeholders: the bully, the target and the bystander.

Perception is reality. For instance, one person's perceived teasing may be another person's perceived threat. The organization's policies should spell out in clear and simple language what the organization considers violent behaviour and what consequences will ensue if the policies are broken.

Nonprofit Risk Management Centre

150 million girls (14% of the planet's child population) and 73 million boys (7% of the planet's child population) have been subjected to sexual violence.

Pinheiro, 2006

## 1

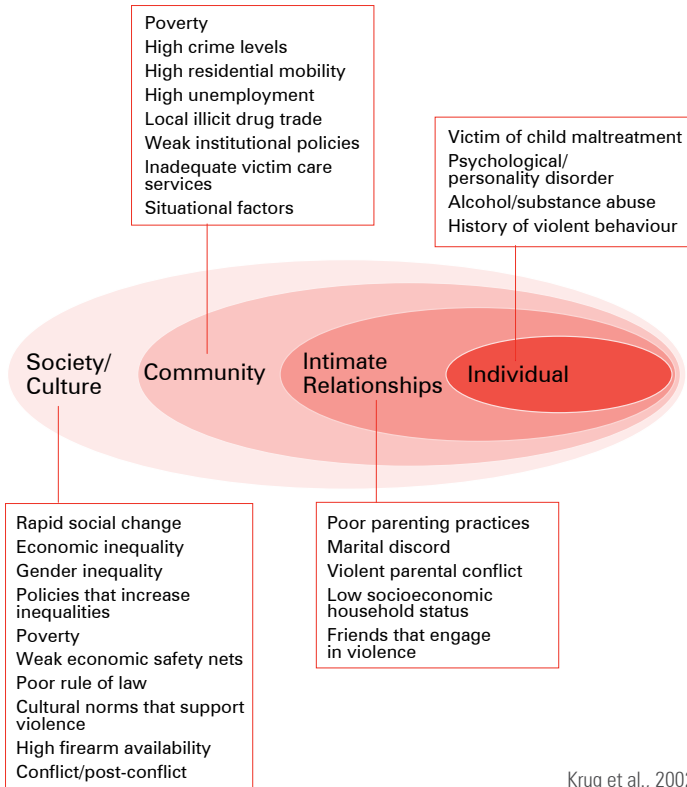
## COMPARISON BETWEEN TYPES OF VIOLENCE

	ABUSE AND NEGLECT	HARASSMENT	BULLYING
<b>Basis for violence</b>	♦ misuse of power	♦ misuse of power	♦ misuse of power
<b>Types of violence</b>	♦ emotional abuse ♦ physical abuse ♦ sexual abuse ♦ neglect ♦ institutional abuse	♦ discrimination ♦ personal harassment ♦ sexual harassment ♦ abuse of power/ authority	♦ verbal ♦ physical ♦ relational ♦ reactive
<b>Legislation and policies</b>	♦ <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)</i> ♦ provincial/territorial child protection acts ♦ <i>Criminal Code</i> ♦ organization's policies	♦ <i>CRC</i> ♦ Canadian human rights legislation: federal, provincial, territorial ♦ <i>Criminal Code</i> ♦ organization's policies	♦ <i>CRC</i> ♦ <i>Criminal Code</i> ♦ organization's policies
<b>Victims</b>	♦ any child or youth as defined by child protection acts ♦ male or female	♦ any person in Canada 12 years of age or older ♦ male or female	♦ any person, but most frequently are children and youth ♦ male or female
<b>Perpetrators</b>	♦ people who are in positions of trust or authority over children and youth ♦ male or female	♦ any person in Canada 12 years of age or older ♦ male or female	♦ any person, but most frequently are children and youth ♦ male or female
<b>Mandate</b>	♦ protection issue ♦ justice issue if criminal behaviour has occurred	♦ rights issue ♦ justice issue if criminal behaviour has occurred	♦ relationship issue ♦ justice issue if criminal behaviour has occurred
<b>Philosophy</b>	♦ victim is blameless	♦ victim is blameless	♦ victim is blameless

## HOW AND WHY ABUSE HAPPENS

Although abuse occurs in an interpersonal context, it must be analyzed in the broader social sphere in which it happens. No single factor predicts emotional abuse, physical abuse, neglect or sexual abuse; rather, abuse and neglect are caused by a complex interplay of variables between individuals, relationships, communities and societies. These different variables are tied together and cumulatively increase the vulnerability to offend or to be victimized. The Ecological Model (Garbarino, 1977, 1992; Krug et al., 2002) **combines the many theories of violence and examines individual factors plus macrosystems and microsystems.** This effective, comprehensive model dissects the risk factors for abuse.

### Illustration: The Ecological Model of Violence



Krug et al., 2002

## 1

## POWER

The misuse of power is the basis of all violence; one person has more power over another and misuses it to physically or emotionally hurt another person. Children are the smallest, weakest and least powerful members of societies—therefore, they are the most vulnerable to abuse of power.

People who hurt children often have power because they are bigger, stronger, have more resources and/or more control. Whatever the reason, abuse of power to harm children is unacceptable.

### SOURCES OF POWER

1. who you know
2. who you work for
3. your position
4. what special knowledge or information you have
5. what resources you control
6. what rewards you can give

### ADULTS CAN CONSIDER WHAT POWER THEY HAVE AND HOW THEY USE IT BY ASKING THEMSELVES QUESTIONS SUCH AS:

1. Where does my power come from?
2. How do I use my power in a responsible manner?
3. What are the power dynamics within my family, organization, community?
4. What kind of power do the children and youth I live with or work with have?
5. In what ways or what situations am I vulnerable to misusing my power?



## A FEW FACTS ABOUT CHILD ABUSE

- ◆ Both female and male children can experience all types of violence.
- ◆ Both males and females can and do hurt children, but most often males commit sexual offences.
- ◆ The people most likely to hurt children are often the ones who children trust and care about the most; this can include family members, coaches, spiritual/religious leaders, educators, family friends and babysitters.
- ◆ Sexual offenders often “groom” children through bribery, tricks, threats, and emotional manipulation to force children to cooperate with the abuse.
- ◆ The impact of abuse can be emotional, physical or behavioural. Children often feel betrayed, stigmatized, helpless and powerless.
- ◆ Violence against children affects children, families and communities and may resonate throughout a child’s life and even over many generations in a family.
- ◆ Every adult has an important role to play in preventing violence, abuse, harassment and bullying.

1

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a blue top, holding a baby. The woman is looking down at the baby with a gentle expression. The baby is wearing a white onesie and has a white bandage on its forehead. The background is a light-colored wall with a subtle floral pattern.

There can be no compromise in challenging violence against children. Children's uniqueness—their human potential, their initial fragility and vulnerability, their dependence on adults for their growth and development—make an **unassailable case for more, not less, investment in prevention and protection from violence.**

UN World Report on Violence against Children

## STEP 2: RECOGNIZE CHILDREN'S VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE

All children and youth live with some risk of experiencing violence; their age, size, inexperience, dependence, and place in society make them vulnerable to the misuse of power by adults or by more powerful children or youth. However, some children and youth are at even higher risk than others and therefore in special need of protection.

### VULNERABLE CHILDREN/ YOUTH POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS

Children/Youth with Disabilities	Isolation, discrimination, dependency, less physically able to defend themselves, communication challenges, cognitive ability, status in society, low self-esteem
Aboriginal Children/Youth	Effects of residential schools, poverty, lack of education, substance abuse, homelessness, poor health, media stereotypes, low self-esteem, discrimination
Sexual Minority Youth —Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender	Prejudice and discrimination, homophobia, heterosexism, lack of information and support, isolation
Children/Youth who use Internet/Technology	Predators and other aggressors accessing young persons via chat rooms, instant messaging, text messaging, camera phones, email, web cams, web sites
Children/Youth of an Ethnic Minority, including Immigrants and Refugees	Language barriers, parents may struggle to support them, lack of knowledge of majority culture, discrimination
Children/Youth affected by Disaster	Chaotic environments, breakdown of social, financial, environmental (e.g., shelter, safe community places) and/or political supports, and increased stress on families and communities
Children/Youth in Institutions	Limited protection systems, unaccompanied by family members, dependence on institutional personnel

For girls with developmental disabilities, the risk of sexual abuse is 1.5 times higher than the general population; for boys the risk is double.

McCreary Centre Society, 1993

Seventy-five per cent of Canada’s Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have been sexually abused.

Jiwani, 1999

While all children live with some vulnerability, they also have the potential to “bounce back” and protect themselves from harm; they have resiliency.

Resiliency is a **combination of individual, relationship, community and cultural factors that help children and youth be protected from violence and abuse.**

Illustration: **Resiliency Factors**

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

- ◆ Assertiveness
- ◆ Ability to solve problems
- ◆ Self-awareness
- ◆ Empathy for others
- ◆ Having goals and aspirations
- ◆ Sense of humour

COMMUNITY CONTEXT FACTORS

- ◆ Limited exposure to violence within family, community, and peer groups
- ◆ Government provision for children’s safety, recreation, housing, and jobs when older
- ◆ Access to school and education, information, and learning resources
- ◆ Safety and security

RELATIONSHIP FACTORS

- ◆ Presence of positive mentors and role models
- ◆ Perceived social support
- ◆ Appropriate emotional expression and parental monitoring within the family
- ◆ Peer group acceptance

CULTURAL FACTORS

- ◆ Tolerance of differing ideologies, beliefs
- ◆ Having a life philosophy
- ◆ Cultural and/or spiritual identification
- ◆ Being culturally grounded

Ungar, 2005

2



In all actions  
concerning children,  
whether undertaken  
by public or private  
welfare institutions...  
**the best interests  
of the child shall  
be a primary  
consideration.**

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3

# STEP 3: DEFINE PROTECTION INSTRUMENTS

## INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

### U.N. CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The first international statement on children's rights was made by the United Nations in 1959. This declaration provided the ground work for the international community to develop and define the rights of children and youth around the world.

On November 20, 1989 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. In January of 2002, the U.N. passed the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography*.

Canada ratified the *Convention* on December 13, 1991 and the *Optional Protocol* in 2004. The *Convention* had been signed and ratified by 192 countries, making it the most rapidly and universally accepted international treaty in history.

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* outlines the many ways that societies are responsible for their children; its overriding theme is **the best interest of the child**.

The *Convention* outlines children's rights to:

- ◆ survival
- ◆ protection/safety
- ◆ health
- ◆ education
- ◆ participation.



Five articles deal directly with issues of child abuse and neglect, and four articles address parental rights and responsibilities.

States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

*UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19*

For more information on the *Convention*, visit: [www.unicef.org/crc](http://www.unicef.org/crc).

### OTHER INTERNATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION INSTRUMENTS

- ◆ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948*
- ◆ *Geneva Conventions, 1949; Additional Protocols, 1977*
- ◆ *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966*
- ◆ *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (and Optional Protocol)*
- ◆ *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination, 1979*
- ◆ *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Trans-national Organized Crime, 2000*
- ◆ *A World Fit for Children, 2002*
- ◆ *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007*

## NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

- ◆ *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- ◆ Canadian Human Rights Legislation
- ◆ *Criminal Code of Canada*
- ◆ *Youth Criminal Justice Act*
- ◆ *Canada Evidence Act*
- ◆ *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IPRA), 2001*
- ◆ *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations and Rules, 2002.*

## PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL FRAMEWORK

- ◆ Provincial and Territorial Child Protection Legislation
- ◆ Provincial and Territorial Human Rights Legislation
- ◆ Provincial and Territorial Legislation and Common Law Protecting the Rights of Children and Youth
- ◆ Provincial and Territorial Acts Against Family Violence
- ◆ Civil Liability.

### PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION

Provincial and territorial bodies have the responsibility for protecting children and families through child welfare or child protection legislation. The actual Child Protection Legislation in each province or territory defines the circumstances when a child is in need of protection. Although provinces and territories have similar legislation to protect children and youth, each offers variations of age and services offered. Links to provincial and territorial Child Protection Acts can be found at <http://www.redcross.ca/ProtectionLegislation>.

## PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

The *Canadian Human Rights Act* prohibits discrimination in areas within federal jurisdiction. Each province and territory also has its **own** human rights legislation to protect persons, **including children and youth**, from the violation of their rights through harmful behaviours such as discrimination—harassment, for example—within their jurisdiction.

Within their human rights legislation, provinces and territories have defined their own prohibited grounds of discrimination. A cross-Canada list of provincial and territorial human rights commissions can be found through the Canadian Human Rights Commission at: <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/links/default-en.asp#provincial>.

## CIVIL LIABILITY

Mistreatment of a child or youth may lead to both criminal and civil liability. Criminal law seeks to redress wrongs from a public perspective; sentences are imposed on offenders found guilty of a criminal offence in order to encourage respect for the law and to maintain a just, peaceful and safe society (see s.718 of the *Criminal Code*). A person who harms another may also be required by a civil court to pay damages to the victim. Civil liability may result even if a person is found “not guilty” in a criminal trial, because the standards of proof are different: criminal charges must be proven beyond reasonable doubt, whereas civil liability is determined on a balance of probabilities.

Child and youth-serving organizations—including schools, recreational centres, sport organizations, camps, and clubs—must ensure that their employees and volunteers do not abuse young people under their care. Therefore they are not only mandated to act when they are aware or suspect that personnel allegedly perpetrate mistreatment, but also when they suspect other abusive situations (e.g., at home). Organizations must show that they have responsibly

met their “duty of care.” Although comprehensive risk management strategies do not eliminate all risk, they can reduce it and, therefore, decrease the risk of liability.

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The Roman Catholic Church in the United States has spent over \$2 billion in sexual abuse related costs, with \$660 million paid by the Los Angeles archdiocese alone.

Flaccus, 2007

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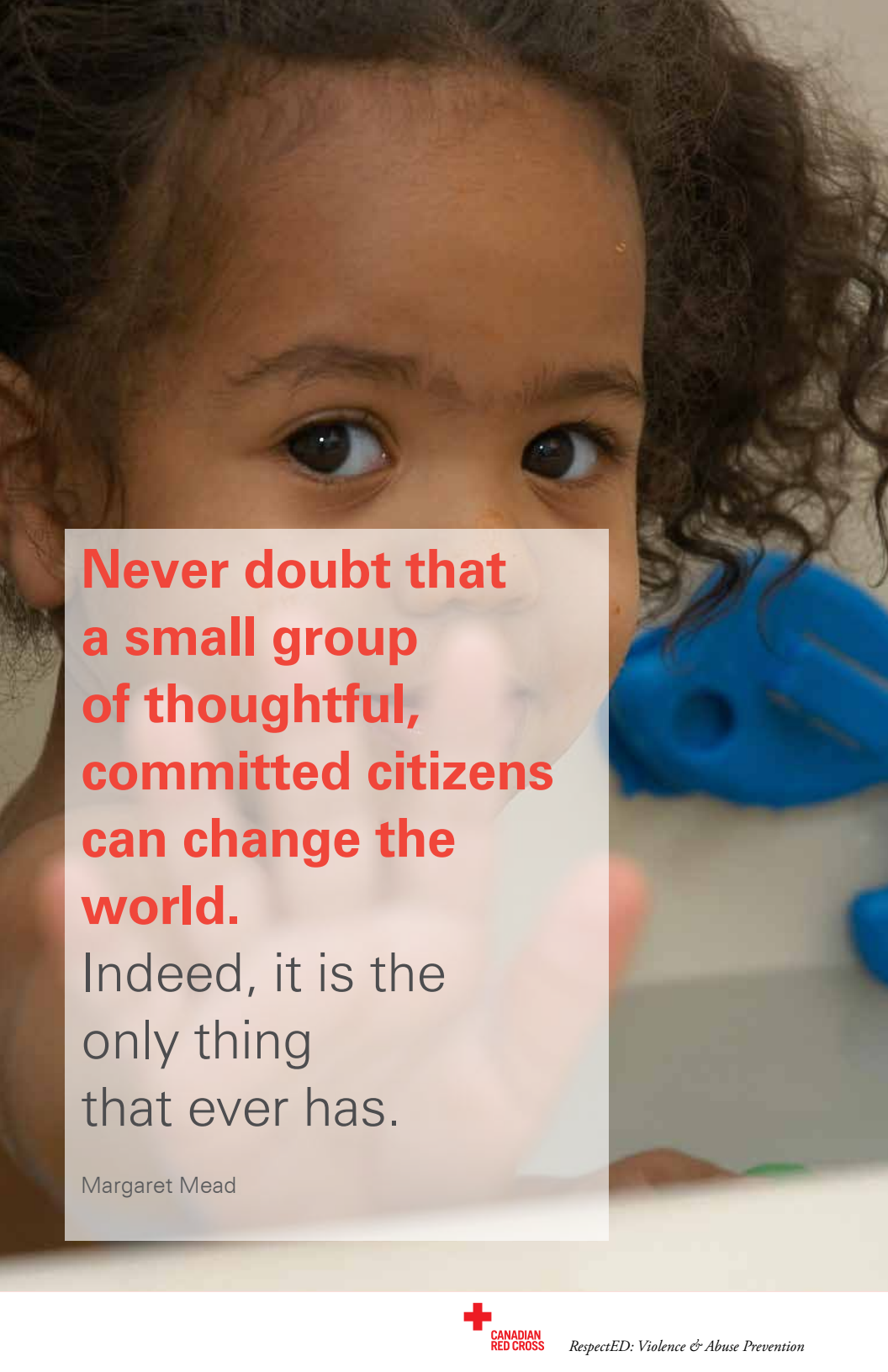
### DUTY OF CARE AND LIABILITY

Duty of care is a legal concept that defines when a person or institution must protect others from harm. In certain circumstances, persons or institutions must exercise reasonable care to ensure that others are not harmed. For example, when an employee/volunteer/officer acting on behalf of a child- or youth-serving organization causes harm to a child in his/her care, that person, as well as the organization being represented, can be found legally responsible to pay damages to the child. In this scenario, the person who causes harm can be found **directly liable**, and the organization can be held **vicariously liable** for the harm done by the person who acts on its behalf.

Examples of liability (Volunteer Canada, 2001) include:

- ♦ **Occupier’s Liability:** requires that an individual or an organization in possession of premises owes a duty of care to those who come on the premises and must take reasonable care to protect them from harm that might occur through their programs, on their premises or at the hands of a third party on the premises.
- ♦ **Direct Liability:** addresses the issue of fault as shown in the Supreme Court ruling against the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of St. George’s (John Doe v. Bennett, 2004) (also found to be vicariously liable)—for the failure of two successive bishops to properly direct and discipline a church leader for sexually abusing children over a prolonged period of time. The diocese of Newfoundland is liable for hundreds of sexual assaults committed against young boys over a 30 year period.
- ♦ **Vicarious Liability:** is the liability an organization takes for the actions of those who function on its behalf. The Supreme Court of Canada in 1999, clearly stated in two companion cases on vicarious liability (Bazley vs. Curry and Jacobi vs. Griffiths) that non-profit organizations, even those staffed by volunteers, have a duty to prevent the abuse of children while they are participating in their programs. The degree of liability is commensurate with the amount of access that personnel have to young people.

Duty of care applies to all types of institutions including business, government and non-profit groups.



**Never doubt that  
a small group  
of thoughtful,  
committed citizens  
can change the  
world.**

Indeed, it is the  
only thing  
that ever has.

Margaret Mead

# STEP 4: CREATE A PREVENTION TEAM

The first step in designing, implementing and monitoring a comprehensive risk management strategy is creating a **safe environments working team**. This includes identifying a focal point and a working group to lead the change-making process and for ensuring personnel are supported and held accountable for creating safe environments.

A working group needs to involve the decision makers within an organization and representation from the different stakeholders. Although every organization has different structures and is unique in size and resources, choose the team by asking these questions:

- ◆ Who are the decision makers?
- ◆ Who represents Human Resources?
- ◆ Who has knowledge of legal systems—or where can that knowledge be found?
- ◆ Who determines budget allocations?
- ◆ Who is responsible for communications and messaging within the organization?
- ◆ Who oversees programs and services?

From this group, a **focal point** needs to be identified, with comprehensive prevention strategies as part of this person's job description. This work cannot be done “off the side of someone's desk.”

Once the group membership is established, **terms of reference** need to be written with their mandate clearly identified, the frequency of their meetings scheduled, and the overall outcomes of their work determined.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING A PREVENTION TEAM

- ◆ Involve leadership and decision makers to ensure decisions are followed through and personnel are held accountable.
- ◆ Select leadership and decision makers from multiple departments and programs.
- ◆ Ensure all personnel on the team are educated on prevention of abuse, violence, bullying and harassment.
- ◆ Decide what relationship your organization's focal point will have with the working group.
- ◆ Ensure females and males are involved and represented in the working group.
- ◆ Set aside an appropriate budget for the working group.
- ◆ Establish clear terms of reference with timelines for the working group.
- ◆ Decide whether you require external support in the design, implementation or monitoring of the strategy and what relationship any external support will have with the working group.
- ◆ Establish a reporting/accountability line for the working group—will it report to the organization's leader, staff committee, governing board?

In addition to an organization's internal team, it can be very effective to **partner with external agencies**. Partnering with child protection services, police and organizations that deliver and support prevention programming can help organizations develop skills to prevent children from being harmed in the first place, and to respond effectively if harm does occur.

Partnering with outside legal support, where there is not adequate legal support internally, is very important to make sure policies and strategies are consistent with legal standards and protect the organization from liability.

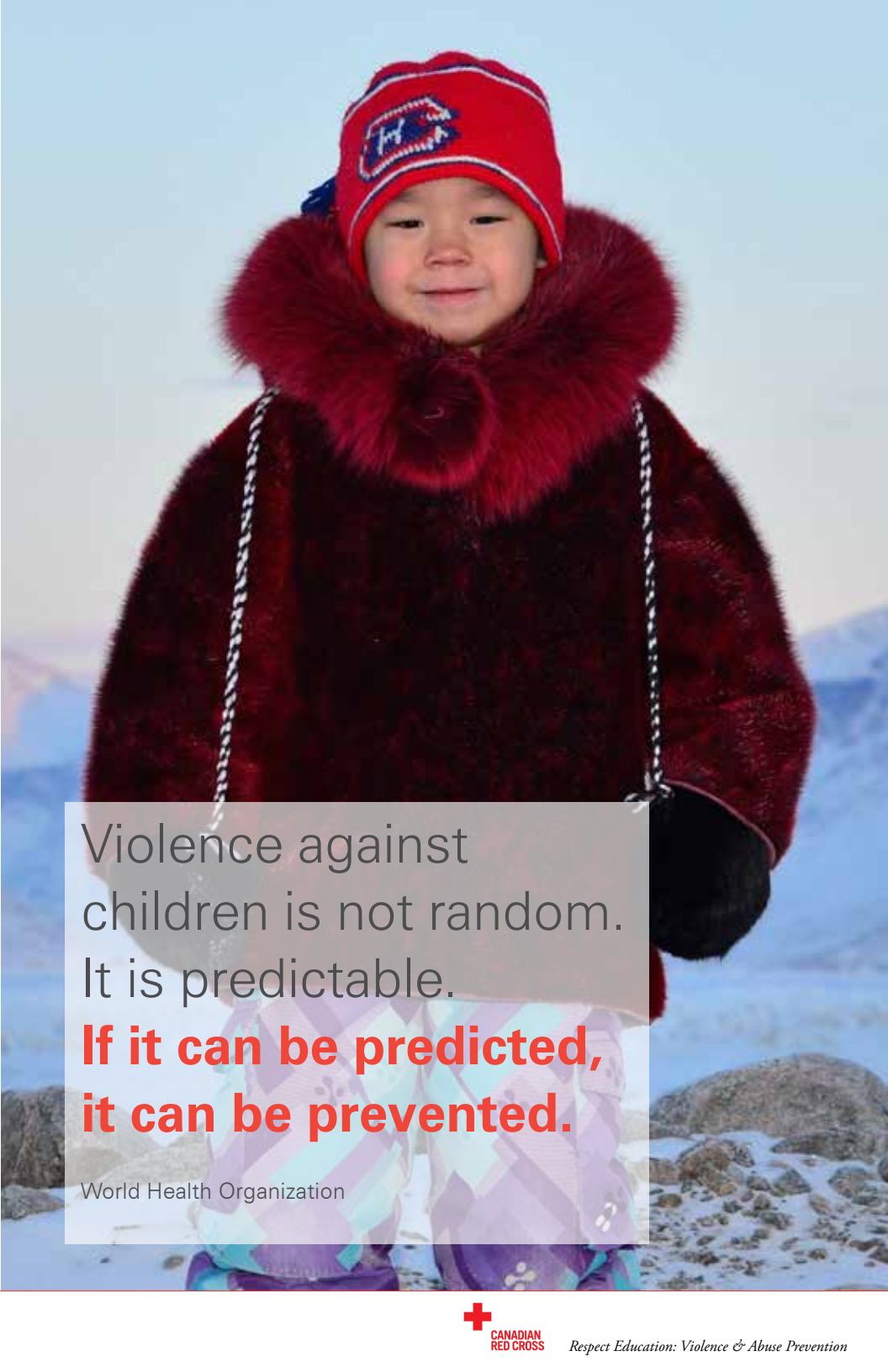
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Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

Andrew Carnegie

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Violence against  
children is not random.  
It is predictable.

**If it can be predicted,  
it can be prevented.**

World Health Organization

# STEP 5: COMPLETE A RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk is **the possibility of suffering loss—a chance that something might happen that will have a negative impact on an individual or an organization**—such as emotional, physical or sexual abuse of a child or youth. It is measured in terms of consequences and likelihood. Risk assessments **measure and evaluate the potential for harmful behaviours**. Once the risk is known, it can be managed through **comprehensive risk management strategies**.

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When conducting your risk assessment, ensure you plan enough time for the assessment; think about all possible risks across your programs, services and operations; and involve a wide range of organizational stakeholders.

Keeping Children Safe Coalition, 2006

## KEY QUESTIONS FOR RISK ASSESSMENTS

The key questions to be answered in a risk assessment are:

- ◆ What are the specific risk factors for vulnerable children/youth?
- ◆ Where are children/youth at particular risk?
- ◆ What are the access points where children/youth can be harmed?
- ◆ What protective systems exist?
- ◆ What protective systems need to be developed to keep children/youth safe?
- ◆ What support is required to keep children/youth safe?

In any organization—whether a school, community centre, place of worship, sport facility, hospital or day or residential camp—children can be at risk of harm. This can occur on an organization's premises, including places such as change rooms, showers, bedrooms, or isolated areas. Risk can even come from an organization's own personnel.

Risk can be **direct** such as acts of abuse, neglect, exploitation, bullying or harassment, or a lack of care that causes physical injury or emotional damage (e.g. forcing children to participate without proper clothing or protective gear; lack of supervision).

Risk to children and youth may also take an **indirect** form. This includes:

- ◆ not developing, implementing and monitoring policies and procedures such as codes of conduct
- ◆ not training personnel on prevention policies and procedures
- ◆ not giving children, youth and adults prevention and safety messages
- ◆ not monitoring and holding personnel accountable for safety policies and procedures
- ◆ not maintaining equipment, facilities and premises.

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It is important for an organization to admit that some degree of risk is inevitable in their programs. It is how they handle the risk that is important ... To protect themselves in the event of future litigation, organizations must show that they are taking reasonable measures to reduce risks.

Volunteer Canada

### CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ASSESSING AND ADDRESSING RISKS

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Ethical</b>   | ◆ Jeopardizing the safety, health and human dignity of personnel and participants, including children and youth            |
| <b>Image</b>     | ◆ Damaging the organization's own credibility<br>◆ Eroding respect and trust granted to the organization and its personnel |
| <b>Legal</b>     | ◆ Violating laws<br>◆ Posing significant risk management and liability concerns  |
| <b>Financial</b> | ◆ Affecting the financial base of the organization through liability cases<br>◆ Affecting donor/investor/customer base     |

## RISK MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST


## QUESTIONS TO HELP CREATE SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

	YES	NO	PARTIAL	COMMENTS
<b>DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE...</b>				
A working group to lead the development and integration of policies, procedures and systems for safe environments?				
A designated focal point to help coordinate and execute policies, procedures and systems for safe environments?				
A code of conduct? If yes, does it...				
◆ Define key terms such as <i>child abuse</i> , <i>violence</i> , <i>bullying</i> and <i>harassment</i> ?				
◆ Prohibit discrimination based on age, gender, disability, religion/faith, sexuality, ethnicity, language, family status, or political beliefs?				
◆ Outline the rights and responsibilities for all personnel?				
◆ Prohibit inappropriate/unsafe behaviour related to media and technology platforms?				
◆ Include special provisions for the protection of children and youth?				
◆ Include a clear reporting structure for any breaches of the code of conduct?				
◆ Outline disciplinary, grievance and appeals procedures?				
A child protection policy?				
A safe, clear, confidential and accessible reporting structure?				

	YES	NO	PARTIAL	COMMENTS
A clear, well-defined investigation process?				
Support and monitoring systems to hold personnel accountable?				
A policy on gender and diversity?				
A policy on preventing and responding to bullying and harassment?				
A policy on preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence?				
A policy on appropriate and inappropriate touching of children and youth?				
Policies on the appropriate use of media and technology?				
<b>ARE PERSONNEL...</b>				
Required to sign a code of conduct?				
Required to complete a standardized application form?				
Provided a clear position description?				
Asked questions about working with children, youth or vulnerable groups in the interview process?				
Given an interview—including at least one in-person interview—during the application process?				
Required to submit personal references during the application process?				
Required to submit a criminal record check?				
Provided a copy of the code of conduct with clear instructions on how to access advice or report breaches?				
Supported and monitored in implementing the code of conduct?				

5

	YES	NO	PARTIAL	COMMENTS
Educated on the code of conduct?				
Educated on the <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> and about abuse, violence, bullying and harassment prevention?				
<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>				
Are there policies for in-program contact with children and youth?				
Are there policies for out-of-program contact with children and youth?				
Are children and youth provided information and/or education on abuse, violence, bullying and harassment prevention?				
<b>PARENTS, VISITORS AND PARTNERS</b>				
Are parents, visitors and partners provided information on the organization's safe environment policies and procedures?				
Are parents provided information and/or education on abuse, violence, bullying and harassment prevention?				
Do visitors have to sign in and/or carry identification when on the organization's premises?				
<b>ARE PREMISES...</b>				
Assessed for areas where children and youth may be isolated or at increased risk of harm?				
Used to visibly display information on safe environments, such as preventing abuse, violence, bullying and harassment?				



Policies provide a road map for the organization and its members.

**The value and importance of good policies for an organization cannot be over-emphasized.**

Hilary Findlay and Rachel Corbett

©iStockphoto.com/Kenneth C. Zirkel

# STEP 6: DEVELOP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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The development of risk management policies is a balance between encouraging positive interactions and discouraging inappropriate and harmful interactions.

The goal is for children and youth to enjoy their experiences within an organization while also being safe from violence, abuse, harassment and bullying.

The United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention as cited in Saul and Audage, 2007

Once an organization has measured its risk, it needs to manage the risk. This can be accomplished through the development, implementation and monitoring of **comprehensive risk management policies and procedures**.

Policies and procedures are critical aspects of risk management. Organizations and institutions not only are accountable for adhering to national, provincial and territorial laws and acts, but are also required to:

- ◆ provide a safe environment for children and youth
- ◆ follow fair procedures
- ◆ respect human rights
- ◆ comply with the obligations to report abuse and neglect under child protection legislation
- ◆ avoid criminal actions
- ◆ protect personnel from compromising situations and false allegations
- ◆ protect the organization from liability.

Internal policies and procedures are the laws an organization makes for itself. They provide a road map for an organization and its members.

Internal policies and procedures should:

- ◆ be clear and accessible for all personnel
- ◆ reflect the philosophy and values of the organization
- ◆ respect the best interests of the child
- ◆ establish a standard of behaviour, which exceeds the minimum standard required by law
- ◆ provide continuity as personnel come and go
- ◆ ensure that matters are dealt with in a consistent fashion.



There are two approaches to developing policies on safe environments:

1. integrate issues into existing organizational policies, OR
2. develop separate, stand alone policies.

The strategy used will vary for each organization.

### INTEGRATED VERSUS STAND ALONE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<b>Integrated</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Minimizes the number of policies</li> <li>◆ Avoids confusion among new and old policies formats, messaging and directions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Integrating policies can be difficult if existing policies are not written to allow changes</li> <li>◆ Outside assistance may be required to help with integration</li> </ul>
<b>Stand alone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Can draw greater attention to safe environment issues—leading to increased understanding of the issues and their importance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A separate policy may not be consistent with other policies—leading to possible confusion, complexity and procedural errors</li> </ul>

Adapted from Findlay and Corbett, 1998

Whether integrated or stand alone, policies and procedures are living documents that require ongoing modification, updating and revisions based on organizational experience and learning. Designing, implementing and monitoring policies and procedures is an ongoing activity.

## KEY AREAS FOR POLICY AND PROCEDURE DEVELOPMENT

### THE 5 P'S

Policies and procedures must be developed for five key areas:

1. Personnel
2. Premises & Technology
3. Participants
4. Parents and Visitors
5. Partners.

### 1. PERSONNEL

#### 1.1 SCREENING POLICIES

Personnel are defined as **any paid staff, volunteers, or governance personnel who have involvement with an organization**. In order to ensure that appropriate personnel are interacting with children and youth, ten elements of screening have been recommended by Volunteer Canada. Screening is **a continuum of steps taken over time, designed to reduce risk and identify any person who poses a risk to children, youth or other vulnerable people**.

Screening personnel applies to everyone in an organization—**do not make exceptions** for people you know or have worked with in the past. **All personnel should be screened** using your organization's policies and procedures. No exceptions.

Keeping and maintaining screening records—application form, interview form, personal and police reference checks—in a secure storage space is a key step to ensure confidentiality of all personnel. This applies for staff, volunteers and participants.

## TEN ELEMENTS OF SCREENING

1. **Job Design:** What is the risk factor?
2. **Job Description:** What job is the person to do and is it clearly defined?
3. **Application Form:** Is the applicant required to fill an application form? Does the form require essential information?
4. **Recruitment Process:** How and where are people being recruited?
5. **Interviews:** Does the interview assess the applicants' responses to safety, diversity and violence prevention issues? Are applicants informed about your organization's values and code of conduct?
6. **Reference Checks:** Are specific questions asked around applicants' suitability for working with vulnerable populations?
7. **Police Record Checks:** Is permission given? Are the results documented and kept secure? How often are checks required?
8. **Orientation and Training:** Does training include risk management and reduction? Does the applicant understand that training is part of the screening process?
9. **Support, Monitoring and Evaluation:** How often does supervision and evaluation occur? What is the monitoring plan?
10. **Participant/ Client Follow-up:** Are clients asked to participate in the evaluation of the service delivery?

Volunteer Canada, 1998

## 1.2 CODE OF CONDUCT POLICIES

Codes of conduct provide the **minimum expected behaviour of all personnel within an organization**. To be most effective, the code of conduct should be integrated into the organization's culture and operations, such as performance reviews.

For a code of conduct to be effective, it is essential that systems be in place to support it. This requires procedures that ensure:

- ◆ all personnel sign the code of conduct
- ◆ signatures are documented by the organization
- ◆ personnel receive training on the code of conduct
- ◆ there is a clear reporting mechanism that all personnel understand and to which they all have access—providing options for multiple reporting lines can be effective to ensure all personnel feel safe and comfortable and do report any concerns (common reporting lines include direct supervisor, human resource personnel,

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Codes of conduct are preventative tools. They are a demonstration of a resolve to self-police and to set and uphold proper standards and discourage behaviours that ... violate human rights, undermine the mandate and bring the organization into disrepute.

United Nations

### KEY INCLUSIONS FOR CODES OF CONDUCT

Codes of conduct should clearly define the following:

- ◆ abuse of power
- ◆ types of abuse of power, including: physical, sexual and emotional abuse; violence; exploitation; and bullying and harassment
- ◆ discrimination including on the basis of: age, gender, disability, religion/faith, ethnicity, political belief, sexual orientation, language and family status
- ◆ appropriate/inappropriate use of media and technology
- ◆ rights and responsibilities of all personnel—including responsibility to report any concerns about violence, abuse, harassment and bullying
- ◆ safe, confidential and clear reporting lines for breaches of the code of conduct
- ◆ clear sanctions, disciplinary procedures and appeal processes.

ombudspersons, senior leadership and/or workplace or children’s safety focal points)

- ◆ reporting of any concerns of violence, abuse, harassment and bullying is mandatory
- ◆ an investigation process is understood by all personnel, especially managers—so when concerns do arise, there is a clear process to follow
- ◆ confidential information is stored securely
- ◆ staff are monitored and supported in achieving their commitments as outlined in the code of conduct—this can include having information and support accessible through a focal point and integrating the code of conduct into performance appraisals
- ◆ **All personnel, without exceptions, are held accountable for following the code of conduct.**

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

For any code of conduct to be successful, trust and confidence in systems, policies, procedures, and people are critical.

**If people don’t feel they can confide in key people in an organization, the issues will stay hidden, buried, and secret.** Problems won’t stop and children and youth may be left unsafe. Confidentiality should be a priority and maintained as far as possible when dealing with issues of violence, abuse, bullying and harassment.

**Confidentiality does not mean “keeping secrets.”**

**Confidentiality is a responsibility to handle information in a way that maintains trust and safety for people.** It means information given in confidence is only passed on only in specific situations and only to those who need to know—according to organizational policies and procedures. Information is secure but not at the expense of legal, ethical and moral obligations. Secrets involve keeping issues hidden and quiet. **Secrets about violence, abuse, harassment and bullying of children and youth cannot be kept;** to get help and keep them safe, harm against young persons **MUST** be discussed and brought out of the shadows.

### 1.3 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

In addition to a code of conduct it is essential that all organizations that work with children and youth have a specific child protection policy. While the code of conduct addresses issues related to safety in a general way, and may highlight the needs of children, it alone is not adequate.

A child protection policy allows an organization to build on and add to the foundations in a code of conduct while also being specific about special vulnerabilities of children to violence, abuse and exploitation; what acceptable and unacceptable contact with children is; the roles and responsibilities of adults in the organization towards children; and reporting options for concerns of child safety. A child protection policy helps to ensure the unique needs of children are properly met by everyone in the organization.

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### VALUES THAT GUIDE A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- ◆ The “best interests of the child” are primary.
- ◆ All children, girls and boys, of all abilities and backgrounds have equal rights to safety in all settings and locations.
- ◆ Violence and abuse against children are never acceptable, in any form, location or setting.
- ◆ Children are vulnerable to violence and abuse due to their size, age, physical and psychological maturity, dependence and lack of power. While all children may be vulnerable, in some settings, some children may have a heightened risk of abuse and violence.
- ◆ Violence against children has damaging and often long-lasting repercussions for children, their families and their communities.
- ◆ All organizations and adults are responsible to provide safety for the children in their care.

## 1.4 TRAINING POLICIES

Training is an important way to ensure all personnel understand how to create safe environments, learn prevention strategies and feel confident in their ability to handle sensitive situations and contribute to building safe environments for children and youth.

It is beneficial for all personnel to receive training on:

- ◆ the organization's code of conduct
- ◆ the organization's abuse, violence, bullying and harassment policies
- ◆ indicators of abuse, violence, bullying and harassment, and how and to whom to report concerns
- ◆ the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- ◆ healthy motivation/discipline techniques
- ◆ risk management policies.

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It is not only what we do, but also what we don't do, for which we are held accountable.  
Molière

## 1.5 SUPERVISION POLICIES

Supervision is key to the success of policy implementation. Supervisors have the authority to ensure progress is made and people are held accountable.

- ◆ Clarify the chain of authority throughout the organization.
- ◆ Consistently monitor the performance of employees and volunteers.
- ◆ Follow policies and procedures if abuse, neglect, bullying or harassment is suspected or reported.
- ◆ Follow procedures outlined by the organization regarding compensation, suspension or termination, if necessary.

## 1.6 VISIBLE ADULT LEADERSHIP POLICIES

Adults can take very clear and transparent steps to set a positive example and ensure reduction of risk in their interactions with children and youth.

- ◆ Contact between personnel—staff or volunteers—and children or youth should be visible to others. If a private conversation needs to take place, either:
  1. Invite another person—who the child knows and feels safe with—to join the conversation. OR,
  2. Move out of hearing of others, but not out of sight.
- ◆ Ensure that there is “two-deep leadership”; at least two personnel accompany children or youth on overnight trips, during activities, while in transport or during any unavoidable out-of-program contact. If two personnel are not available, ensure that at least two children or youth are together with any one staff member or volunteer.

## 1.7 TOUCHING POLICIES

How, where and under what circumstances children can be physically touched is an important issue for any organization working with and for children and youth.

- ◆ Prohibit touching of any children or youth by any personnel, OR
- ◆ Limit touching to “safe” areas of the body, such as hand-to-shoulder.
- ◆ Never allow touching to occur out of visibility of others, even in the event of tending an injured child or youth. If privacy is needed, have another staff or child/youth present.
- ◆ Any touching that is resisted or refused by a child or youth must be Respect Education.



## 1.8 DISCLOSURE POLICIES

All personnel in an organization have an obligation to report any disclosures of abuse or any serious concerns that a child is unsafe.

- ◆ Have clear definitions of abuse, violence, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- ◆ Have step-by-step processes on reporting, investigation, and mediation of any allegations of abuse of power.
- ◆ Provide clearly defined sanctions with criteria for each.
- ◆ Have confidentiality guidelines.

## 2. PREMISES AND TECHNOLOGY

### 2.1 ACCESS POLICIES

Defining **who** has access to children and youth and **under what circumstances** is the responsibility of each organization.

- ◆ Limit unsupervised access to the organization's premises and to children and youth.
- ◆ Define areas which are “off limits” to staff, other personnel and/or children and youth (dangerous or isolated places, storage rooms, etc.), and which areas require staff supervision.
- ◆ Define appropriate use of and access to shower and locker room facilities.
- ◆ Ensure access routes to toilet and shower facilities are well lit and visible.
- ◆ Prohibit staff from using shower facilities at the same time as children or youth.

## 2.2 MAINTENANCE POLICIES

Premises are constantly being used and changed. Monitoring their safety and making ongoing improvements is necessary. Policies can include:

- ◆ Have a clear monitoring schedule for all premises.
- ◆ Have defined levels of expected maintenance, including for lighting, and privacy and cleanliness of shower and toilet facilities.

### STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE VISIBILITY AND SAFETY

- ◆ Landscape to ensure open visible spaces with no possible concealment.
- ◆ Have clear lines of sight throughout the building.
- ◆ Secure areas not used for program purposes to prevent children and youth from being isolated (e.g., lock closets and storage rooms).
- ◆ Install windows in doors.
- ◆ Institute a “no closed door” policy.
- ◆ Install bright lighting in all areas.
- ◆ Use empty space to post information on safe environments.

*Adapted from Saul and Audage, 2007*

## 2.3 MEDIA, PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING POLICIES

Participants should have information and provide consent before they are captured on film, photographs or used in other media.

- ◆ Ensure participants are asked permission before being photographed or filmed. Respect those who do not wish to be on film.
- ◆ If a picture is to be posted in any public place (including bulletin boards, publications or websites), the subject (and parents if the subject is below the age of 18 years) must sign a waiver giving permission.

- ◆ Video and digital cameras, including cell phones with cameras, must be prohibited from being used in change rooms and showers.
- ◆ When media want to photograph/film an event or activity, the organization or team should have the option to grant or withhold permission, and participants should be alerted and given the choice to opt out.

## 2.4 TECHNOLOGY POLICIES

Clear policies for personnel, participants and parents are needed on:

- ◆ camera phone use, including in dressing rooms and bathrooms
- ◆ Internet access
- ◆ use of webcams
- ◆ appropriate and inappropriate information; communication; and use of chat rooms, instant messaging and blogs.

## 3. PARTICIPANTS

### 3.1 IN-PROGRAM POLICIES

Policies on the following are important to keep participants safe:

- ◆ Limit staff, volunteers or other personnel from being present while children or youth shower, change or use toilet facilities, unless a child requires assistance due to a disability.
- ◆ Ensure children and youth have the option of showering or using toilets in a common space or behind secure, private stalls.
- ◆ Prohibit children or youth of considerable age differences from showering at the same time.

### 3.2 OUT-OF-PROGRAM CONTACT POLICIES

The responsibility to respect children's safety applies to personnel not only when interacting with children and youth in organizations but also when interacting with the same children and youth outside of the organization.

Policies are important for regulating out-of-program contact between children/youth and the organization's personnel; any planned contact outside of official activities, games, meetings, or trainings should consider the following:

- ◆ Socializing should occur in groups, never one-to-one.
- ◆ At the end of an event, be sure that no one child or youth is left behind alone.
- ◆ Do not have individual personnel—staff or volunteers—drive individual children or youth home.
- ◆ Only schedule events that fall under the organization's guidelines.
- ◆ Prohibit the use of alcohol or illicit drugs for participants, staff and volunteers at all the organization's functions.

### 3.3 EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICIES

Education is critical to develop understanding of safe environments. It is necessary for all participants.

- ◆ Ensure that all participants receive education on the prevention of abuse, violence, bullying and harassment, and knowledge of where and how to report any concerns.

## 4. PARENTS AND VISITORS

### 4.1 PARENT POLICIES

The participation and involvement of parents is very important to creating safe environments.

- ◆ Allow parents/guardians or other known caregivers (e.g. grandparents) to visit the program at any time, without appointment.

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Policies don't protect people; it's how they are implemented.  
Northway, Davies, Mansell and Jenkins

- ◆ Allow parents to have input on what activities or interactions they are comfortable with for their children.
- ◆ Inform parents of the activities scheduled for children.
- ◆ Ensure a record is kept of which individuals are caregivers to the child, and that everyone involved with a child is aware if a parent, relative or someone else is denied access to the child.
- ◆ Obtain and document the address and contact information for parents and caregivers of all child and youth participants.
- ◆ Have an “open door” policy for parents/guardians to ask questions about the program or organization.
- ◆ Provide parents with education on policies, procedures, appropriate conduct, and awareness on abuse, neglect, bullying and harassment.

#### 4.2 VISITORS' POLICIES

Visitors who have or potentially could have contact with children and youth should be screened and monitored to ensure safety.

- ◆ Prohibit contact between children/youth and individuals who have not been screened by your organization, OR
- ◆ Provide visiting volunteers or staff with the organization's policies on acceptable conduct; explain that the policies will be enforced, and provide direct supervision of the visitor while he or she is in contact with children/youth in the organization's care.

#### 5. PARTNERS

Organizations that contract, collaborate or work with other organizations can maximize risk management through policies for their partners.

## 5.1 PARTNER POLICIES

- ◆ Provide information and training to partner organizations to ensure they understand your organization's commitment to safe environments.
- ◆ Integrate into agreements/contracts with partners your organization's expectations for, and commitment to, the safety of children and youth, and safe environments.
- ◆ Clearly define the actions and consequences that will take place if partners breach their commitment to safe environments.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

For policies and procedures to be effective, all personnel, including managers, need to be held accountable for their role in creating safe environments. To have expectations listed on paper and then take no action when issues arise renders the policies and procedures meaningless.

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### STRATEGIES TO ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Respond to concerns about violence, abuse, harassment and bullying.
2. Ensure all personnel understand and acknowledge their responsibilities and role in creating safe environments.
3. Integrate compliance and implementation of safe environments into all staff performance appraisals.
4. Report progress and gaps on safe environments at least once a year to the board of governors/governance/senior leadership.

**REMEMBER ...** Ensure all your policies and procedures for safe environments are vetted through the organization's legal department or external legal counsel.



We owe our children—  
**the most vulnerable**  
**citizens in any**  
**society**—a life free  
from violence and fear.

Nelson Mandela



*RespectED: Violence & Abuse Prevention*

# STEP 7: EDUCATE ADULTS, YOUTH AND CHILDREN

Education increases knowledge, and informed people have power. As organizations learn how to prevent abuse, neglect, bullying and harassment, the safety of everyone in the organization and the people it serves is enhanced.

Educating people on prevention and risk management increases their sense of ownership and develops the attitude of a collective responsibility to keep children safe.

## THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PREVENTION

Study after study have shown that prevention saves vast amounts of money for every dollar spent. Child abuse costs Canadians \$15 billion a year (Bowlus, McKenna, Day & Wright, 2003).

Sadly, too often organizations and communities wait for a crisis to occur before they develop and implement comprehensive risk management strategies.

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If it can be predicted, it can be prevented.

World Health Organization



## EFFECTIVE TRAINING

Effective training on safe environments requires that participants understand the material and feel confident using what they have learned. Some best practices to achieve these goals are:

- ◆ Ensure training is participatory—participants are involved and actively engaged.
- ◆ Incorporate different ways of knowing into the training: visual, verbal, body movement, music, problem solving, group work, etc.
- ◆ Build on participant knowledge.
- ◆ Ensure material is accurate, current and clear.
- ◆ Use experienced facilitators who understand the issues and can engage the group.
- ◆ Prioritize the creation of a safe environment where people feel safe to discuss the issues and ask questions.
- ◆ Provide refreshers on the training at regular intervals.
- ◆ Evaluate the training using standardized evaluation forms.

.....

Tell me and I'll forget. Show me and I'll remember. Involve me and I'll understand.  
Chinese proverb

### SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND ABUSE ISSUES

Educating on violence and abuse prevention issues requires special attention to safe environments because the issues may:

- ◆ trigger memories of personal abuse or that of a loved one
- ◆ elicit strong feelings and emotions
- ◆ involve discussing issues that are not normally discussed
- ◆ create discomfort
- ◆ challenge preconceived ideas.

## EDUCATING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

All children and youth need to receive abuse, neglect, bullying and harassment prevention education. This education is best adapted to an age-appropriate level to promote the young person's understanding and confidence to be safe. Children and youth should be provided an understanding of:

- ◆ their rights—the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- ◆ emotional, physical, sexual abuse and neglect
- ◆ bullying and harassment
- ◆ prevention strategies to help keep them safe in the home, family, community or on the Internet
- ◆ how and where to report abuse, bullying and harassment
- ◆ how to help a friend who is being abused, bullied or harassed.

Youth can also benefit from education on violence prevention in dating and relationships.

## EDUCATING PERSONNEL

Personnel include:

- ◆ all staff, including managers and senior leadership
- ◆ volunteers
- ◆ board and governance members
- ◆ interns
- ◆ persons on contracts—of any duration.

All personnel should receive education on:

- ◆ the organization's code of conduct
- ◆ what violence, abuse, harassment and bullying are, how to prevent them and how and to whom to report concerns
- ◆ the organization's abuse, violence, bullying and harassment policies

- ◆ risk management policies
- ◆ healthy motivation/discipline techniques
- ◆ the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

### THE BENEFITS OF TRAINING ON SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

Training personnel on safe environments can help them to:


- ◆ clearly understand and commit to a code of conduct
- ◆ understand their role in reporting and handling disclosures of abuse, neglect, bullying and harassment
- ◆ understand their role in screening
- ◆ understand how the provincial/territorial Child Protection Act, Criminal Code, Human Rights Legislations, Civil Legislation, and the organization's own policies operate in terms of reporting abuse, neglect, bullying and harassment
- ◆ identify behaviours that may pose a risk to the organization, its personnel, or children, youth and other vulnerable people
- ◆ understand risk management and how to create safe environments.

## EDUCATING PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

As the leading figures in a child's life and in order to create equal knowledge, parents/guardians need to receive, at minimum, the same level of prevention education as their child or youth. Parents can be strong representatives and advocates in promoting the safety of their child or youth while participating in educational, sport, culture, religious/faith, or recreational activities.

.....  
An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.





A wound will not heal  
**until the matter is  
given words and  
witness.**

Clarissa Pinkola Estes

©iStockphoto.com/Wendy Shiao



*Respect Education: Violence & Abuse Prevention*

# STEP 8: RESPOND TO DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE, BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Children and youth often do not talk about their experiences with violence and abuse because they may be:

- ◆ scared
- ◆ ashamed
- ◆ trying to pretend it did not happen
- ◆ caring for the person who hurt them and not want them to get in trouble
- ◆ blaming themselves; thinking it is their fault
- ◆ confused
- ◆ unable to trust.

Studies and experience shows that how a disclosure of child abuse is handled is a significant factor in determining what the psychological impact is. Therefore, the person responding to the disclosure needs to follow specific steps while asking three basic questions:

1. What do I need to know?
2. What do I need to do?
3. When do I need to do it?

There are essentially two ways the secret of abuse is revealed: **purposefully** or **accidentally**. Regardless of how a child tells, disclosures are usually mixed with several strong emotions—relief, guilt, fear and chaos because now someone knows the secret.

Purposeful Disclosures are **where an individual decides to tell someone about her/his abuse, bullying or**

**harassment experience either through words, art or drama.**

When a child or youth decides to tell, she/he usually wants the situation to change, but is also often afraid of the consequences that the change may bring. It is important to listen using the guidelines tabled below. **The procedure for responding to a Purposeful Disclosure is “HEARD.”**

- H** Hear the disclosure/Honour the child or youth and their information
- E** Empathize/Encourage/Ensure the child or youth is safe
- A** Affirm the child or youth and their courage to tell/Acknowledge choices
- R** Respond according to policies/Refer if bullying or harassment/Report if abuse or criminal behaviour
- D** Document accurately/Develop confidentiality guidelines

## TECHNIQUES FOR RESPONDING: DOs AND DON'Ts

DOs	DON'Ts
<b>DO</b> ask general, open-ended questions: <i>Do you want to tell me about that?</i>	<b>DO NOT</b> ask leading questions: <i>When, why, where, who, how did this happen?</i>
<b>DO</b> state observations: <i>I see you have bruises on your legs.</i>	<b>DO NOT</b> draw conclusions: <i>You must have been beaten.</i>
<b>DO</b> validate feelings: <i>I see you are upset.</i>	<b>DO NOT</b> analyze through remarks: <i>You must hate your father for doing that!</i>
<b>DO</b> express concern: <i>I need to know that you are safe; let's try to get some help.</i>	<b>DO NOT</b> make promises: <i>Everything will be alright when you report.</i>
<b>DO</b> let children/youth know clearly what decisions and actions need to be taken: <i>Here are the decisions we need to make and the people we need to talk with.</i>	<b>DO NOT</b> become part of the secret: <i>If you tell me, I won't tell anyone.</i>

Accidental Disclosures are when **an individual reveals the abuse through behaviour or other external circumstances accidentally**. Behaviours can have many meanings, and are the result of numerous factors. This complicates Accidental Disclosures as observers try to make sense of what they are seeing, hearing or sensing. Sometimes the behaviours are indicative of harmful experiences. **The procedure for responding to an Accidental Disclosure is “DARE.”**

- D Document Observations/Suspicious
- A Ask for clarification/Affirm the child or youth
- R Respond according to policies/Refer if bullying or harassment/Report if abuse or criminal behaviour
- E Encourage/Empathize/Ensure the child or youth is safe/Ensure confidentiality guidelines are followed

**REMEMBER ...** You **do not** have to be 100% certain abuse has occurred. If you suspect it, report it. **The safety of a child may be at risk.** The authorities have the responsibility to determine the facts and evidence, not you.

## ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

Anonymous allegations are sometimes believed less than reports with people’s name attached. No one wants to create rumours circulating within an organization, especially when that rumour has the potential to destroy an individual’s career or reputation. While it is important to use common sense in responding to the “rumour mill”, it is equally important to listen to what young people are saying, ask open-ended questions, and report when necessary. Many children/youth have continued to suffer because no one filed an official report of harmful behaviours.

## REPORTING

Everyone in an organization—personnel, participants, parents, and partners—should know to whom and how



to report concerns about violence, abuse, harassment and bullying.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE REPORTING MECHANISM

**Safety:** A safe reporting mechanism considers potential dangers and risks to all parties and incorporates ways to prevent injury, threats or harm. This includes ensuring and prioritizing confidentiality. Safety also means that multiple options of reporting should be available so all personnel can feel safe and confident in reporting concerns.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality is an ethical principle that restricts access to and dissemination of information. Confidentiality helps create a safe environment where people are more willing to talk about and report issues. While policies and procedures are important in defining a reporting structure, it is absolutely critical that personnel have confidence and trust in the people authorized to receive concerns. If personnel lack trust or doubt confidentiality from the people to whom they should report, the issues will not be reported. The harm will not stop—it will remain hidden, buried, and secret.

**Transparency:** A transparent mechanism means personnel, participants, parents and partners all know the mechanism exists, have input in its development, have clear access to it and know what happens once they make a report.

**Accessibility:** A reporting mechanism is accessible when it is available and understood by all people involved in an organization. Everyone must be told how to report issues and be actively encouraged to report when problems arise.


*Adapted from the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, 2007*

Abuse, harassment and bullying require unique legal responses. Child abuse, harassment and bullying may involve criminal acts and therefore must be reported to legal authorities. All child abuse must be reported to child protection authorities. Harassment is a human rights issue while bullying is a relationship issue—each may constitute criminal behaviour in some circumstances. However, many forms of harassment and bullying can be handled internally within an organization using policies and procedures.

.....

It is clear that protection of children is everyone's responsibility.  
UNICEF



A close-up photograph of two young children in a swimming pool. The child on the left is wearing blue swim goggles and has water on their face. The child on the right is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is blurred, showing other people and lights in the pool area.

You keep plugging away—that's the way social change takes place. **That's the way every social change in history has taken place: by a lot of people, who nobody ever heard of, doing work.**

Noam Chomsky

# STEP 9: MEET THE CHALLENGES

The path to a safe environment is full of challenges. However, a committed organization and team can overcome the following barriers.

## BARRIERS: SOCIETAL

- ◆ diverse understanding of protection issues and the meaning of safe environments
- ◆ complex issue—children are at risk from a variety of people in numerous situations
- ◆ weak or overburdened protection systems within communities and societies
- ◆ many different legal, social and cultural contexts

## BARRIERS: ORGANIZATIONAL

- ◆ complex or very grassroots organizational system
- ◆ issue not prioritized
- ◆ fear of the issue and disclosures
- ◆ overburdened field staff/volunteers
- ◆ lack of funding; worry the cost is too much
- ◆ lack of experience in developing and implementing policies

### COMMON TENSIONS IN MEETING ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

Confidentiality	vs.	Accountability
Integration	vs.	Program silos
Vulnerability	vs.	Prioritization
Need	vs.	Capacity
Complex issues	vs.	Simplified solutions
Long-term results	vs.	Pressure for immediate, conclusive results

## BARRIERS: INDIVIDUAL

- ◆ emotional issue
- ◆ lack of awareness/ training
- ◆ inevitability myths
- ◆ fear
- ◆ shame
- ◆ unsure what to do, where to start

## BARRIERS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- ◆ not being asked / no participation
- ◆ not trusting the adults in their lives
- ◆ not being heard or believed
- ◆ lacking the language and definitions
- ◆ lacking control over process
- ◆ lacking knowledge of resources
- ◆ ineffectual responses by adults or systems

## RESPONSES TO THE BARRIERS

## 1. IT TAKES TIME, BUT IS DOABLE!

Responding to barriers and developing a risk management strategy is a process and it takes time. However, once the *Ten Steps* are implemented, greater safety is provided for everyone in the organization and the risk for liability is reduced.

## 2. WE HAVE A LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY

Canadian law makes it a legal responsibility for adults to protect children and youth, and report violence against them. The law establishes criminal liability for organizations and individuals when they fail to take reasonable steps to prevent workplace accidents that affect workers or the public. Legal liability extends to ALL individuals directing

.....  
 We are the  
 people we've  
 been waiting  
 for.

Alice Walker

in the workplace—“everyone who undertakes or has the authority to direct how another person does work or performs a task.”

### 3. WE HAVE A DUTY OF CARE

This duty imposes a standard of care upon individuals. Conduct that does not meet this objective standard may constitute negligence, and may result in liability for the individual and the organization.

### 4. IF WE DON'T, IT'S NEGLIGENCE

Negligence is ...

- ◆ when an adult in a position of responsibility refuses to act when they are aware of abuse, harassment or bullying situations
- ◆ often influenced by the mistaken belief that bullying will “work itself out”
- ◆ passing the buck: “that’s what the police are for”
- ◆ condoning or supporting the behaviour (as in hazing)
- ◆ taking no preventative action through risk management practices.

### 5. IT'S REQUIRED FOR INSURANCE ... AND SAVES MONEY

Many insurance companies are now requiring that organizations/institutions adopt a comprehensive risk management strategy in order to be eligible for insurance. Implementing risk management strategies saves money and reduces risk of liability.

### 6. WE HAVE A MORAL AND ETHICAL DUTY

It is our moral and ethical duty to provide safe environments for young people.

## 7. CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE WORTH IT!!!

Ensuring all children and youth are safe and have an opportunity to reach their potential is something everyone can agree to. It is also a goal that is very achievable. Each organization has an important role to play. Children and youth are worth it!!!

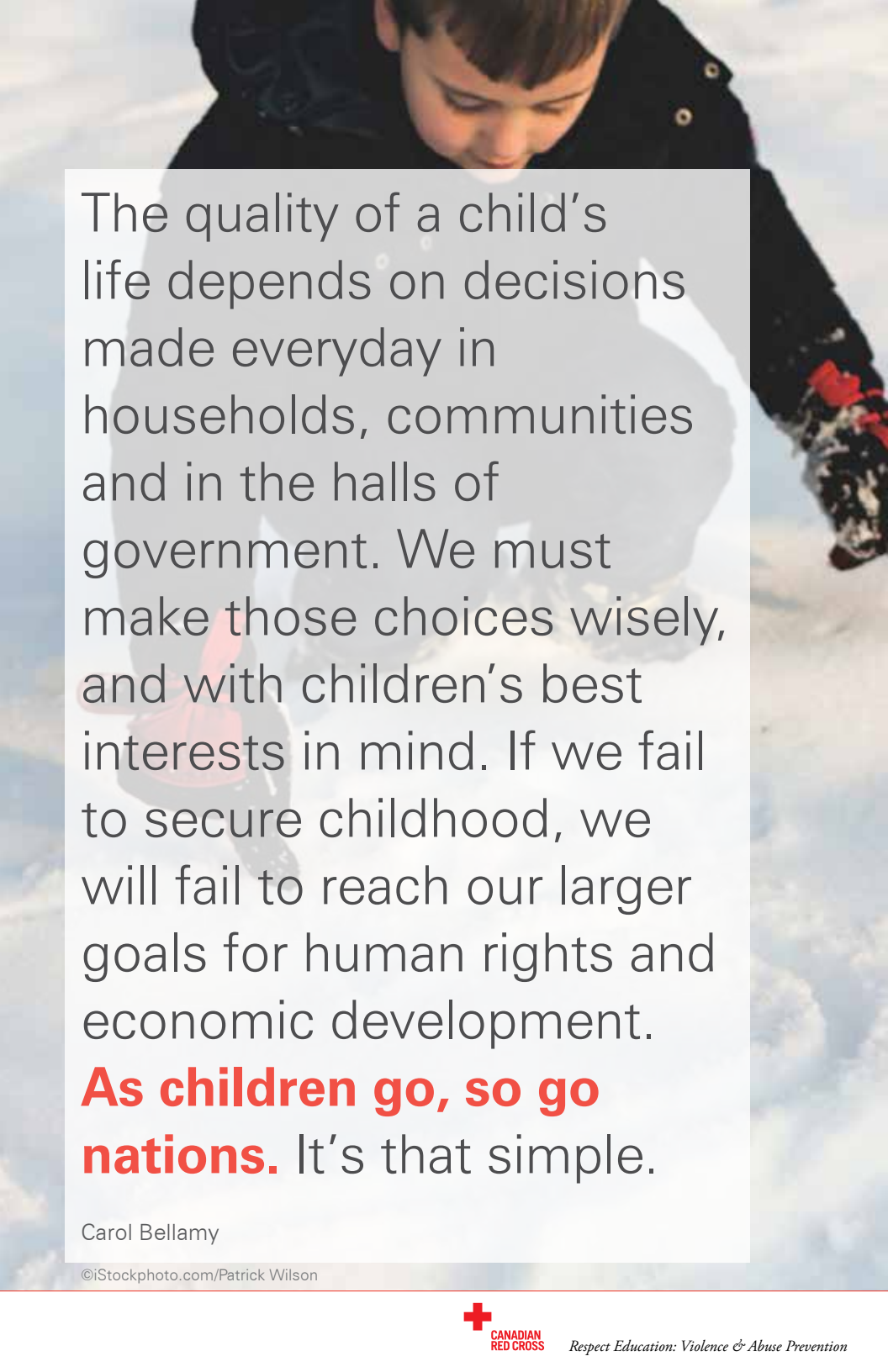
.....

[T]here will be rocks in the road ahead of us. They will be stumbling blocks, or stepping stones: It all depends on how we use them.

Unknown author







The quality of a child's life depends on decisions made everyday in households, communities and in the halls of government. We must make those choices wisely, and with children's best interests in mind. If we fail to secure childhood, we will fail to reach our larger goals for human rights and economic development.

**As children go, so go nations.** It's that simple.

Carol Bellamy

©iStockphoto.com/Patrick Wilson



*Respect Education: Violence & Abuse Prevention*

# STEP 10: MAINTAIN SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

## 1. REVIEW POLICIES EVERY TWO YEARS

- ◆ Keep current; adapt as needed.
- ◆ Ensure implementation through training and regular refreshers for all personnel.

## 2. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICES

- ◆ Involve children/youth.
- ◆ Use the lens of “best interest of the child.”
- ◆ Recognize that insurance does not equal risk management.
- ◆ Ensure equal rights for all children/youth.
- ◆ Evaluate progress through reviews and benchmarking.
- ◆ Address challenges.

## 3. BE A SAFE ORGANIZATION

- ◆ Ensure continuous risk management learning.
- ◆ Develop clear messaging.
- ◆ Be committed to an ongoing comprehensive risk management strategy.
- ◆ Nurture an environment of openness and transparency.
- ◆ Promote safe environments for children/youth to learn, play and grow.
- ◆ Make visible through posters, brochures, emails, and web sites your commitment to safe environments.

.....  
The road to success is always under construction.

Lily Tomlin

#### 4. MONITOR AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL AND PROGRAMS

- ◆ Ensure all personnel understand and acknowledge their responsibilities and role in creating safe environments.
- ◆ Integrate compliance and implementation of safe environments into all staff performance appraisals.
- ◆ Review commitment to code of conduct during performance evaluations.
- ◆ Hold Managers accountable for safe environments.
- ◆ Develop and keep current a data base system on personnel.

#### 5. MONITOR RISK

- ◆ Monitor risk issues, trends and legislation.
- ◆ Review risk assessment checklist every two years.
- ◆ Define gaps and develop a plan with timelines to address the gaps.

#### 6. BUILD INTERNAL CAPACITY

- ◆ Develop risk management skills and knowledge within your own organization.
- ◆ Define internal “champions.”
- ◆ Develop partnerships within your community.
- ◆ Use pilots and evolve.

#### 7. MAKE “SAFE ENVIRONMENTS” A PRIORITY

- ◆ Build into every program and service budgets and support for creating and maintaining safe environments.
- ◆ Demonstrate “buy in” from governance, management and service delivery partners.
- ◆ Incorporate into yearly reports your “safe environments” status.
- ◆ Celebrate successes!





Red Cross mission:  
**To improve the  
lives of vulnerable  
people** by  
mobilizing the  
power of  
humanity.

# CANADIAN RED CROSS

The Canadian Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and together as 185 National Societies around the world, we are focused on one strategic goal: **To improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.**

.....  
The Red Cross is a light in the darkness. It is our duty to see it does not go out.

Albert Schweitzer

In addition to being a humanitarian organization dedicated to helping victims of conflict or disaster throughout the world, the Canadian Red Cross helps people deal with situations that threaten their survival and safety, their security and well-being, and their human dignity.

The Canadian Red Cross delivers numerous national and local programs and services through its thousands of staff and volunteers. Well over a million Canadians benefit annually from Red Cross programs such as Respect Education: Violence & Abuse Prevention, First Aid, Swimming and Water Safety, Restoring Family Links, Humanitarian Issues Program, Disaster Services, and Community Services such as the Homemakers Program, Health Equipment Loan Service and Aids to Independent Living.

The Canadian Red Cross as well as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement operate under seven

<b>Humanity</b>	The Red Cross endeavours to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found, protecting life and health and ensuring respect for the human being.
<b>Impartiality</b>	The Red Cross is guided solely by the needs of human beings and makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class, or political opinions.
<b>Neutrality</b>	In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature.
<b>Independence</b>	The National Societies must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.
<b>Voluntary Service</b>	It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.
<b>Unity</b>	There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.
<b>Universality</b>	The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

Virtually every Canadian is touched by the Red Cross sometime in life: [www.redcross.ca](http://www.redcross.ca)  
 Fundamental Principles. They are:

## RESPECT EDUCATION: VIOLENCE & ABUSE PREVENTION

Respect Education responds to violence against children and youth with a series of prevention education programs for children, youth and adults. The aim of Respect Education: Violence & Abuse Prevention is: **to create safe environments free of violence—abuse, bullying, exploitation—through prevention education and response.**

.....  
Respect Education reduces the toll of intentional injuries on our young people and our communities.  
Paul Kells, Founder of Sean Kells Community Safety Award

Respect Education educates and certifies volunteers, youth, teachers, and community members as Prevention Educators. In collaboration with schools, sport organizations, community agencies, and post-secondary institutions, Respect Education Prevention Educators deliver presentations that enable participants to:

- ◆ understand maltreatment
- ◆ learn that abuse is never the young person's fault
- ◆ understand the inappropriateness of bullying and harassment
- ◆ define healthy relationships
- ◆ establish a risk management strategy
- ◆ promote safe environments
- ◆ define helping resources.

To learn more about preventing violence, bullying, and abuse, taking a course, or becoming a Respect Education Training Partner, please visit <http://www.redcross.ca/ViolencePrevention>

Respect Education educational resources can be ordered online from

<http://www.shop.redcross.ca/ViolencePrevention>,

by calling the Red Cross Contact Centre at **1-855-886-2648**,

or by e-mailing: [Respect\\_Education@redcross.ca](mailto:Respect_Education@redcross.ca)



## Illustration: Respect Education Program Streams

Respect Education's programs are delivered in both of Canada's official languages.\*

### 1 Creating Safe Environments

ADULTS	Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments	   
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### 2 Preventing Violence Against Children and Youth

CHILDREN	Be Safe!	 
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YOUTH	It's Not Your Fault	
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ADULTS	Be Safe! Training for Educators	  
	Prevention in Motion	  
	Walking the Prevention Circle	
	Respect in School  (Respect Group Partner Program)	
	Prevention Educator Training	

### 3 Promoting Healthy Youth Relationships

YOUTH	Healthy Youth Relationships	 
	Youth Facilitator Training	

ADULTS	Healthy Youth Relationships: Adult Workshop	 
	Prevention Educator Training	


### 4 Preventing Bullying & Harassment


YOUTH	Beyond the Hurt  
	Youth Facilitator Training


ADULTS	Beyond the Hurt: Adult Workshop	 
	Respect in the Workplace  (Respect Group Partner Program)	
	Prevention Educator Training	


\*Exception: Walking the Prevention Circle (English only, French TBA)


#### ICON GUIDE

 available online

 available in classroom

 classroom & online blended format

 available in international settings

 available in Spanish

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## the hurt can stop

Respect Education aim: To create safe environments free of violence—abuse, bullying, exploitation—through prevention education and response.



**CANADIAN  
RED CROSS**

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