

CHILD ABUSE POLICY

In compliance with the Child and Family Services Act, 1985, “a person who, in the course of his or her professional or official duties, has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a society”. Any professional or official who fails to report a suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection, where the information or suspicion is based was obtained in the course of his/her professional or official duties, is liable on conviction to a fine of up to \$1 000.00.

A child, according to Ontario law, is someone under sixteen years of age or someone up to eighteen years of age if under the care of the Children’s Aid Society.

TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE AND INDICATORS:

1. Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse constitutes all actions that result in non-accidental physical injury including (but not limited to) internal injuries, bruises, cuts, burns and fractures. It differs from “acceptable use” of corporal punishment because it is excessive, inappropriate to the age or behaviour of the child and has no healthy corrective purpose.

Signs of physical abuse include: unexplained bruises or welts, scars in a regular pattern, burn marks, unexplained fractures or scalding, adult size bite marks, inappropriate clothing (long sleeves on a very hot day).

The child may display the following behaviour: fear of physical contact, apparent fear or going home, uncharacteristic or unexplained changes in behaviour, inconsistent explanations of injury.

2. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse constitutes any sexual acts involving a child and parent or other person. This can range from the parent or person exposing a child to sexual acts such as prostitution to actual molestation. It includes exposure, fondling or masturbation, intercourse and invitations to touch.

Signs of sexual abuse include: difficulty in walking or sitting, pain, itching, bleeding and bruises in the genital or anal area, torn, stained or bloody underwear.

The child may display the following behaviour: fear of physical contact, apparent fear of going home, uncharacteristic or unexplained changes in behaviour, reluctance to participate in

physical activities, unusual knowledge of sexual behaviour, stories of sexual contact with an adult or older child.

3. Child Neglect

Child neglect constitutes “acts of omission” on the part of the parent or another person who is responsible for the child. Examples would be failing to provide the child’s basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, safety; failing to provide adequate supervision; or failing to provide adequate medical attention. Emotional neglect refers to failing to provide enough psychological nurturance necessary for a child’s growth and development.

Signs of neglect include: persistent hunger, malnutrition, underweight or dehydration; poor hygiene, dirtiness, skin disorders associated with bad hygiene; constant fatigue and listlessness, inappropriate clothing for the weather; unattended sores or cuts or other medical needs.

The child may display the following behaviour: demands for constant attention; lack of parental participation or interest; indication that no one is ever home to look after the child; an obvious lack of energy when playing.

4. Emotional Maltreatment

Emotional maltreatment is the most difficult form of abuse to define. This includes overt rejection, unnecessary criticism or excessive demands or performance for a child’s age and ability.

The child may display the following behaviour: demands for constant attention, extreme lack of confidence, withdrawal, depression, extreme aggressiveness or passivity when playing with other children.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY AND PROTECTION FROM LIABILITY

You have a responsibility for the protection of the children in your care. If you believe on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be abused, neglected or maltreated, you must promptly report that belief and its basis directly to a CHILDREN’S AID SOCIETY. You may notify the Director of your intent to call.

You are not responsible for proving that child abuse took place; you are responsible for identifying and reporting suspected child abuse as soon as possible.

Listen to the child openly and calmly. Put your own feelings aside. Give your full attention to the child. Do not be judgmental of the child or parents. Reassure the child but do not ask any questions or sound shocked.

All persons making a report of suspected child abuse are protected against civil action, unless that person is proved to have acted “... maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief or suspicion ...”.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

Any staff/student/volunteer who suspects that a child has been abused or is at risk for abuse must immediately call a Children's Aid Society. The person who suspects the abuse must make the call him/herself – do not ask anyone to help you decide if a report should be made. You may notify the Director/designate of your intent to call.

You will need to write a clear and detailed report stating your suspicions and the reasons for them (Suspected Child Abuse Form). You will then notify the appropriate agency (C.A.S., C.C.A.S., J.F.C.S., N.F.C.S.) immediately. The reporting staff will give the agency the following information: their name, address and telephone number of the centre, child's name, address, telephone number, parent contact information

and a factual account of the situation. You will record the details of the call, including the name of the person at the agency and the date and time of the call.

If in consultation with the agency, the incident is considered to be of a minor nature, the Director (or designate) will put the written report (Suspected Child Abuse) in the child's file and follow up as directed by the agency. If the situation becomes severe, it will be reported to the appropriate agency immediately.

If the incident is severe, the centre will follow any direction from C.A.S. The Director will inform the President of the Board of Directors and other agencies if appropriate (Toronto Children's Services (Serious Occurrence) & the Ministry of Education if the alleged abuse involves a staff member.

NOTIFYING PARENTS

The decision to meet or contact the parents will be made in consultation with the C.A.S. or appropriate agency.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The duty to report suspicions of abuses overrides the provisions of confidentiality in any other statute, specifically those provisions that would otherwise prohibit disclosure by a professional or official. It must be emphasized that strict confidentiality is extremely important here. Open discussion about the case among staff members is not acceptable.

SUSPECTED ABUSE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF MEMBERS

If an allegation of abuse is made against an employee by another employee, child, parent, or outside agency, such an allegation will be reported to C.A.S. immediately.

The staff member who witnessed the incident or who received the information (staff or Director) will complete a written, objective account of the verbal report and then call C.A.S. If a staff member makes a report, he/she will then notify the Director or designate. If the incident or allegation involves the Director, the staff will report to C.A.S. and then notify the President of the Board of Directors.

The Director or designate will immediately notify the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, the Ministry of Education and Toronto Children's Services and complete the appropriate documentation (including following the Serious Occurrence Reporting Procedures).

The staff member will not be informed of the allegation unless instructed to do so by C.A.S. (or appropriate agency).

The investigation will be conducted as per instruction from the Children's Aid Society. If C.A.S. declines involvement, the Director or designate will conduct the investigation in consultation with the Board of Directors. If the incident involves the Director, the Executive Committee will proceed with the investigation.

The said employee will be given work under constant supervision until such investigation is completed, or may be asked to take a leave of absence until such time as the investigation is completed.

Depending on the outcome of the investigation, several courses of action are possible:

If the allegations are proven to be false, no further action will be taken.

If the investigation is inconclusive, the Director will continue to monitor the activity of the employee, providing continued documentation.

If the report is based on fact, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the severity of the situation (after consultation with C.A.S., the Ministry, Toronto Children's Services and if warranted, the Police) up to and including immediate dismissal.

REPORTING INFORMATION:

Toronto Children's Aid Society – 416-924-4646

Catholic Children's Aid Society – 416-226-1010

Jewish Family and Children's Services – 416-638-7800

Native Child and Family Services – 416-969-8510

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REPORT OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Mother/Guardian's Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Father/Guardian's Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

DATE OF REPORT: _____ TIME: _____

Reason for this report (give details of situation or evidence)

Child's explanation (what was said and when)

If other staff were consulted, give details

Was the Children's Aid Society contacted? Yes No

Society contacted: _____

Phone # _____

Person contacted: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Comments: _____

Signature of Staff

Signature of Director

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS ON REPORT OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Date: _____ Time: _____

Action Taken: _____

Remarks: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Action Taken: _____

Remarks: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Action Taken: _____

Remarks: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Action Taken: _____

Remarks: _____
