

# Abuse Prevention Protocol

Location: Office & LOC's  
Effective Date: March 7, 2019  
Revision Number: 1

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Within this document "The Organization" is defined as **Northern Hills Community Association**

## **PURPOSE**

This policy establishes how "The Organization" will prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children, youth, seniors and other vulnerable adults by its employees and volunteers. "The Organization" seeks to create a welcoming and nurturing environment and has zero tolerance for those whose actions may jeopardize the safety, health or innocence of those in the organization's care.

This policy will be reviewed, signed and dated by each employee or volunteer both at the time of hiring as well on an annual basis moving forward

## **DEFINITIONS**

Because abuse takes many forms, it can be broken down into the following subtypes, all of which are prohibited within the scope of this policy:

- Physical abuse: Injury intentionally inflicted on a child, youth or vulnerable person
- Sexual abuse: Contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a youth and an adult, two youth, or a vulnerable adult and a caregiver
- Emotional abuse: A mental or emotional injury to a child, youth or vulnerable person that results in an observable and material impairment in an individual's growth, development or psychological functioning
- Elder abuse: Any action by a person in a position of trust that results in harm to or jeopardizes the well-being or safety of any elder person
- Neglect: Failure to provide adequate care for an individual
- Economic abuse: Deliberate misuse of the money or belongings of an individual

## **POLICY GUIDELINES**

### **Personnel Screenings**

Safeguards in the hiring process (including volunteers) will be used to eliminate from consideration any candidates who display characteristics that could classify them at a high risk for violating this policy. This includes a written application when hiring all employees and a written application when approving a volunteer who will be working with the vulnerable sector in a scenario where the parent or guardian of the vulnerable person is not present. The required screenings, including reference checks for employees and for volunteers (who will be working with the vulnerable sector in a scenario where the parent or guardian of the vulnerable person is not present) and any additional background information if determined on a case by case basis will depend on the positions and its level of involvement with children, youth, seniors and vulnerable persons along with a no tolerance section related to any past criminal activities of the applicant.

This application, along with the rest of the employee's or volunteer's file, will be held for up-to 7 years past the date the volunteer or employee's duration.

### **Vulnerable Persons**

Candidates for positions that involve regular interaction with children, youth, senior citizens and vulnerable persons will be screened and selected using the following:

- Standard employment application that includes a signed authorization to perform necessary background checks, such as a vulnerable sector check
- Criminal background checks in any and all provinces where the candidate has lived
- Sexual offender registry checks in any and all provinces where the candidate has lived
- Driving records and any applicable certification if the position requires the transportation of children
- In-person interview of the candidate
- As part of the final approval for hiring, vulnerable sector checks will be conducted for employees and then again every five years for those who regularly work with children, youth, seniors and vulnerable persons. The same statement is true for volunteers that are working with vulnerable people in a scenario where the parent or guardian of the vulnerable person is not present.

All information collected about candidates will be reviewed and used to determine if they are appropriate for the respective position. If hired, all information collected during the hiring process will be included in the employee's permanent file, which will be maintained over the course of his or her employment and/or volunteer commitment with "The Organization".

Personnel screenings are required regardless of current employment/volunteer status with "The Organization" & "The Organization's" employees /volunteers seeking to transfer into a position that involves working with children, youth, seniors and vulnerable persons must undergo the same review process as new hires.

### **Structural Guidelines for Programs**

All programs offered by "The Organization" are designed to encourage safe interactions between employees *and/or volunteers* and children, youth, seniors and vulnerable persons. The following guidelines are meant to keep established safeguards effective:

- Employees *and/or volunteers* are restricted from being alone with children, youth, senior citizens and vulnerable persons where they cannot be easily observed by others.
- Employees *and/or volunteers* are not allowed to implement new activities or programs for children, youth, senior citizens and vulnerable persons without "The Organization's" consent. Request for new activities or programs should be submitted in writing to management.
- Should a vulnerable person need to be 'segregated from the group' for disciplinary actions (i.e. a child is misbehaving and has been given a 'time-out'), the vulnerable person is to be located in an area where they are still always supervised.
- Written permission must be obtained from a parent or guardian before any employee *and/or volunteer* transports children, youth, senior citizens and vulnerable persons in the name of "The Organization".
- Children under the age of 12 placed in the care of "The Organization" will only be released to a parent, legal guardian or person designated by a parent or legal guardian.

### **General Conduct**

In an effort to provide a safe and healthy environment for both mind and body, the following guidelines are meant to guide "The Organization" employees/volunteers during their interactions with children, youth, seniors and vulnerable persons. These guidelines do not and cannot outline every situation that may be encountered while on the job, requiring employees/volunteers to act with a certain degree of personal discretion. Because a certain action is not prohibited in this section does not mean it is acceptable behaviour. "The Organization" reserves the right to take disciplinary action against employees/volunteers whose actions are found to be inappropriate regardless of whether they appear in this section:

- Employees/volunteers will treat all children, youth, seniors and vulnerable persons with respect and consideration. Treatment must be fair and equal, and must not be based on sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, or economic or social status. All efforts must be made to avoid favouritism, or the appearance of favouritism.
- While representing "The Organization", employees/volunteers must not possess, distribute, use or allow others to use any alcohol or drugs.
- Employees/volunteers must not use harsh or inappropriate language, degrading punishment or any type of restraining device in the name of behaviour management.

- Employees/volunteers must not participate in or allow others to engage in any form of hazing.
- Employees/volunteers must not have sexual contact with children, youth, seniors and vulnerable persons.
- Employees/volunteers must not dress, undress, shower or bathe with or in the presence of children, youth, senior citizens and vulnerable persons.
- Employees/volunteers must not use physical punishment in any form.
- Employees/volunteers are prohibited from sharing sleeping locations with children, youth, senior citizens and vulnerable persons. This includes beds, tents, hotel rooms and other similar areas. Employees can sleep in open areas as long as the area is large enough for employees to have their own defined sleeping areas and other employees are also present.
- Employees/volunteers must not discuss their own sexual history, preferences or fantasies nor their use of illicit or pornographic materials while in the company of children, youth, senior citizens and vulnerable persons.
- Employees/volunteers are not allowed to possess any sexually oriented materials (books, magazines, videos or clothing) when conducting business in the name of "The Organization".
- When one-on-one discussion or counselling is warranted, employee/volunteer interactions with children, youth, seniors and vulnerable persons will take place in an area that allows for private conversation while remaining in the view of others.

If, for any reason, employees/volunteers feel there is a need to make an exception to these guidelines, they must submit to their supervisor/the board etc. a written description of the incident and why their actions were necessary. The report will be reviewed for wrongdoing. A copy of the original report along with any additional findings made by the reviewer will be included in the employee's/volunteer's permanent file.

## **Training**

New employees to the organization will be supervised by a senior employee or senior board member within the organization for a minimum of 2 weeks, or longer if deemed necessary by the organization. New volunteers that are working with the vulnerable sector will be supervised by an employee that is not considered a 'new' employee that is also under supervision.

Annual abuse training is mandatory for all volunteers and staff members who regularly work with children, youth, senior citizens and vulnerable persons. Training materials and procedures are to include, but are not limited, to the following:

- In-house video presentations
- Handbooks
- Policies
- Instructions for reporting incidents
- Refresher courses
- Recognizing the signs of abuse

Abuse protocol training will take place upon hiring a new employee and when adding a new volunteer (who will be working with the vulnerable sector in a scenario where the parent or guardian of the vulnerable person is not present) and then again annually. In addition to completing mandatory training, volunteers and staff are expected to respond to and report all allegations or complaints of abuse in an appropriate manner.

## **Reporting of incidents and allegations of abuse**

Employees and/or volunteers are to immediately report all incidents and /or allegations of abuse on the organizations Incident Report Form/System. Upon reporting the incident and/or allegation, a senior person within the organization is responsible for reviewing the report and then immediately reporting it to a senior board member (if applicable) and to the necessary authorities such as local police, Children's Aid Society, etc. Further, this person and/or the senior board member of the organization is to report the incident and/or allegation to the insurance company.

All employees and/or volunteers identified in such incidents or allegations of inappropriate behaviour and/or abuse will be immediately redeployed away from all vulnerable persons pending the outcome of the investigation conducted by the appropriate authorities.

At no time will the organization have the authority to apply corporal punishment to any parties involved in the incident and/or allegation.

### **Transportation of the Vulnerable Sector**

All the same procedures, guidelines, reporting, etc. within this Abuse protocol apply while transporting the Vulnerable Sector. Where at all possible, transportation is to be arranged through the same transportation companies as used by the local public school system. If "The Organization" operates the transportation itself or uses a transportation company that is not typical to the local public school system then additional abuse protocol guidelines will be implemented and reviewed around this type of transportation (of the Vulnerable Sector).

### **Invited Persons that do not typically Visit the Premises**

In the case of an invited person that does not typically visit "The Organization's" premises, such as a temporary contractor to do maintenance on the building, "The Organization's" employee(s) or volunteer(s) will assign an employee or volunteer to supervise this invited person and periodically check in with them while they are present on the premises.

### **Feedback**

As feedback is a vital element in overseeing the implementation of an abuse protocol, it is very important that all employees and volunteers report anything to management/or the board if anyone recognizes a gap between protocols, procedures and practices.

Staff and volunteers are also encouraged to discuss and suggest ideas and potential amendments to the abuse procedure based on their daily experience and interactions.

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“The Organization’s” Abuse Prevention Policy

## Employee Agreement

If you have any uncertainty or questions regarding the content of this policy, you are required to consult your supervisor/the Board. This should be done prior to signing and agreeing to the “The Organization’s” Abuse Prevention Protocol.

I have read and understand “The Organization’s” Abuse Prevention Protocol and agree to abide by its terms and conditions throughout the course of my employment/volunteer activities. I understand that my failure to follow the terms of this policy could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination (as applicable).

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Employee / Volunteer signature

Date

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Supervisor /Volunteer signature

Date