

Abuse Prevention Protocol

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PURPOSE

This policy establishes how West Springs/Cougar Ridge Community Association (“the Organization”) will prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children, youth, elder people and other vulnerable persons by its volunteers. The Organization seeks to create a welcoming and nurturing environment and will not consider or tolerate Volunteers whose actions may jeopardize the safety, health or innocence of vulnerable persons in the Organization’s care. This policy applies to all Volunteers in a role, or who are being considered for a role, where they will be interacting with vulnerable persons, in a situation where parents or guardians of these vulnerable persons are not present.

Each Volunteer is required to review, sign and date this Abuse Prevention Protocol (“the Protocol”) at the time of hiring and annually from the date of hire.

This Protocol excludes third parties whom the Organization may engage to provide services (i.e. conducting a program, including staffing). If applicable, the third party may be asked to provide proof of liability insurance and abuse insurance coverage.

DEFINITIONS

The Canadian [Criminal Records Act](#) (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-47) defines a vulnerable person as:

A person who, because of his or her age, disability, or other circumstances whether temporary or permanent:

- a) is in a position of dependency on others; or*
- b) is otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of trust or authority towards them.*

[Volunteer Alberta](#) (Volunteer Screening Terms & Definitions) defines a volunteer (“Volunteer”) as an individual who;

- Chooses to undertake a service or activity; someone who is not coerced or compelled to do this activity
- Does this activity in service to an individual or an organization or to assist the community at large
- Does not receive a salary or wage or any financial remuneration for this service or activity

Abuse takes many forms and can be broken down into the following subtypes, all of which are prohibited within the scope of this Protocol. All of the following are covered under the term “Abuse”:

- Physical abuse: Injury intentionally inflicted on a child, youth or other vulnerable person
 - Sexual abuse: Contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a youth and an adult, two youths, 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 a vulnerable individual
 - Economic abuse: Deliberate misuse of the money or belongings of a vulnerable individual
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PROTOCOL GUIDELINES

Recruitment Safeguards

Safeguards will be used in the recruitment process to eliminate any candidates from consideration who display characteristics that could indicate that they are at a high risk for violating this Protocol. A written application is also required to approve any Volunteer who will be working with the vulnerable sector in situations where parents or guardians of vulnerable persons are not present. The required screenings may include the following:

- Candidates personal reference checks
- Additional background information may be requested (based on a risk assessment) from any candidate, depending on the prospective position and its level of involvement with children, youth, seniors and vulnerable persons

The role description and responsibilities, along with any associated risks with the aforementioned will be taken into consideration on the Organization's tolerance in the recruitment process related to any past criminal activities of the applicant.

The Volunteer's complete file, including this application, will be retained for up to 7 years after the date the Volunteer's commitment to the Organization ends.

Required Background Checks

Candidates for positions that involve regular unsupervised interaction with vulnerable persons will be screened and selected using the following:

- Standard volunteer application; this application form includes an authorization signed by the candidate allowing the Organization and candidate to work together to perform any necessary background checks, such as a police information check (including a vulnerable sector check). This may involve the candidate taking a letter from the Organization to the Calgary Police Service so the background checks can be performed and giving the Organization access to the results.
- A Criminal Record Check for all provinces in which the candidate has lived
- In-person interview of the candidate (if deemed necessary after a risk assessment is completed).
- All information collected about candidates will be reviewed and used to determine whether they meet the requirements for the prospective position. If accepted as a Volunteer, all information collected during the recruitment process will be retained in the Volunteer's file. The Association collects personal information from Police Information Checks and from other sources and is obligated to keep that information confidential, and to use it only for the purposes for which the individual agrees it can be collected. Information can only be disclosed to individuals who are assigned by the organization to make decisions about hiring or refusing potential volunteers. There shall be no dissemination or disclosure of the information to any other agency, body or organization without the specific approval of the applicant.

Background checks are required irrespective of a candidate's status with the Organization. Candidates who currently work with the Organization, and are applying for a position that involves working with vulnerable persons, must undergo the same review process as candidates new to the Organization.

Structural Guidelines for Programs

All programs offered by the Organization are designed to promote safe interactions between Volunteers and vulnerable persons. The following guidelines are designed to maintain the effectiveness of established safeguards:

- Any Volunteer is prohibited from being alone with any vulnerable person where they cannot be easily observed by others.
- Volunteers are not permitted to implement new activities or programs for vulnerable persons without the Organization's approval. Proposals for new activities or programs must be submitted in writing and approved by the Organization's board of directors.

- In the case where a vulnerable person must be segregated from the group for disciplinary reasons, (e.g., a child has misbehaved and is given a “time out”), that vulnerable person must be placed in an area where he/she is able to be under a Volunteer’s constant supervision.
- Written permission must be obtained from parents or guardians before any Volunteer transports vulnerable persons on behalf of the Organization.
- Children under the age of 12 placed in the care of the Organization must only be released to a parent, legal guardian or person designated by a parent or legal guardian.

This section does not cover every possible scenario for programs and events. In cases where additional guidelines are required or changes need to be made to these guidelines or these guidelines need to be tailored to a specific program/event, the organizer of the program/event must submit the proposed guidelines for the Organization’s board of directors to review and approve. For example, some activities may not allow transporting of vulnerable persons.

General Conduct

In an effort to provide a safe and healthy environment, the following guidelines are designed to inform the Organization’s Volunteers during interactions with vulnerable persons. It is impossible for guidelines to outline every potential situation. Therefore, Volunteers are obligated to act using appropriate personal discretion. The fact that a certain action is not prohibited in this Protocol does not mean it is acceptable behaviour. The Organization reserves the right to take disciplinary action against Volunteers whose actions are found to be inappropriate, irrespective of whether they are addressed in this section.

- Volunteers will treat all vulnerable persons with respect and consideration. Treatment must be fair and equitable, 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, Volunteers must not possess, distribute, use or allow others to use any alcohol or drugs.
- Volunteers are prohibited from using or possessing any drug (i.e. any substance, whether legal or illegal, that has the potential to change or adversely affect the way a person thinks, feels or acts) and having a blood-alcohol at or above .020.
- Volunteers are prohibited from using harsh or inappropriate language, degrading punishment or any type of restraining device in the name of behaviour management.
- Volunteers are prohibited from engaging in, or allowing others to engage in any form of hazing. Hazing is any action or situation, with or without the consent of the participants, which recklessly, intentionally, or unintentionally endangers their mental or physical wellbeing, or safety.
- Volunteers must not have sexual contact with any vulnerable persons.
- Volunteers are prohibited from dressing, undressing, showering or bathing with, or in the presence of, any vulnerable persons.
- Volunteers are prohibited from using physical punishment in any form.
- Volunteers are prohibited from discussing their own sexual histories, preferences or fantasies, and their use of illicit or pornographic materials, while in the company of any vulnerable persons.
- Volunteers are prohibited from having on their persons any sexually oriented materials (books, magazines, videos or clothing) when representing the Organization.
- When one-on-one discussion or counselling is warranted, Volunteer interactions with any vulnerable person must take place in a location that is in the view of others while allowing for private conversation.

If, for any reason, a Volunteer feels an exception to these guidelines occurred and was warranted or required, he/she must submit a written description of the incident to the Organization’s Board of Directors, outlining the reasons these actions were necessary. The report will be reviewed by at least two of the Organization’s directors (one of who will be an Executive). They

will review the Volunteer's description and determine whether the actions were acceptable or unacceptable. A copy of the Volunteer's description, along with any additional findings made by the reviewers, will be retained in the Volunteer's permanent file.

Training

Training and supervision requirements for Volunteers who are new to the Organization will be determined and managed on a case-by-case basis. The Organization shall perform a risk assessment to determine the level of training and supervision required. If supervision is recommended, the duration will depend on the type of role and/or activity (e.g., ongoing program, one-time event or program, etc.). Duration may range from one time to multiple occurrences. New volunteers that are working with the vulnerable sector, and have been deemed by the risk assessment to require supervision, will be supervised by a Volunteer who is not considered a "new" volunteer that is also under supervision.

Annual Abuse Prevention Protocol training is mandatory for all Volunteers who regularly work with vulnerable persons. Training materials and procedures include, but are not limited to, reviewing and signing this Protocol. The training must occur prior to Volunteers working with the vulnerable persons.

Reporting of incidents and allegations of abuse

If, for any reason, someone (i.e. Volunteer, third party) feels an incident has occurred, they are required to report the incident or allegation of an incident of abuse immediately, using the Organization's Incident Report Form and submitting it to the Organization's Board of Directors. Upon receiving the completed Incident Report Form, representatives of the Organization (where one will be an Executive) are required to review the report. If necessary (only if the Organization and person submitting the form both agree no further action required), the incident or allegation must be reported to the appropriate authorities, who may include the Calgary Police Service, Calgary Region Child and Family Services, etc. In addition, the Organization must report the incident or allegation to the Organization's insurance provider.

Any Volunteer identified in such incidents or allegations of inappropriate behaviour and/or Abuse must be redeployed away from all vulnerable persons immediately, 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.

Feedback

As feedback is a vital element in overseeing the implementation of an Abuse Prevention Protocol, it is very important that any Volunteer recognizing a gap between this Protocol, and other organizational procedures and practices, report the gap to the Organization's board of directors.

Volunteers are encouraged to discuss, suggest improvements and potential amendments, and provide feedback about this Protocol, based on their experience and interactions on behalf of the Organization.

Volunteer Agreement

If you have any uncertainty or questions regarding the content of this Protocol, you are required to consult your representative at the Organization, prior to signing and agreeing to 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 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).

Volunteer signature

Date

Organization Representative signature

Date