



West Point Grey Community Association Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the practice and procedures for employees, contracted instructors, and volunteers of WPGCA to contribute to the prevention of abuse of children, youth and other vulnerable persons. The policy provides a framework for action when abuse is suspected. The policy covers Association employees, contracted instructors, volunteers and Park Board Employees.

2. Scope

West Point Grey Community Association (WPGCA) Employees, Independent Contractors, volunteers and Park Board Employees.

3. Definitions

Abuse means any intentional treatment of a person that results in harm or injury, or may result in harm or injury. This includes physical abuse, sexual abuse or emotional abuse. Although neglect is often considered abusive, it differs in that abuse is an action, where neglect is the lack of one or a series of actions.

Child & Youth For the purpose of this policy, a “child” is defined as anyone under the age of 13 and “youth” refers to the ages between 13 and 18.

Child Care Facilities are those governed under *British Columbia’s Community Care Facility Act* (Child Care Regulations), including licensed daycare, pre-school, kindercare and out-of-school care programs. More information is available at:

<http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/index.htm>

Emotional Abuse is an attack on one’s sense of self. Humiliation, rejection and constant reiteration that a child is stupid or bad can actively undermine his or her sense of worth and self-confidence. Other acts include forced isolation, intimidation, exploitation, terrorizing or routinely making unreasonable demands of a person.

Harassment is difficult, if not impossible, to define in absolutes. At the extreme, harassing behavior is easy to define, but behavior is on a continuum with most behaviors lying in the gray area. Not everyone perceives behavior in the same way. Any definition of harassment will contain a certain subjective or interpretive element.

Generally speaking, harassment is unwanted comment, conduct, or gesture directed towards an individual or group, which is intimidating, malicious, degrading, or offensive. It creates negative and uncomfortable feelings for the person, or group of people, to whom it is directed. Such a person may feel anything from a discomfort or embarrassment in the presence of the person or group of people displaying the behavior, to a feeling of terror or even fear for their safety.

Neglect is a failure to act, including meeting physical health, self-esteem, development or safety needs of a vulnerable person.

Physical Abuse is the use of force to any part of one’s body, which results in, or may result in, a non-accidental injury.



Position of Trust means where one's assigned responsibilities include direct contact with vulnerable persons. All references to personnel apply to those placed in a position of trust.

Sexual Abuse refers sexual exploitation of a person, involving the exposure of that person to sexual contact, activity or behavior. It may include invitation to sexual touching, intercourse, and use of pornography or prostitution. Normal behavior required for health care and hygiene, and normal affectionate behavior towards children would not be defined as sexual abuse.

Note: Sexual activity between children may be abusive if differences in age or power between the children are significant in that the older or more powerful one is clearly taking sexual advantage of the younger or less powerful one. This would not include consensual, developmentally appropriate sexual activity between children where differences in age and power are insignificant.

Staff includes WPGCA employees and volunteers supervised by Park Board staff, independent contractors of the WPGCA, and employees and volunteers of the Park Board.

Standard of Care is a legal principle, which identifies the obligation of individuals and organizations to take reasonable measures to care for and protect their clients.

Vicarious Liability is a legal principle, which within the Courts determines whether an employer should be held vicariously liable for acts of its employee. It requires the employee's wrongdoing to fall within the "scope" of their employment.

Vulnerable Persons are individuals who, because of age or emotional, mental or physical difficulties or communication barriers, are restricted in their ability to remove themselves from an abusive situation.

WPGCA: West Point Grey Community Association

WPGCC: West Point Grey Community Centre; which is jointly operated by the WPGCA and the Vancouver Park Board.

4. Signs of Abuse, Neglect, and Emotional Maltreatment

The following section deals with possible signs of different kinds of abuse. You should remember that these signs may indicate abuse, but may also indicate other problems, so you need to be careful when evaluating these signs. These are guidelines only.

4.1 Signs of Physical Abuse:

- fear of physical contact
- apparent fear of going home and/or particular people
- uncharacteristic or unexplained changes in behavior
- reluctance to participate in physical activities
- unusual knowledge of sexual behavior (in children, often demonstrated through play)
- destructive and delinquent behavior

4.2 Signs of Neglect:

- persistent hunger, malnutrition, underweight, dehydration
- poor hygiene, dirtiness, skin disorders associated with bad hygiene
- persistent fatigue and listlessness
- inappropriate clothing for the weather
- unattended sores, cuts or other medical needs
- In the child's behaviour, you may notice:



- demands for constant attention
- lack of parental participation or interest
- indications that no one is ever home to look after the child
- obvious lack of energy when playing

4.3 Signs of Emotional Maltreatment: (with children)

In the child's behavior, you may notice:

- demands for constant attention
- extreme lack of confidence; withdrawal, depressions, inability to make eye contact
- extreme aggressiveness or passivity when playing with other children
- has a "no win" attitude
- demonstrates inappropriate adult behavior such as organizing or disciplining others

5. Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy Statement

5.1 Responsibilities of the WPGCA

- To ensure that employees, independent contractors and volunteers are aware of, have read and signed off on the Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy and are aware of their responsibilities to adhere to the above policy.
- To ensure a current criminal record check is done for all persons who have access to or work with children & youth, including all Association staff, independent contractors and volunteers.

5.2 Management & Supervision

- A minimum of two reference checks and a screening interview on all prospective employees, independent contractors and volunteers will be conducted, documented and filed prior to commencement of employment or placement.
- An individual who is to be considered for employment, contract or a volunteer position with the WPGCA will be required to authorize a criminal record search for disclosure of any convictions for which no pardon has been granted. No one is permitted to work directly with WPGCC participants prior to formal completion of a criminal check.
- New employees, individual contractors and volunteers must participate in an orientation program including review of written materials explaining WPGCA policies, procedures, and regulations.
- All employees, individual contractors and volunteers should be familiar with the Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy and by affixing their signatures, acknowledge having received and read it. This Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy as a reference guide is aimed to contribute to the ongoing practice of development of employees and volunteers in the work place
- It is the supervisor's responsibility to clarify with the employee, individual contractor or volunteer their roles and responsibilities regarding their relationships with vulnerable persons with whom they may be in contact. Regular supervision of employees and volunteers will offer the opportunity to raise any issues.
- Employees, individual contractors and volunteers supervising programs involving the care of, and service to vulnerable persons, will be made aware that random visits to each program site are required to assure that standards, policies, program quality and performance of employees and volunteers are being maintained.



- All incidents should be discussed with immediate supervisor. It is the supervisor's responsibility to bring the incident to the attention of senior management.
- There should be a written record of any concerns. This confidential information will be kept in a personnel file, and will be kept for as long as deemed necessary by the freedom of information act
- Employees, individual contractors should avoid working alone with children & youth. But if unavoidable, one to one contact should take place in an environment where other employees or volunteers are on site and in close proximity or an open door policy is appropriate. Volunteers are not permitted to provide one on one personal care to any child or youth.
- In the case of employees and individual contractors who are dealing with special needs or personal care needs, there is an exemption from this rule. Volunteers are not permitted to provide one on one personal care to any child or youth.

5.3 Responsibilities of WPGCA Employees, Independent Contractors, and Volunteers

- To ensure they are aware of, have read, signed off on and adhere to the WPGCA Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy and procedures.
- Failure to declare any existing or subsequent criminal convictions will be considered as gross misconduct and may result in possible dismissal of employees or termination of the volunteer position with WPGCA.

5.4 Expectations of WPGCA Employees, Independent Contractors and Volunteers

- The employee, independent contractor or volunteer must recognize his/her privileged relationship with vulnerable persons. Inherent in this responsibility is the recognition that the relationship must not be exploited for private advantage. The employee, independent contractor or volunteer is expected to treat all people with respect and dignity and to be always mindful of his/her responsibilities in the care of the person and the rights of the person.
- A vulnerable person involved in any activity provided through the WPGCC has the right to be free from abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or neglect) by an employee, independent contractor, or volunteer. A child's consent or encouragement cannot waive this right.
- Parents and caregivers shall be invited and encouraged to visit program sites to check in on their children and do not need to ask permission to do so or be denied this right.
- Never involve a child in any setting, activity, behavior or conversations that could be interpreted as being inappropriate.
- Touching and hugging children and youth may be a natural part of a relationship between an employee, independent contractor or volunteer and a young person. This type of support is valid when deemed beneficial to the child or youth. However, the responsibilities rests with the employee, independent contractor or volunteer to never initiate a hug and to never engage in physical or verbal situations with youth that could be construed or misinterpreted as physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Touching should be kept to a minimum and touching anywhere that a bathing suit covers is strictly forbidden.
- Since a child often perceives the employee, independent contractor or volunteer as being in a position of influence and authority, it is inappropriate for the individuals to engage in any action (verbal or non-verbal) which has degrading or sexual overtones.
- Employees, independent contractors or volunteers will not discipline children by use of physical



punishment, abusive verbal or emotional punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care such as food and shelter.

- Employees, independent contractors or volunteers are not sex educators. Sex education is a parental responsibility. Employees, independent contractors and volunteers shall not be involved in sexually explicit conversations with participants. They should never show or provide participants written or photographic material with sexual content.
- Foul language is not permitted, nor are age inappropriate movies/videos or magazines. Although personal and neighbourhood standards as to what is “foul” and “inappropriate” vary from place to place, any doubt regarding these subjects should be resolved on the side of caution and wholesomeness, and WPGCA’s rules, policies and directives on these matters shall be final. WPGCA facilities and programs are not appropriate places or excuses for the expression of frustration, anger or protest.
- Employees, independent contractors or volunteers shall not expose or involve participants in any form of nudity except as is normal in a public locker room setting. (i.e. public swimming pool), and any doubt regarding this subject should be resolved on the side of caution, modesty and wholesomeness, and WPGCA’s rules, policies and directives on these matters shall be final. WPGCC’s facilities and programs are not appropriate places or excuses for nudity.
- Activities conducted away from the WPGCC premises and all overnight activities require permission of the responsible WPGCC supervisor and written permission from the parents of the participants.
- On activities away from the site, do not change plans without the consent or knowledge of the supervisor.
- Employees, independent contractors or volunteers shall not ask a participant to keep any secrets about their relationships. All activities, conversations, communications and relationships are open and liable to full disclosure to the participants, parents, law enforcement authorities and the organization.

6. Reporting Incidents of Abuse and Neglect

WPGCA employees, independent contractors and volunteers who witness abuse, suspect abuse or who have received a disclosure of abuse or neglect of a child (under 19 years of age) are responsible for reporting the circumstances to the intake social worker of the Ministry for Children and Families Office. Reporting the incident only to your supervisor does not satisfy this responsibility.

Call the **Helpline** when you have a concern about the safety and well-being of a child:
604-310-1234 after regular office hours or 604-660-4927 during regular office hours
 (8:30am-4:30pm)

For further information, please refer to the Family, Child and Community Services Act of B.C. at
http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96046_01

While WPGCA recognizes that employees, independent contractors and volunteers are obligated to assist vulnerable adults and seniors, the Board also recognizes that capable adults and seniors are entitled to live as they wish. If abuse, neglect or self-abuse is suspected contact the Police Department (911 in case of emergency, 604-717-3321 if non-emergency).

6.1 Suspicions of Abuse or Neglect



If WPGCA employees, independent contractors, volunteers, or Vancouver Park Board employees suspect that abuse or neglect has taken place please ensure you do the following:

- Document all signs, statements, conversations, and observations.
- Consult the Supervisor, Programmer and others who work with the individual. Clarify concerns or suspicions. Discussions are confidential.
- If you still suspect abuse/neglect has occurred, report your concerns to the Supervisor or Programmer promptly.
- Both parties are obligated to report to a child protection social worker. Contact your local Ministry for Children and Families office or by calling 604-310-1234.
- If the individual is in need of protection and is 19 years of age or older call the police at 911.
- Note: Do not interview the individual. Do not contact family or guardian. This is the role of the investigating social worker.

All oral and written information about cases of abuse and neglect is confidential.

6.2 Disclosure of Alleged Abuse or Neglect

WPGCA employees, independent contractors, volunteers, or Vancouver Park Board employees who receive a disclosure from the abused individual directly, informing them that an incident has occurred which might be defined as abuse or neglect, should following the steps outlined below:

- Document all conversations, statements and observations.
- Report immediately to your Supervisor or Programmer.
- Also, report immediately to the intake social worker at the local Ministry for Children and Families office (Mon-Fri 8:30-4:30) or MCF after hours.
- If abused individual is 19 years or older, call the Police at 911
- Do not contact family or guardian. This is the responsibility of the investigating social worker or police officer.
- All oral and written information about cases of abuse and neglect is confidential, and shall only be reported as described above.

6.3 Witness to Suspected Abuse incidents

WPGCA employees, independent contractors, volunteers, or Vancouver Park Board employees, who witness an abusive incident on a park, playground, pool, arena or related Vancouver Park Board facility:

- Protect the individual being abused. Your action is based on the abused person's age and the level of danger at that moment.
- If the abused person is in immediate danger:
If safe, you may choose to intervene
If it is not safe for you, call 911
- If the abused person is safe from immediate danger:
If youth is in need of protection, call 604-310-1234
If they are an adult, report the incident to the police; call 911



- Communicate directly with the abused individual. Identify yourself. Assure them that you can help. Offer any assistance they might need at that time.
- Obtain the abused person's name, telephone number and address. If possible, obtain the suspected abuser's name and telephone number.
- If it is OK to approach the abuser, identify yourself; determine their relation to the abused person. Do not restrain the suspect.
- Document your observation and discussions; consult other witnesses for theirs.
- Prepare written report to direct Supervisor or Programmer.
- Do not contact parents or guardian unless asked by police or social worker.
- Remember that all oral and written information about cases of abuse and neglect is confidential, and shall only be disclosed as described above.

6.4 Support for those who report Abuse

All those making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern, whether they be children & youth, employee, volunteer, or members of the general public should be reassured that:

- They will be taken seriously
- Their comments will be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared if they or others are at significant risk
- If children & youth, they will be given immediate protection
- If employees, independent contractor or volunteers, they will be given support

I have read and fully understand the above statements and will ensure my conduct on site at West Point Grey Community Centre adheres to the above.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

