



It starts with Scouts.

Tout commence
avec les Scouts.

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Child Abuse Prevention Policy

Background

Scouts Canada has set as its mission “to contribute to the education of young people, through a value system based on the Scout Promise and Law, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.”

This mission is operationalized through a variety of means that includes: the assistance of youth to establish a value system based upon spiritual, social and personal principles as expressed in the Promise and Law. These principles include: duty to God, duty to others and duty to self.

Consequently Scouts and their leaders have a collective responsibility to ensure the safety of children and youth involved in Scouting as well as responsibility to protect its members from bullying and all forms of child abuse, whether physical, sexual or emotional, and neglect. Additionally Scout leaders must be alert to inappropriate physical or sexual behaviour between Scouts.

Child abuse cannot and will not be tolerated in the Scouting movement but leaders must also be aware of signs of neglect by a parent or other caregiver. These signs however are often more difficult to determine. If one has suspicions of abuse or neglect it is required that these suspicion be reported to the appropriate authorities. When unsure if circumstances require a report, it is prudent to consult with local authorities.

Child protection is a provincial/territorial responsibility and as such is provided in various forms across the country and may be identified by different names but will be listed under “child protection services” in your community. An up to date list is available from Scouts Canada or your Council Executive Director or local police service.

Most provinces provide the service directly through employees of the public service but in Ontario and some parts of Manitoba the service is provided through private agencies. Additionally several provinces have divested protection responsibility to native agencies.

However legislation and definitions of child abuse are relatively standardized across the country. All include a definition of physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as the risk thereof. Scout leaders must be aware of the local definitions and contact information for child protection authorities and police.

Additionally the definition of a child is included in child protection legislation. Generally a child is defined as any person under the age of 19, 18 or 16 depending on the province.

It is imperative therefore that all adults in the Scouting movement are aware of, and adhere to provincial legislation and the following policies relating to the abuse of children.

Child Abuse Prevention Policy Statement

All complaints of physical or sexual abuse must be reported immediately to the child protection authorities and the police in your jurisdiction. Additionally all complaints of risk of physical, sexual or emotional abuse must be reported to the local child protection authorities. Failure to do so may result in suspension from the Scouting program and criminal charges under provincial child protection legislation. If the person is uncertain about circumstances, it is prudent to consult with local authorities.

Information relating to a current situation must be reported to the local child protection authorities. Information of an historical nature involving a former scout who is now an adult should be reported to police. Scouts Canada will ensure that each Scout leader is aware of local authorities and their contact information as well as the definition of a child as defined by the provincial legislation.

The recipient of the complaint must stop collecting information upon determining that there are reasonable and probable grounds to suspect abuse and turn the matter over to the appropriate authorities immediately.

Upon completing the report to authorities the person must then report to the Council Executive Director, as per the Compliance Procedure, who will contact the child protection authority and in cases of physical or sexual abuse, the police, to ensure the referral has been made. He/she must also report to the Scouts Canada Risk Manager and the Director of Communications.

The Council Executive Director, immediately, upon consultation with the child protection authorities and in cases of physical or sexual abuse, the police, will suspend the alleged abuser.

Child Protection Policy

Anyone with reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is being mistreated or is receiving inadequate care and supervision is required to report such suspicions to the local child protection authority. If there is uncertainty about information, it is prudent to consult with local child protection authorities.

Procedures

When any member or parent contacts a member of Scouts Canada with a complaint of abuse or neglect against a member, or if the police contact Scouts Canada to inform us of allegations or charges against a current member, the following steps should be taken immediately.

1. Advise the person that you are required to and will report the occurrence to the appropriate Child Protection Authority and in circumstances involving physical or

sexual abuse, police as well as the Scouts Canada Council Executive Director. No judgment statement should be made about the alleged abuser, nor should you show alarm or anger.

2. Remove the child from any further danger if warranted.
3. Advise the person they will hear further directly from the child protection authority or police.
4. Advise the child or parent that all information will be kept confidential and will only be provided to those who require it for the protection of all involved.
5. Contact the child protection authority, and in circumstances involving physical or sexual abuse, police and your Council Executive Director immediately following the discussion.
6. As soon as possible, write a more detailed report of your discussion regarding alleged or suspected abuse or neglect (ie.who, what, when, where). Give your written statement to your Council Executive Director as soon as possible as per Compliance Procedure.

Do not investigate further; this is the duty of Child Protection Authorities or Police.

Tips for dealing with child abuse or child protection allegations

1. Listen, believe and reassure. Stay calm. Don't panic or overreact to the information. Listen compassionately and take what the person is saying seriously. Don't criticize or tell the person they misunderstood what happened.
2. Ensure that discussions with the child occur in a private setting, (using the "two leader rule").
3. It is critical to use open-ended questions. Do not lead. "Tell me what is happening" is a good open-ended question.
4. It is imperative that the child does most of the talking so as to avoid any leading by the adult in the collection of information.
5. When the disclosure has given reasonable and probable grounds to suspect child abuse, no further questions should be asked. Do not probe for any details. It is now time to make a child abuse referral to the child protection authorities and/or the police.
6. The details of the interview should be documented immediately upon its conclusion because recall and memories are most accurate at this time.

Child Protection Training Policy

Scouts Canada will make available to each Scout leader as part of orientation to scouting, information with regard to provincial/territorial legislation identifying child protection authorities and definitions of child abuse and neglect and will ensure through training, that leaders are aware of reporting requirements and procedures. In addition each Scout leader will be provided with information and best practices to prevent child abuse, bullying, exploitation, other mistreatment or violence from occurring while involved in Scouting programs.

Scouts Canada will collect from the provincial or territorial child protection authorities, information to be included in its orientation materials outlining the definition of a child, the definition of child abuse and a child in need of protection as well as contact information for the local child protection authorities and the police.

KEY RELATED DOCUMENTS

Compliance Procedure