

All Ontario Youth Convention Abuse Prevention Policy

Rev. 1.1 5/04/05

INTRODUCTION

The All Ontario Youth Convention gathers youth and leaders together to worship, to establish a deeper relationship with the Lord, to renew their commitment to Him, and to gather in Christian fellowship. It is the spiritual, moral, and legal obligation of the planners of the convention, and the acting leaders at the convention, to provide a secure environment for all participating in the convention. As a body of believers we must ensure that every man, woman and child, regardless of age, cultural background or sex, when in contact with the people and ministry of the All Ontario Youth Convention, will find an environment free from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

An Abuse Prevention Policy is intended to outline the obligations of the Convention leaders, and of the other participants in the convention, to other youth and leaders by prescribing certain policies or procedures designed to minimize the risk of abuse. The information provided in this document is expected to be a guideline for the protection of participants, and volunteers of the All Ontario Youth Convention. We must ensure that every reasonable step is taken to eliminate the risk of abuse.

We are striving to create a nurturing environment, which protects each person's dignity and safety, in order that each may grow freely in the love of our Lord and his people. We acknowledge, however, that we live in a broken world, and that one of the signs of that brokenness is the violation of boundaries for healthy relationships. When sin of this nature occurs, appropriate action is required. We must strive to achieve justice, protect victims, promote the healing of those who have been abused, and work towards the repentance and healing of the abuser.

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

Physical abuse - is any intentional act that results in physical pain or injury regardless of whether an obvious physical symptom such as a wound or bruising results. Physical abuse also includes physical neglect, which means not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care. Physical abuse may be a single event or a chronic pattern of behaviour. Physical abuse is often followed by a request/threat to the victim to not tell anyone what happened, not to report the discipline, or not to show anyone a mark or a bruise.

Emotional abuse - is any attempt to control another person's life through threats, fears and/or deprivation in such a way that it impairs a person's God given sense of self worth. Excessive criticism, ridicule, yelling, and threat of physical abuse or centring out an individual for public humiliation is unacceptable.

Sexual abuse - is any sexual action taken by one person against or in the presence of another who is an unwilling participant or observer of such action. Physical contact is not a necessary element of sexual abuse. Suggestive speech, pornographic material, public exposure of genitals and requests for sexual contact all represent forms of sexual abuse which do not involve physical contact. Sexual abuse includes any role inappropriate sexual encounter, even if consensual at the time (e.g. between parent and children, teachers and children, pastors and counselee) All sexual activity between an adult and a Child is considered to be sexual abuse regardless of whether or not the adult participant believes that the child has consented to the activities, and regardless of the intentions of the adult participant.

GENERAL POLICIES
(Program Procedures, Protocol)

1. Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, pushing) is not permitted.
2. Abusive verbal discipline (yelling, insulting, threatening) is not permitted.
3. Parent(s) are to be informed and involved whenever a youth misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehaviour increases.
4. Concerns about a youth's behaviour or the appropriate response to a youth's behaviour should be reported to the discipline committee. Small Group Leaders, Area Dorm Residents and any Planning Committee members other than those on the discipline committee are not to impose discipline on any youth.
5. Just as the behaviour of the youth must reflect their age and level of comprehension, discipline must reflect their age and level of comprehension.
6. Youth leaders may meet with the youth one-to-one *if* necessary. Any such meetings should occur in public (example: door ajar or in a main area). For longer contacts, wherever possible, parents should be notified. If it is not in the best interest of the child to notify the parents, a supervisor should be notified.
7. Adequate supervision should be present for all mixed-group activities.
8. While the appropriate display of affection is often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another, such displays can be misinterpreted. Therefore, displays of affection between volunteers and youth ought to be limited to actions such as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulder, an open-handed pat on the back, a handclasp or a handshake, or a light touch of the forearm. Restrict these displays to a public area. Any participant's (either youth or leader) right to refuse such displays of affection will be respected. Alternative non-physical displays *of* affection (wink, encouraging compliment) can be used.

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING AND REPORTING ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

Every province and territory in Canada, except the Yukon, has mandatory reporting laws regarding the abuse and neglect of children and youth. Consequently it is the policy of the All Ontario Youth Convention that any of the convention leaders, volunteers, or participants who have reasonable grounds to suspect that a participant is, or may be a victim, or who have been a victim of emotional, physical abuse or neglect, or sexual abuse shall immediately report the suspicion.

DUTY TO REPORT: Every person in Ontario is required under *The Child & Family Services Act* to promptly report his/her belief that a child (under 16 years of age) is or may be in need of protection. "A person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is or may be in need of protection shall share the belief and the information upon which it is based to a society." C.F.S.A. s. 72(l)

PERSONS MUST REPORT DIRECTLY The person who has the reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must make the report directly to a children's aid society. The person must not rely on anyone else to report on his or her behalf. CFSA s.72(3)

ONGOING DUTY TO REPORT

A person must report any additional information, even if that person has reported previous information about the same child and family. CFSA s72(2)

WHY PEOPLE DO NOT REPORT

"I must have made a mistake." "It's not really any of my business." "I'll deal with it next week." "I'm overreacting." "What if I am wrong?" "It's not my responsibility."

The fear of getting involved, making a mistake, feeling vulnerable, confronting disagreement or facing possible criticism, is common. It is important that you move past the fear and realize that you may be the only person who cares enough to help a child in need. "Reasonable grounds" are what average person, given his or her training, background and experience, exercising normal and honest judgment, would suspect. The Children's Aid Society will decide if the information provided will require an investigation or intervention or may make suggestions about how the child and family can be helped in other ways if necessary.

PROTECTION FROM LIABILITY All persons, in making a report of suspected child abuse to a Children's Aid Society, are protected in law against civil action unless the person is proven to have acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief or suspicion. [C.F.S.A.s. 72(7)]

FAILURE TO REPORT The penalty imposed upon certain professionals and officials for failure to report a suspicion of child abuse emphasizes that the child's safety must take precedence over all other concerns, including confidentiality of information and all other provincial statutes. Any professional who fails to report his/her suspicion of a child's abuse where that information was obtained in the course of his or her professional or official duties is liable, upon conviction, to a fine of up to \$1000. [C.F. S.A. s.72(4), (6.2)]

Steps required immediately when youth reveals that he/she has been abused or when abuse is suspected:

1. Document evidence observed, disclosed, or suspected.
2. Report evidence to the professional Counsellor who is available at the Convention.
3. If the youth is under 16 years of age report to the Children's Aid Society.
4. The Accused will be suspended from his or her volunteer position.
5. Continue to support the victim while the proper authorities investigate.

Important Phone Numbers

Children's Aid Society - FACS	Niagara	905-937-7731
	Ottawa	613-747-7800
	Waterloo	519-576-0540
Sexual Assault Centre	Niagara	905-682-4584
	Ottawa	613-562-2333
	Waterloo	519-741-8633
Distress Line	Niagara	905-688-3711
	Ottawa	613-741-6433
	Waterloo	519-744-7645
Women's Place, Interval House of Ottawa Anselma House	Niagara	905-788-0113
	Ottawa	613-234-5181
	Waterloo	519-742-5894
Regional Police Department	Niagara	905- 735-7811
	Ottawa	613-236-1222
	Waterloo	519-653-7700
Police Emergency	911	
Kids Help Phone	1-800-668-6868	

Resources

Swagman, Beth; Preventing Child Abuse, A guide for churches"; CRC Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Child and Family Services Act, 1990, Ontario

Some information was taken from Abuse Policies of Bethany Christian Reformed Church of Fenwick.
Last Updated: May 4, 2005

Revisions

- 1.0 – 5/12/03 Original Final Document
- 1.1 – By Tim Scholman, 2005 Planning Committee Chairman
 - 5/04/05 – Changed Terms – Small Group Leader, Area Dorm Resident
 - Added Regional Phone Numbers for Waterloo, Ottawa and Niagara

Planning Committee, Area Dorm Residents and Small Group Leaders Code of Ethics

1. My first priority in teaching/supervising/leading youth will be to seek the welfare of the youth physically, socially, educationally, and spiritually.
2. I will also try to understand and respect the youth's cultural background.
3. I will not do anything that will damage the trust of a youth. I will try to protect the youth from all forms of abuse while he or she is in my care.
4. If I suspect that a youth may be hurt by the abusive actions or attitudes of another person, I will report that suspicion to a responsible person so that it can be investigated properly.
5. If I wish to talk to the youth alone, it will be within the sight and sound of other people.
6. I will answer the question of a youth openly and honestly.
7. If a youth is distressed, I will try to offer comfort and help. I will encourage the youth to find appropriate help for their needs.

I have read and I understand the expectations as presented.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Volunteer/Staff Position: _____

Date: _____