



Building Healthy Minds and Bodies since 1977

6.3 REPORTING CHILD ABUSE POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to assist Okanagan Gymnastics Centre (OGC) employees and volunteers in their statutory duty to protect children, under the age of 19 and vulnerable adults, from physical, emotional, verbal and sexual abuse, exploitation and/or neglect. The policy strives to ensure that employees are aware of the current provincial legislation which covers OGC's statutory duties towards minor employees and minor members, and to provide employees and volunteers with information and tools to deal with a situation where a child and or vulnerable adult may be a risk due to abuse, exploitation and/or neglect.

POLICY

OGC recognizes its responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of all children attending the OGC facility, whether that child is member, employee, or visitor. OGC recognizes that this same responsibility occurs in the case of a vulnerable adults over the age of 19.

OGC shall take steps to ensure that OGC employees and OGC members are aware of, and alert to, signs and symptoms of possible child abuse, exploitation and/or neglect, and if required, have the tools to be able to respond appropriately if a child's safety or well-being is at risk (and/or the safety / well-being of a vulnerable adult).

PROCEDURE

An OGC employee or volunteer who has a reasonable belief that a child (or vulnerable adult) has been or is likely to be abused, exploited or neglected has a legal duty under British Columbia's provincial legislation to report the matter to the Ministry for Child and Family Development ("MCFD"). If a child is in immediate danger, call police (9-1-1) to intervene in addition to MCFD to determine need for immediate child apprehension and protection. An OGC employee or volunteer who makes a report, (can be done anonymously) to the appropriate authorities shall not be penalized in any way for reporting suspected abuse, exploitation and/or neglect, as long as the report was provided in good faith.

Recognizing Abuse

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Staff should be concerned about a child (or vulnerable adult) who shows the following symptom/s (this is not a comprehensive list but an overview):

- a) Neglect
 - Appears to be undernourished and/or has inadequate or no meals/snacks when appropriate.
 - Has obvious medical needs that are unattended.
 - Is frequently dressed inadequately for the season or weather.
- b) Physical Abuse
 - Has physical injuries such as bruises, welts, cuts or burns and whose explanations seem to be incompatible with the nature or extent of the injury.
 - Is fearful when questioned about an injury.
 - Is usually fearful to undress at appropriate times, such as for gym class.
- c) Sexual Abuse
 - Frequently makes drawings or people with disproportionately shaped sexual organs.
 - Demonstrates unusual interest in, or preoccupation with, sexual acts or sexual language that is beyond the kind of interest or knowledge normally expected for his/her age.
 - Mentions that “it hurts going to the bathroom”.
 - Complains about pain around the genitals, mouth and/or throat area.
 - Appears to be extremely fearful of being left alone with particular adults or with adult men or adult women in general.
- d) General indicators
 - Is very reluctant to attend school and or extra-curricular activities.
 - Is frequently absent from school and or extra-curricular activities.
 - Is frequently late.
 - Appears reluctant to go home.
- e) Parent/guardian(s) behaviour as an indicator
 - Shows a lack of concern for the well-being of the child.
 - Has unrealistic expectations of the child’s performance.
 - Appears unduly distrustful and suspicious of organization staff.
 - Is aggressive/abusive when approached about general concerns regarding the child.

Expectations

No OGC employee shall put himself/herself in a situation where they may be open to an allegation of child abuse, exploitation and/or neglect, including but not limited to being alone one-on-one with a child / vulnerable adult, assisting a child / vulnerable adult with a non-emergency injury and/or with personal hygiene issues when a third party is not present, meeting a child / vulnerable adult outside of the OGC facility

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without the permission of the child's parent and/or guardian, or the parent/guardian/caretaker of the vulnerable adult.

Notification

If an OGC employee or OGC member suspects a child or youth (under 19 years of age) is being abused or neglected you have the legal duty to report this concern to a MCFD child welfare worker. Phone 1-800-663-9122, 24 hours a day. A report also needs to be made to the supervisor of the OGC employee, to make them aware of the situation. If the employee or supervisor feels the child is in immediate danger, call police (9-1-1) to intervene in addition to calling the MCFD child welfare worker. If a child or youth would like to talk to someone call the "Helpline for Children at 310-1234. You do not need an area code and can call anytime day or night and do not need to give your name. Reports should also be made if an OGC employee has concerns about abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult, and that call can be made directly to the RCMP.

Documentation

- All disclosures received by an OGC employee from a child / vulnerable adult must be documented in an objective manner with recording of facts, including time, dates and manner in which the staff member became aware of the situation.
- A copy shall be given to the OGC Director of Operations as soon as possible and within 24 hours.
- Ensure that documentation uses the wording that the participant used to make the disclosure.

Ongoing Safety of Child / Vulnerable Adult

In the event that an OGC employee has been reported to MCFD and/or the RCMP on the suspicion of child abuse, exploitation or neglect, and the alleged (child) victim wishes to continue to participate at OGC (and MCFD / RCMP believe the child's continued involvement at OGC is in the child's best interests) accommodations shall be made in conjunction with OGC Management so that the child is able to continue participating in their program at OGC and the child's ongoing safety and personal well-being is not compromised. Similar issues will be reviewed in the case of a vulnerable adult.

Non-involvement in investigation

OGC employees shall not assume nor undertake any investigation of child abuse, exploitation and/or neglect past the point of reporting a suspected offence to their OGC supervisor, and the same limitations occur in the case of a vulnerable adult. It shall be the responsibility of the OGC employee along with their supervisor to report the matter to MCFD and the RCMP, and allow further investigation, if necessary, to be undertaken by MCFD, RCMP or appropriate entity/person.

Discussion of Alleged Abuse

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OGC staff discussion of alleged abuse must be kept to the minimum required. Under no circumstances will staff notify the alleged offender of the accusation or discuss the circumstances with the alleged offender. Staff will allow the Ministry / RCMP to notify the parents and/or guardians of the abusive situation. While continuing to offer support, staff should refrain from interviewing the child after the child's first disclosures. However, management is required to allow the investigating social worker and police officers to interview the child. No staff will be present during the interview, unless specifically requested by the investigating social worker, police officers, or the child. The same parameters would be in effect when a vulnerable adult was being interviewed.

Confidentiality

If child abuse, exploitation and/or neglect is suspected, and a report is made to MCFD and/or the RCMP, the confidentiality of the child / vulnerable adult involved and the family of the child / vulnerable adult must be respected and OGC shall take steps to ensure that this confidentiality is maintained.

Employee Charged and Convicted

Any OGC employee that is accused of child abuse, exploitation and/or neglect shall be suspended with pay pending the completion of an investigation by MCFD and/or the RCMP. Details of the OGC employee's situation, pending the resolution of the investigation by MCFD and/or the RCMP shall be handled by Management, confidentially and with discretion. Any OGC employee accused of abusing, exploiting and/or neglecting a vulnerable adult would be subject to the same set of restrictions.

The future employment of the accused OGC employee shall be determined by the OGC Board of Directors and Gymnastics British Columbia once the findings of MCFD and the RCMP have been provided. Any OGC employee convicted of abusing, exploiting and/or neglecting a child / vulnerable adult shall have their employment terminated immediately.

Responsibilities:

OGC management shall:

- Ensure that OGC employees are informed and familiar with this policy.
- Report child abuse and/or abuse of a vulnerable adult to the appropriate authorities (MCFD and RCMP).

OGC employees shall:

OGC staff suspecting abuse will compile a report containing the following information, one copy of which will be given to MCFD and one copy kept in the locked OGC's files. The child's name, address and birth date / name of vulnerable adult, address and birth date.

- The name of the parent/guardian(s) responsible for the child's care / name of parent/guardian/caretaker of the vulnerable adult.

- Any immediate concerns about the child's safety / any immediate concerns about the safety of the vulnerable adult.
- The nature and extent of the circumstances leading to the suspicion that the child / vulnerable adult is a victim of abuse.
- All physical and behavioral indicators observed.
- Information on nature / type of disabilities of a child / vulnerable adult, if known.
- Information on the relevant information concerning the child, vulnerable adult and/or family, including language or culture.
- The identity of the suspect(s), where possible, including as much information as possible.
- Information about other persons who may be witnesses or may have information about the child / vulnerable adult.
- Become familiar and act according with this policy and the applicable provincial legislation.
- Report child abuse, exploitation and/or neglect to OGC management, MCFD and the RCMP.
- Record pertinent details and dates regarding the well-being of a child / vulnerable adult.
- Make reasonable effort to avoid situations where an OGC employee may be open to allegations of child abuse or abuse of a vulnerable adult.
- Advise the appropriate authorities and OGC management if a parent, guardian or third party informs an OGC employee of suspected abuse, exploitation or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult.

1. DEFINITIONS

“Child” means a person under 19 years of age and includes a youth.

“Child abuse” means the physical, mental, emotional and/or psychological maltreatment or sexual molestation or neglect of a child.

“Child neglect” means failure on the part of child's caregivers to keep child safe and healthy. It can include one or more of the following:

- The failure to provide adequate food and shelter;
- The failure to provide basic health care;
- Inadequate supervision or child care;
- Inadequate protection from physical risks or danger.

“Reasonable grounds” means a set of facts or circumstances which would satisfy an ordinary cautious and prudent person that there is reason to believe and which goes beyond mere suspicion.

“Physical abuse” any physical force or action which results in, or may potentially result in, injury to a child and which exceeds that which could be reasonable discipline.

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“Vulnerable adult” is any person who lacks the absolute *most basic* (as distinct from mid-level or typical level) human life skills by reason of not having learned them through the formative years of childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. A vulnerable adult is unable, rather than unwilling, to properly learn or properly maintain these skills, and is usually completely without, and unable to obtain, any family, friends, acquaintances or other assistive persons in their lives to offer education or assistance in these areas

2. REFERENCES

Child, Family and Community Service Act (1996)
Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect, British Columbia

APPROVED BY OGC BOARD OF DIRECTORS FEBRUARY 15, 2017