



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Approved July 9th, 2016

1. Understanding the need

Reducing the risk of sexual abuse of vulnerable persons

The physical and sexual abuse of children has increasingly and properly claimed the attention of our society. In response, it is the commitment of RDYO to provide reasonable protective care to all preschoolers, children, youth and other vulnerable people involved in our program. Children are naturally trusting. Children readily place their faith in adults who care for them. It is our responsibility as an organization to safeguard that trust.

Impact

A single incident of abuse can devastate an organization. Parents question whether their own children have been victimized. The viability of our youth and children's programs is jeopardized. Leaders face blame and guilt for allowing the incident to happen. Such incidents often attract media attention – sometimes on a national scale. Television stations conduct live interviews on the evening news. Front page stories hit the local paper. Community residents begin to associate the program with the incident of abuse. However, far more tragic is the emotional trauma to the victim and the victim's family, and the enormous potential legal liability the organization faces. If a trial ensues, the issue stays alive in the media for months, sometimes even years.

2. Understanding abuse

Definitions

Abuse is characterized as follows:

- It can be physical, emotional or sexual;

- It always involves the misuse of power;
- Misuse of power takes place when people take advantage of the authority or power they have over vulnerable people. Vulnerable people include adults with physical or mental disabilities and children.

Physical abuse is using physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a vulnerable person. It is more than reasonable discipline. Sometimes injury is caused by over-discipline. Injuring a child, youth or other vulnerable person is not acceptable, regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline.

- In 97 per cent of reported cases of physical abuse, parents are the perpetrators.¹
- The perpetrator of physical abuse is approximately 1.5 times more likely to be male than female.²

Emotional abuse is a pattern of hurting an individual's feelings to the point of damaging their self respect. It includes verbal attacks, insults, humiliation or rejection. A child, youth or vulnerable person who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behaviour.

Sexual abuse occurs when a child, youth or other vulnerable person is used by somebody else for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may also be sexual abuse if older or more powerful children or youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful.

Sexual abuse includes behaviour that involves touching and non-touching aspects.

Types of sexual abuse that involve touching include:

- Fondling
- Oral, genital and anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Rape

Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include:

- Verbal comments
- Exposure to pornography
- Obscene phone calls, e-mail or other communications
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

Symptoms of abuse and molestation

RDYO volunteers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioral and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit.

Physical signs may include:

¹ Wolfe, D. (1987). *Child Abuse. Implications for Child Development and Psychopathology*. Newbury Park, California: Sage. p. 20.

² Ibid.

- lacerations and bruises
- nightmares
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- difficulty with urination
- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease

Behavioural signs may include:

- sexual self-consciousness
- “acting out” sexual behaviour
- withdrawal from regular activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don’t like (names a particular person).
- (Particular person) does things to me when we’re alone.
- I don’t like to be alone with (particular person).
- (Particular person) fooled around with me.

The effects of sexual abuse of vulnerable people

Child sexual abuse robs children of their childhood and can potentially scar its young victims for life. Too often, in the past, the effects of abuse were minimized or dismissed. Children were viewed as being resilient. Recent research has shown that children can suffer significant pain from even a single abusive incident. RDYO staff and volunteers must be aware of the pain and long term suffering that can accompany such abuse. Abused children can display a wide range of negative symptoms in the aftermath of abuse. Abuse can result in abnormal fears, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), aggressive behaviour, sexual “acting out,” depression and poor self-esteem. Sexually transmitted disease is also a possible outcome.

The degree of damage depends upon several factors including the intensity, duration and frequency of the abuse. In addition, the relationship of the perpetrator to the child matters. If the abuser is a known and trusted authority figure in the child’s life, the degree of impact increases dramatically. Consequences of child sexual abuse can plague victims into adulthood. Outcome studies of adult survivors of child sexual abuse suggest the following effects: sexual dysfunction, eating disorders, substance abuse, promiscuity, disassociation from emotions, and possible perpetration of sexual abuse on others.

Profile of a child molester

Who is the typical child molester? Some assume that molesters are “strangers wearing trench coats” or “dirty old men.” These stereotypes are not only inaccurate, but they also contribute dangerously to a false sense of security. Researchers in the field of child sexual abuse currently indicate that no single profile fits the various perpetrators of abuse.

3. PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Commitments

The RDYO makes the following commitments to protect children, youth and vulnerable adults, and those who work with them:

- Screening of those who work with children, youth and other vulnerable individuals.
- All staff, board members, and volunteers who participate in the Orchestra's residential camp will undergo a *criminal record check*.
- All employees and volunteers who work with preschoolers, children and youth will be made familiar with the nature of child sexual abuse.
- All employees and volunteers who work with preschoolers, children and youth will be made familiar with the guidelines contained in the RDYO's *Child Protection Policy*.
- The policies to prevent sexual abuse are regarded seriously and will be enforced.
- In general, all music instruction is done in an open, visible and public location and whenever possible there are two unrelated adults, present during activities involving children and youth.
- Our contract staff or volunteers will make regular rounds of instruction spaces, washrooms and corridors during the activities of the RDYO.
- A directory of names and addresses of parents and children will be carefully maintained.

Proper display of affection

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. The following guidelines are recommended as healthy and positive displays of affection:

A. Appropriate Touch

Love and caring can be expressed in the following appropriate ways:

- Bend down to the child's eye level and speak kindly; listen to him or her carefully;
- Take a child's hand and lead him or her to an activity;
- Put an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting;
- Take both of the child's hands as you say, "You did such a good job!" (or "I'm so glad to see you. We've missed you!" etc.);
- Pat a child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her;
- Hold a child by the shoulders or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour;
- Gently hold a child's chin to help him or her focus on what you are saying;
- Hold and console a preschool child who is crying.

B. Inappropriate Touch

Staff and volunteers should avoid:

- Kissing a child or coaxing a child to kiss you;
- Extended hugging;
- Tickling;
- Touching a child in any area that would normally be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child with toileting);
- Carrying children or having them sit on your lap;
- Being alone with a child except during scheduled private instruction that takes place in an open, visible and public instruction space monitored by program directors

Staffing and supervision guidelines

Program staff and volunteers should always conduct themselves appropriately, being an example of integrity, respect and honesty to those in their care. The desire is to provide a safe and loving environment where children and youth feel comfortable and are protected.

A. Supervision

- Programs that involve children and youth must always include adequate supervision.
- Supervision should also be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

B. Two Adults

- In general, there are to be two unrelated adults in any enclosed room with children or youth.
- Teams work well and are encouraged as a method of staffing.

C. Parental Permission

- Consent of a parent must be obtained before transporting a child or youth.

D. Day Trips

- Activities conducted away from normal RDYO rehearsal venues should be pre-approved by two members of the Board executive.
- Parents should be notified at least one week prior to the outing.
- All supervising adults must be approved volunteers.
- When transporting children is involved in an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts.

Review of the policy

A copy of the *Policy to Protect Children, Youth and Other Vulnerable People at RDYO* will be provided to all prospective volunteers with the expectation that they read the material and become familiar with the contents.

Criminal Record Check

The right to ask for a *criminal record check* for volunteers is reserved by RDYO. (All contract staff submit to a *criminal record check* for their own protection and for the protection of the organization.) A *criminal record check* will always be required in those instances where someone is a new volunteer or unknown to the organization. Minors (under 16 years of age) are exempt from a *criminal record check*. The cost for a *criminal record check* requested by RDYO will be borne by the organization under the condition that the volunteer commits to three months of service. If there is no criminal record of any sort, the volunteer may be considered for ongoing service. If there is a record or information which raises some concern, administrative staff will meet to discuss and resolve the matter.

The following are criteria to consider when evaluating the information:

- The number and type of convictions;
- The age and circumstances of the offender at the time of the offense;
- The length of time between past criminal activity and the present;
- The conduct and circumstances of the individual since the offense; and
- The likelihood of the individual repeating the offense.

If any offense is related to the abuse of children or is of a sexual nature, the prospective volunteer or staff will not be approved for work or volunteer service. The information contained in the *criminal record check* report is considered strictly confidential.

Approval

The Board Executive will review the materials and make the decision to make a *prospective staff or volunteer* an *approved staff or volunteer*. All staff and volunteer application materials will be kept confidential.

Disqualification

Kinds of criminal convictions which disqualify individuals from working with children and youth:

- A criminal conviction for a sexual offense involving a minor would disqualify an applicant.
- Other crimes would strongly suggest that a person should not be considered for work with minors.

5. Incident reporting procedures

Anyone who has concerns regarding the safety of a child must report it to a manager or director who will facilitate the contact with the appropriate child protection agency. Abuse or neglect need not have already occurred for a child to be in need of protection; it is not necessary to wait until a child has been harmed to intervene.

Discuss suspicious behavior immediately

Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between staff /volunteers and a child, youth or other vulnerable person must be confronted immediately and investigated. Prompt warnings must be issued when appropriate, and the situation monitored very closely. The staff/volunteer's services should be terminated immediately for continued violation of sufficient gravity. Staff and volunteers should note when a youth or child appears aloof or withdrawn, or exhibits a marked personality change. This may indicate a problem that deserves attention.

Responding to a child, youth, or other vulnerable person

When a child, youth or other vulnerable person first comes to you, be sure to take his or her word seriously. Don't deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to the individual. Give emotional support, reminding the individual that he or she is not at fault. Tell the individual that he or she was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the individual "you will not tell anyone."

Confidentiality

In these matters it is important to keep the information restricted to those who need to be advised. This means that all suspicions of abuse should be directed only to the Board Executive.

Responsibility of the Board Executive

As soon as possible after an incident is disclosed the Board Executive will:

- In conversation with the person who has made the disclosure, complete an incident report form.
- Advise the person who has made the disclosure to maintain his/her own detailed notes including names, dates, times, places, etc.
- Assist the person who has come to you to contact appropriate authorities. An in-depth investigation will be left to professionals who are familiar with such cases.
- Take the allegations seriously without prejudging the situation and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support to help to prevent further hurt. The care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
- Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is an approved staff or volunteer, that person should be suspended from his or her duties until the

investigation is finished. If the person is a paid employee, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

Protection from liability

RDYO personnel are required to immediately report to the appropriate local authorities any suspected case of child abuse. It is not a breach of confidence between RDYO personnel and the child involved. No person is personally liable for anything done or omitted in good faith in the exercise of this responsibility. Although protecting parents as much as possible from undue interference by outside authorities may be desirable, the protection of children from abuse is more important.

The social worker will talk to people who have contact with the victim and family. They may request records or other types of information. They are entitled to whatever information is needed to complete an investigation. If denied access to a record, they can seek a court order.

Who must report

All persons who have “reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection” have an obligation to report.

6. Response to Allegations of Abuse

Realistically, no practical prevention strategy is completely effective. An accusation of sexual abuse may occur in any organization. The *Child Protection Policy* contains an approved strategy to respond to allegations of abuse. The RDYO response strategy recognizes the following underlying principles:

- All allegations are to be taken seriously.
- Situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people’s privacy and confidentiality.
- Full co-operation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of the organization’s lawyer.
- Adequate care must be shown for the well-being of victims.

7. Implementation and accountability

The topic of abuse and the introduction of the *Child Protection Policy* will create a variety of reactions among staff and volunteers. Many will solidly support the adoption of the policy. Some will have questions while some may have reservations. The need for such a

policy will be presented in introductory sessions and opportunity for feedback will be provided. The manager or director will be available to address concerns and provide specific answers about the policy.

Presentation of the policy

The following key points will be made:

- Sexual abuse can happen in any organization.
- One incident can devastate a child, a family and the organization.
- The legal liabilities can be enormous.
- Leaders may be held liable.
- A prevention program can reduce risk through relatively simple procedures. employees adhere to this Code.