



*Society of
Saint Vincent de Paul*

National Council of Canada



The Abuse Prevention Policy and Program for all existing members, volunteers and employees

New members have the Abuse Prevention Policy and Program information in the Screening and Orientation program(as of April 2017), but may attend this session too

The National Council of Canada
wishes to thank
Windsor Essex Central Council
for sharing their program and slides
for use in the National program.

This program and slides were produced in part by
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Abuse Prevention Policy and Program

- The material presented here is in summary form.
- Please refer to the National Council of Canada Guidelines (8.7 Abuse Prevention Guidelines, and 8.8 Discrimination and Harassment Guidelines) for full information on reporting, receiving, handling, and documenting complaints, claims and other issues.
- Members, volunteers and employees of all Conferences, Councils and Special Works operations are also asked to sign Form # 9.23 to confirm they have had this training.

The Purpose of this policy and the Training material is-

- To meet moral, ethical and legal requirements by the Society pertaining to relations between members, volunteers and employees and their services to the vulnerable persons we meet
- To maintain environments that are free from abuse, discrimination or harassment
- To identify and correct unacceptable behaviors and actions
- To establish clear mechanisms for reporting, receiving and managing alleged abuse
- Intended for your protection as a member, volunteer or employee of the Society

Policy Statements of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

- The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is committed to ensuring the safety and protection of those we serve
- One of the primary goals volunteers and employees, is to respect integrity and promote dignity in accordance with Christian values and the philosophy of the Society as expressed in the Rule
- Abuse, discrimination, harassment or neglect of any kind is contrary to the mission of the Society, *serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.*

Policy Statements (cont.)

- The Society will not tolerate any form of physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological abuse nor any form of neglect or harassment.
- The Service Covenant/Confidentiality Agreement and the Abuse Prevention Checklist and Acknowledgment Form are to be signed by all Vincentians at the time of their orientation, documenting each member's commitment to upholding the Mission and Values of the Society.

What is Abuse?

Abuse, without limitation, is defined as: any inappropriate action that causes, or is likely to cause, a person physical or psychological harm, or financial or material loss. Abuse can be manifested in several forms including verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, cyber, financial, medical, violation of human rights, and negligence. Different types of abuse can occur in isolation or together.

Physical Abuse (defined)

- The use, attempted use or threatened use of force that may result in physical harm or injury
- Includes slapping, hitting, punching, shaking, pulling, throwing, kicking, biting, choking, strangling, or the abusive use of restraints

Sexual Abuse (defined)

- Any unwanted touching, communication of a sexual nature or content, fondling, observations for sexual gratification, penetration or attempted penetration or innuendos, exhibitionism or exploitation for profit including pornography

Verbal Abuse (defined)

- Humiliating remarks, name calling, swearing at, yelling at, taunting, teasing, and continual put downs

Psychological Abuse (defined)

- Communication or course of action of an abusive nature
- Includes sarcasm, exploitive behaviour, intimidation, manipulation, and insensitivity to race, sexual preference or family dynamics

Cyber Abuse (defined)

- The use of technology to psychologically, emotionally, sexual and/or otherwise abuse or harass a Vulnerable Person.
- It includes but is not limited to the use of email, social media, texting, blogging and website postings.

Financial Abuse (defined)

- **The misuse of** a person's funds and assets; obtaining property and funds without his/her knowledge and full consent, or in the case of an elderly person who is not competent, not in his/her best interests.
- It includes *pressuring* someone for money or property.
- Most common form of elder abuse in Canada

Other applicable Definitions -

- **Vulnerable Person:** A person served by the Society who is in a position of material or emotional need, sick, or physically or mentally handicapped.
- **Discrimination:** Any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference which has the purpose of nullifying or impairing the recognition, employment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- **Harassment:** Engaging in comments or conduct that is known, or ought to be known, to be unwelcome – including but not limited to - name calling, offensive jokes, unwanted advances or touching, harassing letters, calls, emails, or visits; threats of retaliation or other threatening behavior.

Proactive and Preventive
Actions,
What Does the Law Say,
Remedial Actions

Prevention

Proceed with completing the Vincentian Selection process:

Complete a Membership Application including three references

Using the Interview Checklist/Reference Check Report, the Conference President or Screening Committee interviews the applicant and recommends approval of membership pending reference check

A Volunteer Screening form is completed and a vulnerable sector police record check is conducted by the potential new member and submitted to the conference in question to ensure there is no criminal record, no outstanding criminal charges, no contact or access or behaviour restrictions or orders made in the interest of safety or child protection.

Once an initial police record is completed, a police record check must be renewed every three years. A copy is placed in the member's file, which shall be opened and maintained up to date by the Conference President

Using the Interview Checklist/Reference Check Report, two trained full members of the Conference or Council interview the three references separately according to the Responsible Stewardship guidelines

New members take part in an orientation session, including training on the Abuse Prevention program

New members sign the Service Covenant/Confidentiality Agreement and the Abuse Prevention Checklist and Acknowledgment Form

Understand why allegations may be made? =

My truth, your truth, the whole truth...or ?

- Vulnerable persons may be under stress, and super sensitive to the actions of others
- A complaint may be seen as a way to get some money
- Mental health problems
- Anger and/or frustration
- A history of abuse
- A hypersensitivity to potential or perceived abuse
- A sincere belief that something did happen

What does the law say?

Human Rights Code

“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.”

- All other laws must reflect and be consistent with the Human Rights Code.

What does the law say?

Criminal Code

- Abuse and harassment are crimes under the criminal code and perpetrators can be charged and convicted.

Good Samaritan Laws

- Protect individuals who are doing their best with due diligence to help an individual who is in distress

What does the law say?

Provincial Legislative Acts vary by province.

Ex. Child and Family Services Act of Ontario

- Outlines the provisions for the protection of children and youth from abuse and neglect
- Outlines the mandatory provision for disclosure of witnessed abuse and/or neglect of children to the appropriate authorities and protects those who disclose the information

Neglect is the failure to provide for the shelter, safety, supervision and nutritional needs of the child.

It can be physical, educational or emotional neglect.

What if I witness abuse or harassment in a home?

Any member shall report immediately to the Conference President all instances of actual **or suspected** child abuse or neglect they may witness during a home visit.

Remember, you have a mandatory duty to report any suspected or actual child abuse you witness to the appropriate authorities.

What if I witness abuse or harassment in a home?

The President and the reporting member-s, after review of the facts and observations at hand, shall ask the member to promptly inform the appropriate Provincial/Territorial child protection and welfare agency

(e.g.: Ontario: Children's Aid Society: Québec: Direction de la protection de la jeunesse, etc.) if they reasonably believe a child is abused or neglected.

Always err on the side of caution.

Remedial Actions – the process of reporting -

- If a potential claim situation arises –
- Make a report to your President immediately

If the alleged abuser is a member of the Society and the alleged abuse is deemed to have occurred while volunteering for the Society, the President will

follow the Procedure detailed in Procedure I of NCC Guidelines for Abuse Prevention.

The Process of Reporting (cont.)

When a Vincentian is made aware
of an allegation of abuse

he or she must report this immediately

To the acting Conference President

in a timely fashion for referral to law enforcement
or other governmental authorities
having jurisdiction over such matters, as
applicable.

**Working
Together...
We are trained!**



**...to ensure a safe
environment for everyone.**