

Abuse, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy and Program

This Summary Document was developed from materials in the National Operations Manual and the National and Windsor-Essex training procedures – it is intended to be used along with, or in place of, the PowerPoint of the same name. This document and the PowerPoint were developed by the National Training Committee. If anyone has questions or wants suggestions on how to use these materials, please contact a member of the National Training Committee.

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The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is committed to ensuring the safety and protection of those we serve. One of the primary goals and purposes of the Society, and its members, employees and volunteers, is to respect the integrity and promote dignity in accordance with Christian values and the philosophy of the Society as expressed in the Rule. The Society will not tolerate any form of physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological abuse, any discrimination, nor any form of harassment or neglect, towards anyone to whom we offer help and protection. Abuse or neglect of any kind is contrary to the mission of the Society, *servng Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.*

Responsibility for Implementation of the Abuse, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy:

In late 2012, the Abuse Prevention Guidelines #8.7, the Discrimination and Harassment Guidelines #8.8, and the Abuse Prevention Checklist and Acknowledgement form #9.23, were developed to respond to mandatory Insurance coverage requirements, and were distributed nationally. The intent was that all present Vincentians – conference and council full and auxiliary members, volunteers and employees of Conferences and councils, and all Special Works operations, would take the training and read and sign Form 9.23 to acknowledge their intent to abide by the Abuse, Discrimination, Harassment Prevention Policy.

The responsibility for implementation of the national Abuse, Discrimination, Harassment Prevention policy rests with the Regional Presidents, and the Presidents of the local Particular Council and Conferences. This policy has also been included as part of the Screening and Orientation procedure for all new members.

In addition, Particular Council Presidents where a Special Works, such as a Thrift Store, exists are responsible to ensure that this policy training is delivered to all the employees and volunteers at the Store within their jurisdiction.

The purpose of this policy is:

- 1) 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 serve.
- 2) To maintain environments that are free from abuse of any form or kind
- 3) To identify and correct unacceptable behaviours and actions
- 4) To establish a mechanism for receiving complaints, and a procedure to manage complaints – the exact processes are explained in document #8.7 Abuse Prevention Guidelines; and #8.8 Discrimination and Harassment Guidelines. Please refer to these guidelines if a potential situation arises

- 5) To ensure that members, employees and volunteers are aware they must report any incident that could result in a potential complaint against the society or any of our members, volunteers and employees
- 6) Intended for your protection as a member, volunteer or employee of the Society.

Applicable Definitions:

Vulnerable Person: means a person served by the Society who is in a position of material or emotional need, sick or physically or mentally handicapped. Volunteers and employees in positions of trust with vulnerable individuals must go through a more rigorous screening process in these instances.

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 neglect or negligence. Different types of abuse can occur in isolation, or together.

Physical abuse - the use, attempted use or threatened use of intentional force that can result in physical harm or injury to an individual. It can take the form of slapping, hitting punching, shaking, pulling, throwing, kicking, biting, choking, strangling or the abusive use of restraints.

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

Emotional abuse – an attack on an individual’s self-esteem. May take the form of name calling, threatening, swearing, yelling, ridiculing, berating, intimidating, isolating, hazing, habitual scapegoating and blaming.

Verbal abuse - making humiliating remarks, name calling, swearing at, yelling at, taunting, teasing, and continual put downs.

Psychological abuse - any communication or course of action of an abusive nature, and can include sarcasm, exploitive behaviour, intimidation, manipulation, and insensitivity to race, sexual preference or family dynamics.

Cyber abuse – the use of any type of technology to psychologically, emotionally or otherwise abuse or harass a vulnerable person

Discrimination: any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference which has the purpose of nullifying or impairing the recognition, employment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Harassment: engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. Harassment includes name calling, offensive jokes; unwanted sexual advances or invitations, ogling, sexually suggestive comments, persistent and unwanted requests for dates, unwanted touching; distribution or production of denigrating or degrading pictures or cartoons; harassing letters, phone calls, emails, or visits; threats of retaliation if a person refuses an advance or makes a complaint; or engaging in threatening behavior toward another person. The behavior need not be intentional in order to be considered harassment but may be offensive and/or intimidating.

Moral, Ethical and Legal Requirements – 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

Good Samaritan Laws: Protect individuals who are doing their best with due diligence to help an individual who is in distress

Criminal Code: Abuse and harassment are crimes under the criminal code and perpetrators can be charged and convicted

Provincial Legislative Acts vary by province:

In Ontario, the Child and Family Services Act of Ontario outlines the provisions for the protection of children and youth from abuse and neglect. Neglect is defined as the failure to provide for the shelter, safety, supervision and nutritional needs of a child. It can be physical, educational or emotional neglect.

The Child and Family Services Act of Ontario has a mandatory provision of disclosure of witnessed abuse and/or neglect of children to the proper authorities.

Check out the Provincial Acts and Child and Family Services Acts in your province, territory or region. Include this information in your training sessions.

Responsibilities for the Implementation of this Policy:

The responsibility for the implementation of the national Abuse, Discrimination, Harassment Prevention policy, and its inclusion in their local new member screening and orientation policies, falls to the Presidents of the local Particular Council and Conferences. Regional Presidents are also responsible to ensure that this policy is applied at all Special Works within their jurisdiction.

All Presidents are responsible to ensure this training is given to anyone involved with delivering our goods and services to those in need, not just to Conference members. Presidents must ensure their Abuse, Discrimination, Harassment Prevention policies are developed according to respective provincial legislation and are provided and available to each current and new members, including volunteers and employees.

These responsibilities are spelled out in the Operations Manual Administrative Procedures, in the Policies and Procedures section ADM #6.2.7 titled Abuse, Discrimination, Harassment, which states:

- 1) All Presidents must ensure that Abuse, Discrimination, Harassment/Discrimination Prevention policies are developed according to respective provincial legislation and are provided and available to each current and new members.
- 2) Presidents must ensure compliance with this policy in their local Conferences/Councils.
- 3) Presidents must ensure confidentiality and safety of all member records. This includes the documentation and protection of the signed forms 9.23.