

3.30 Child Abuse Prevention Policy

Intent

Growing Together Family Resource Centre is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all Growing Together Family Resource Centre employees, children, clients and visitors and, as such, treats any act of abuse and/or neglect as a very serious matter and will report incidents to the authorities as appropriate, and investigate promptly. Growing Together Family Resource Centre takes every reasonable precaution to reduce the risk of abuse and/or neglect.

Guidelines

At all times, children under the care and control of Growing Together Family Resource Centre shall be provided with appropriate supervision, provided by a competent and trained individual. At no time shall any children under the care and control of Growing Together Family Resource Centre be allowed to leave the premises without appropriate supervision, or under the care and control of their legal guardian(s).

Preventing Abuse

To prevent abuse and neglect, Growing Together Family Resource Centre requires all prospective employees and volunteers to have a Vulnerable Sector Police Check completed prior to hiring.

Growing Together Family Resource Centre also provides information to staff/volunteers at time of hire/volunteering and annually thereafter on our Abuse Policy, aimed at prevention, reporting and eradication of abuse.

Abuse prevention committee

The committee shall be comprised of the three supervisors and the executive director, they will review and sign off on the policy annually and ensure the enforcement of it. They will consult with the Health and Safety committee to follow up on recommendations from the risk assessments. They will arrange for appropriate annual child abuse prevention employee training.

Definitions

Physical Abuse is defined as but not limited to the 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 use of restraints.

Sexual Abuse is defined as but not limited to any unwanted touching, fondling, observations for sexual gratification, any penetration or attempted penetration with a penis, digital or object of the vagina or anus, verbal or written propositions or innuendos, exhibitionism or exploitation for profit including pornography.

Emotional Abuse is defined as but not limited to a chronic attack on an individual's self-esteem. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, berating, intimidating, isolating, hazing, habitual scapegoat, blaming.

Verbal Abuse is defined as but not limited to humiliating remarks, name calling, swearing at, taunting, teasing, continual put downs.

Psychological Abuse is defined as but not limited to communication of an abusive nature, sarcasm, exploitive behavior, intimidation, manipulation, and insensitivity to race, sexual preference or family dynamics.

Neglect is defined as but not limited to any behavior that leads to a failure to provide services which are necessary such as withdrawing basic necessities as forms of punishment, failing to assess and respond to changes in health status and refusing or withdrawing physical or emotional support.

Harassment is defined as but not limited to any unwanted physical or verbal conduct that offends or humiliates, including gender-based harassment. It can be a single incident or several incidents over time. It includes threats, intimidation, display of racism, sexism, unnecessary physical contact, suggestive remarks or gestures, offensive pictures or jokes. Harassment will be considered to have taken place if a reasonable person ought to have known that the behavior was unwelcome.

(see 2.17 Workplace Anti-Violence, Harassment and Sexual Harassment)

Physical Contact is a necessary and important component of working with and caring for infants and children and is essential to creating a nurturing environment that supports healthy development and positive engagement. All physical contact between GTFRC employees and children must be appropriate and directly related to the employee's role and job description. All employees will receive training at their staff orientation upon hire and annually thereafter. Staff will also review the policy during their annual policy and procedure review.

Teaching appropriate boundaries reduces the child's risk of sexual exploitation and/or abuse. Although children naturally test boundaries, it is important to consistently re-establish them and set limits on their behavior. Maintaining appropriate boundaries with children will build their security and help them learn how to create healthy relationships and set personal boundaries. Respecting a child's personal boundary (including physical, emotional and sexual boundaries) teaches them how they should expect to be treated by others.

- Ask children if they want to be touched, before touching them. For example, "May I hold your hand?" "Do you want a hug?" "Would you like me to help you fix your ponytail?" Any physical contact that is unwanted or makes a child feel uncomfortable is not appropriate.
- If a child invades the personal space of yourself or others, asks personal questions or confuses their role with an adult, be supportive while firmly re-establishing appropriate boundaries.

- Teach children to respect personal space and privacy. Establish privacy for using bathrooms and changing where possible.
- Establish and reinforce the child's role. Set limits and discourage children from listening to and engaging in adult conversations, especially when conversations pertain to adult related topics and adult decision making.

Examples of appropriate physical contact/affection in an early learning and childcare setting are:

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the back
- High fives
- Touching the hand, head, shoulder and arm
- Arm around the shoulder
- Sitting with a child
- Holding hands

Training and Education

Growing Together Family Resource Centre will make every effort to eliminate abuse and neglect through the implementation of in-house continuous quality improvements and risk management programs, including an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of our policy to promote zero tolerance of abuse and neglect of children under our care.

Growing Together Family Resource Centre provides annual mandatory educational in-services to staff and volunteers regarding abuse and neglect.

This includes Orientation training and retraining of all Growing Together Family Resource Centre staff, including:

- training on the relationship between power imbalances between staff and children and the potential for abuse and neglect by those in a position of trust, power and responsibility for childcare,
- training on the security protocols implemented by Growing Together Family Resource Centre,
- reporting obligations,
- how to identify signs and symptoms of abuse and/or neglect, and
- situations that may lead to abuse and neglect and how to avoid such situations.

(See P&P Section 5 Behavior Guidance)

Risk Assessment

Growing Together Family Resource Centre's Health and Safety committee will conduct a risk assessment of the environment to identify any issues related to potential abuse and/or neglect that may impact the operation and will institute measures to control any identified risks to employee safety. This information will be provided to all relevant stakeholders.

The risk assessment may include review of records and reports i.e. security reports, employee incident reports, staff perception surveys, health and safety inspection reports, first aid records or other related records. Research may also include a review of similar workplaces with respect to their history of abuse and/or neglect.

Growing Together Family Resource Centre Shall:

- Investigate all reported acts / incidents of abuse and/or neglect, and:
- consult with other parties (i.e. Legal Counsel, Health & Safety consultants, JHSCs, Employee Assistance Provider, Children's Aid Society, Human Rights Office, Local Police Services, Ministry of Education-Program Advisor and College of ECE's.)
- take all reasonable measures to eliminate or mitigate risks identified by the incident;
- document the incident, its investigation, and corrective action taken.
- Review this policy and hazard assessments annually, or as changes to job responsibilities or environments occur, and revise the assessment as needed.
- Review the efficacy of actions taken to eliminate or control abuse and/or neglect, and will revise our policy and procedures as required.

Reducing Risks

Employees will need to use personal or centre-issued electronic communication devices. In these cases, employees will have explicit direction from their Supervisor governing use. Ex. Hi Mama Situations include: field trips, off site programming, emergencies. While assigned to work with children, staff/volunteers are not permitted to use personal electronic communication devices except during breaks and emergency situations. Internet use, texting, emailing, on line shopping, and social media are all prohibited during working hours unless for administrative or documentation purposes. (See Internet and Electronic devices 2.24)

Safety and Prevention

(See 2.17 Workplace Anti-violence, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment Policy (Bills 168 and 132) – Ontario)

Walks and Field trips

All offsite excursions are reviewed for risk and approved by a Supervisor in advance: written parental consent is required and all safety practices are followed including emergency contacts, first aid and cell phone access.

(See 3.24 Maintaining Ratios- Best practice/Staff orientation)

Health

GTFR follows all recommended practices for allergies, injury and infectious diseases as outlined by the Ministry of Education and local Health Department. Health and safety regulations with the Child Care and Early Years Act include:

- All child care supervisors and employees counted in ratios must have a valid Standard First Aid and CPR – C certification.

- Whenever a child has an accident/incident that leads to injury, the employee is required to complete an Accident or Incident form for the parent/guardian to review and sign. All parents must be notified when any accident or incident occurs that could affect the health, safety or well-being of their child, and be provided with a copy of the report.
- If a child is diagnosed with anaphylaxis, asthma or another chronic medical condition, individual plans are completed by the parent reviewed with the Supervisor and staff prior to the child starting in a program. All allergy information is kept up to date in the child's file and allergy lists as well as any individual plans, are posted in the classrooms and kitchen as per the CCEYA compliance.

(See 3.10 (a) Child Care Centre Daily Written Record/ Communication Binder)

(See Accident report form)

Insurance

GTFRC ensures we have Commercial General Liability Insurance coverage, Abuse coverage and employer liability coverage for all aspects of the organization and provides proof of required insurance to the program funders, Ministry of Education, Municipality – Children's Services and local school boards.

Recruiting and Hiring

The interview is a formal process. Depending on the number of resumes received there may be a selection process based on years of experience, education, presentation of application, other special skills e.g. music, art. The applicant will be asked questions and rated on the answers provided based on a pre-set of answers and score. During the interview the Director will discuss the centre's core values, the training offered. Three references are required, two who can offer insight into the applicant's work experience. The questions asked are about their relationship with children, co-workers, families and supervisors. A question is asked about their programming skills, work attendance and initiative. The reference is asked if they would hire the applicant.

(See 2.6.1 Promotions and Transfers)

Experienced staff

GTFRC has job descriptions for all positions. For new employees they are offered a peer coach who supports their connection into the organization and is available for any questions regarding policies and procedures.

(See Job descriptions 2.22)

(See Peer coach orientation)

Supervision and Support for all Staff/Volunteers

(See 2.16 Child Care Centre Policy for Monitoring Compliance and Contraventions)

(See 2.23 Child Care Centre Supervision of Students and Volunteers Policy)

Reporting Abuse and/or Neglect

Growing Together Family Resource Centre recognizes that abuse and neglect can have serious and even lethal consequences. Behaviours such as physical abuse, sexual

abuse, emotional and psychological intimidation and neglect can be disruptive and harmful to the victim.

Clients

- Any client of Growing Together Family Resource Centre may come forward and report an act of abuse or neglect that they have experienced or witnessed.
- Growing Together Family Resource Centre will ensure that they are protected from any reprisal or negative action from within the organization resulting from the report. Growing Together Family Resource Centre will thoroughly investigate all claims / reports of abuse and/or neglect.

•

Employee

As an employee of Growing Together Family Resource Centre, you have the following responsibilities to our workplace:

- We trust that all of our employees will help us eliminate the threat of abuse and/or neglect from our workplace.
- All employees are responsible for preventing and reporting acts of abuse and/or neglect.
- If you witness any action related to abuse and/or neglect in the workplace, you must immediately report the incident to a member of the Administration Team.

The Administrative Team's Role

- The Administrative Team is responsible for creating and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace free from abuse and/or neglect.
- The Administrative Team must be sensitive to the climate in the workplace and address potential problems before those problems become serious.
- If a member of the Administrative Team becomes aware of abuse and/or neglect in the workplace and chooses to ignore it, that member and the organization risk being named co-respondent in a complaint and may be found liable in legal proceedings brought about by the complainant and/ or government representatives.

When an employee or client has asked a member of the Administrative Team to deal with a situation involving abuse and/or neglect, the member should:

- Support the employee or client without prejudging the situation.
- Work with the employee or client and document the action(s) and have them sign and date an official complaint.

Growing Together Family Resource Centre will immediately report to the Police, the Children's Aid Society, the College of ECE's, the Ministry of Education-Program Advisor and the parent of the child, every suspected, alleged, witnessed or confirmed incident of abuse or neglect regardless who did the abusing, or caused the neglect.

Growing Together Family Resource Centre will ensure that the child's legal guardian(s) are immediately notified of the results of the investigation.

Investigation of Abuse or Neglect

Growing Together Family Resource Centre shall take all claims of abuse and/or neglect seriously, and will investigate thoroughly. All complaints of abuse / neglect shall be reported to the authorities prior to the internal investigation process. During the investigation process there will always be two people present in the meeting which will include the Director and the centre supervisor.

Growing Together Family Resource Centre management will follow the investigation process outlined below:

Obtain a Description of the Incident / Claim

- Listen to the victim or witness, and ensure that they provide a full account of the incident(s).
- Ensure that you treat the matter seriously, using a professional manner and avoid discounting their difficulties in coming forward and telling the story.
- Contact the Executive Director if it appears that the situation may require legal action.
- Obtain a written, signed and dated statement from the claimant.
- Ensure that the client / child / visitor / employee is free from retaliation from within the organization as a result of their coming forward.
- Inform them that they may wish to file a complaint with the authorities.
- Immediately report to the Police, the child's legal guardian(s), and Children's Aid Society, the College of ECE's and the Ministry of Education-Program Advisor every suspected, alleged, witnessed or confirmed incident of abuse or neglect regardless of who did the abusing, or caused the neglect.

Conducting an Investigation into an Incident / Claim

- Conduct your investigation immediately after learning of the complaint.
- Ensure that the investigation remains confidential, and that all information gathered remains confidential. Information should be shared only where necessary, and with appropriate parties (who must also be informed of the need for confidentiality).
- Investigate all claims seriously.
- Document all required information.
- Contact the authorities where appropriate.

Interviewing the Complainant

- Obtain a full account of the incident, and document all details provided.
- Determine any potential pattern involved, or if the incident was a singular occurrence.
- Determine if the incident was influenced by any contextual factors.

- Identify any reporting relationships, or hierarchical structures that may have influenced the incident(s).
- Determine a timeline of events associated with the incident, and what the job duties of each party were at the time of the incident, and what their expected locations were.
- Examine the potential of a charge made under false pretences, and any motivating factors that may be involved. Work to rule out these potential elements.
- Inform the complainant that a thorough investigation will take place.
- Obtain a written, signed and dated statement from the claimant.
- Ensure that the employee is free from retaliation from within the organization as a result of their coming forward.

Interviewing Witnesses

- Obtain written, dated and signed statements from any witnesses.
- Ensure that the witness is free from retaliation from within the organization as a result of their coming forward.

Resolve the Complaint

- Where disciplinary action is required, determine the level of discipline based on the severity of the incident, previous action taken in similar circumstances, the employee's previous history, and the frequency.
- Review, revise and re-communicate company policy on abuse and/or neglect.
- Place documentation of the complaint, investigation, rulings, discipline imposed, and any actions taken into confidential files.
- Follow up with the involved parties to provide details of the actions being taken in response to the findings of the investigation.
- Ensure that the child's guardian(s) are immediately notified of the results of the investigation.

Mandatory Reporting

Any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that any of the following has occurred or may occur must immediately report that suspicion and the information upon which the suspicion is based to management, and the authorities (Police and Children's Aid Society).

Whistle-Blowing Protection

Growing Together Family Resource Centre offers protection against retaliation to any person who discloses information to Growing Together Family Resource Centre, the Police, or Children's Aid, or who gives evidence in legal proceedings. This protection is known as the "whistle-blowing" protection.

Specifically, the whistle-blowing protection ensures that Growing Together Family Resource Centre and our staff will not retaliate against any person, whether by action or omission, or threaten to do so because anything has been reported regarding abuse and/or neglect.

In addition, no person will encounter retaliation because evidence has been or may be given in a legal proceeding.

Neither Growing Together Family Resource Centre or its staff will do anything that discourages, is aimed at discouraging or that has the effect of discouraging a person from doing anything mentioned above. Nor will Growing Together Family Resource Centre or its staff do anything to encourage a person to fail to do anything mentioned above.

For the purposes of the whistle-blowing protection, "retaliation" includes, but is not limited to, disciplining or dismissing a staff member, imposing a penalty upon any person, or intimidating, coercing or harassing any person. A client shall not be barred from, or have their child removed from care at Growing Together Family Resource Centre, be threatened with expulsion, or in any way be subjected to discriminatory treatment (e.g. any change or discontinuation of any service to or care of a child or the threat of any such change or discontinuation) because of anything mentioned above, even if the client, child or another person acted maliciously or in bad faith. Further, no child, family member of a client, or guardian of a child shall be threatened with the possibility of retaliation.

Assisting Victims of Abuse and/or Neglect

Growing Together Family Resource Centre will work with victims of abuse and/or neglect to address their concerns and ensure their ongoing safety.

Growing Together Family Resource Centre will work to ensure that persons identified as posing a threat are barred from entry to Growing Together Family Resource Centre premises.

Where necessary, Growing Together Family Resource Centre will provide chaperones for interactions where there is a reasonable fear of abuse.

Growing Together Family Resource Centre will provide information for counselling services for victims of abuse and/or neglect.

Disciplinary Measures

If it is determined that any employee has been involved in the abuse or neglect of any child under our care, immediate disciplinary action will be taken. Such disciplinary action may involve the reporting of the incident(s) to the authorities, possible legal action, and could result in immediate dismissal without further notice.

This Anti-Abuse Policy must never be used to create fraudulent or malicious complaints. It is important to realize that unfounded/frivolous allegations may cause both the accused person and Growing Together Family Resource Centre significant damage. If it is determined that any employee has knowingly made false statements regarding an allegation related to abuse and/or neglect, immediate disciplinary action will be taken. As with any case of dishonesty, disciplinary action may include immediate dismissal without further notice. (See Disciplinary measures 2.16)

Special Circumstances

Should an employee or client have a legal court order (e.g. restraining order, or "no-contact" order) against another individual, they are encouraged to notify Growing Together Family Resource Centre, and to supply a copy of that order to the Executive Director. This will likely be required in instances where the victim strongly feels that the aggressor may attempt to contact that employee at Growing Together Family Resource Centre, in direct violation of the court order. Such information shall be kept confidential.

If any visitor to the Growing Together Family Resource Centre workplace is seen with a weapon (or is known to possess one), makes a verbal threat or assault against an employee or another individual, employee witnesses are required to immediately contact the police, emergency response services, their immediate supervisor, and the Executive Director.

In cases where criminal proceedings are forthcoming, Growing Together Family Resource Centre will assist police agencies, legal counsel, insurance companies, the College of ECE's, the Ministry of Education and the courts to the fullest extent.

Collection and Retention of all Necessary Documents

All records of abuse and/or neglect reports, and subsequent investigations, are considered confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone except to the extent required by law. They must be uploaded by the ED to a confidential file and kept for a life time as there is no statute of limitation as it pertains to abuse.

All documentation related to this policy will be kept in labeled folders in a secure, locked filing cabinet in the administration office area. This includes:

- Employment interviews
- Reference check information
- Copy of Vulnerable Sector Check
- Incident and Accident reports

The Abuse prevention policy will be kept in the policy binders located in the administration's office. Employees, students and volunteers must read and sign off on these policies. They will be reviewed annually by all employees and updated as required.

Confidentiality

Growing Together Family Resource Centre will do everything it can to protect the privacy of the individuals involved and to ensure that complainants and respondents are treated fairly and respectfully. Growing Together Family Resource Centre will protect this privacy so long as doing so remains consistent with the enforcement of this policy and adherence to the law.

Neither the name of the person reporting the facts nor the circumstances surrounding them will be disclosed to anyone whatsoever, unless such disclosure is necessary for an investigation or disciplinary action. Any disciplinary action will be determined by Growing Together Family Resource Centre and will be proportional to the seriousness of the behaviour concerned. Growing Together Family Resource Centre will also provide appropriate assistance to any employee who is a victim of discrimination or harassment.

Safety and Prevention - Visitor Management and Security

1. To ensure the security and safety of Growing Together Family Resource Centre premises, Growing Together Family Resource Centre will employ appropriate security measures to protect against the potential dangers of abuse and/or neglect.
2. Growing Together Family Resource Centre has controlled-access entrances.
3. Visitors will be required to sign in with Growing Together Family Resource Centre administration.
4. Parents and caregivers will be required to submit signed documentation stating who is allowed to pick up their child(ren).
5. Any unauthorized visitors or suspicious persons will be reported to the Police