CAMP NORTHLAND

Abuse and Duty to Report Policy

Updated May 2026

ABUSE

Definitions:

The Child, Youth and Family Services Act, which defines child abuse and governs the responsibilities of the Camp as set out in this document, will be referred to as **CYFSA**.

Child: "a person under the age of eighteen years" (*CYFSA section 2-1*)

Child in need of protection: a child is in need of protection where the child has suffered physical harm inflicted by the caregiver, or resulting from that person's failure to provide adequate care for the child; where the child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited by the caregiver; where the child needs medical treatment and the caregiver does not provide adequate treatment; where the child has suffered emotional harm as demonstrated by serious anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or self-destructive behaviour; where the child has been abandoned; etc.

Caregiver: The use of the word caregiver applies to the primary caregiver (parent, legal guardian, foster parent, etc.); an assigned caregiver (daycare worker, babysitter, partner of caregiver, etc.); or an assumed caregiver (teacher, recreational group leader, bus driver, camp counsellor, etc.).

Abuse: "means a state or condition of being physically harmed, sexually molested or sexually exploited"

Types of Abuse:

Physical: non-accidental use of physical force, or use of excessive force, resulting in physical injury or death.

Emotional: behaviour in which a child's sense of self is attacked, including constantly insulting, humiliating, belittling or rejecting a child, as well as socially isolating a child, intimidating a child, or routinely making unreasonable demands or imposing unreasonable expectations on a child.

Neglect: the situation or condition where there is inadequate care and nurturance of a child that could seriously impair his/her emotional or physical health and development.

Sexual: the use of a child by an adult for sexual purposes whether or not consent is alleged to have been given. It includes but is not limited to: acts of exposure, lewd or suggestive sexual comments, sexual touching or invitation to touch, exposing a child to pornography, involving a child in pornography (taking pictures or videos of naked children), and penetration.

Sexual Exploitation and inappropriate conduct:

'LTP's' and 'CITs' at Camp Northland are considered campers without exception. Any suggestive, sexual or physical behavior or conduct with a camper will be grounds for immediate dismissal. Furthermore, anyone that is 16 or 17 years old falls into the definition of 'young persons' in the Criminal Code of Canada, s. 153. Accordingly, sexual exploitation laws prohibit conduct of this nature.

In addition, any counselor in a supervisory position, or a position relative to another staff member that creates an imbalance of power, is cautioned that any breach or violation of Canadian sexual exploitation laws will be grounds for immediate dismissal and police intervention.

SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH: A FACT SHEET FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CANADA

Source: https://publications.gc.ca/site/archivee-archived.html?url=https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2007/jus/J2-306-2005E.pdf

Sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth occurs when an older child, adolescent or adult takes advantage of a younger child or youth for sexual purposes, including for participation in prostitution, pornographic performances and in the production of pornography. Sexual abuse and exploitation is perpetrated on children of all ages, from infancy to adolescence.

According to the *Criminal Code of Canada*, children and youth under the age of 14 cannot legally give informed consent to sexual activity. According to the *Criminal Code of Canada*, children and youth under the age of 14 cannot legally consent to sexual activity. Sexual activity includes all sexual contact ranging from sexual touching to sexual intercourse. Except for a narrow close in age exception, all sexual activity with a child under the age of 14 is a criminal offence, regardless of the child's consent. **All campers are considered to be under the age of consent while at camp.**

There are many overlapping dimensions to the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth. A child or youth may be sexually abused and exploited by one or more family members or by others outside the family, including by others known to the child or youth or by a stranger. The perpetrator may be acting alone or in an organized group or
network. The perpetrator may be either the same or the opposite sex as the victim although current data suggest that the majority of perpetrators are male. Regardless, however, of where and how it occurs, or who commits it, or whether the child or youth consents, the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth is a betrayal of trust and an abuse of power.

Types of sexually abusive or exploitive behaviour

The sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth may involve a range of behaviours. Non-contact sexual abuse may involve making sexual comments to the child or youth, exposing intimate body parts, voyeurism, having a sexual fixation on a child or youth's clothing or body parts, luring, making sexually related phone calls and engaging in sexually related correspondence through the Internet. Contact sexual abuse may involve making the child or youth participate in acts such as touching (fondling) or digital or object penetration of intimate body parts. Sexual exploitation may involve prostitution as well as making children and youth participate in pornographic acts or performances for personal or commercial use. There is an increasing international dimension to the sexual exploitation of children through sex tourism and also through the Internet. In Canada, acts of sexual abuse and exploitation against children and youth are crimes. Child sexual abuse and exploitation is a serious violation of the basic human rights of the child.

Dynamics of sexual abuse and exploitation

Perpetrators may use various tactics to gain access to, isolate, manipulate and control their young victims. Typically there is a power differential between the perpetrator and the victim. Perpetrators tend to be older than their victims and are likely to be more knowledgeable about sexual activity. They may spend a lot of time befriending and grooming their victims. They may use threats, physical force, bribery, trickery or other forms of psychological coercion to gain access to, and make their victims compliant. Sexual abuse or exploitation may be a single act, or repeated acts. These acts may become more serious, frequent and intrusive over time. Victims may experience lifetime negative effects.

Why victims may not disclose

There are many different reasons why victims may keep the abuse secret:

- *Age and/or developmental stage:* In some cases, they may be too young (developmentally, cognitively or emotionally) to articulate what happened to them.
- *Feelings of powerlessness:* Some victims may feel trapped by circumstances or have been threatened that harm will come to them, or someone close to them if they disclose.

• *Dependency:* They may be in a situation of dependency on the perpetrator.
• *Fear:* They may fear that they will not be believed. They may fear that they will be stigmatized, and that their sexual identity will be called into question. They may be afraid of the perpetrator's reprisals or other negative consequences of telling others. They may want to protect family members (including the perpetrator).
• *Conflicting emotions:* They may feel conflicted and suffer confusion or shame. They may believe that the abuse is their fault. Even in cases where victims tell others about the abuse, the recipient may not report the abuse to authorities for reasons such as disbelief, shame, fear of and dependency on the perpetrator.

Types of sexual abuse

According to the CIS, the most common form of substantiated child sexual abuse in child protection cases was touching and fondling of the genitals (68% of cases), while attempted and completed intercourse accounted for 35% of cases. An adult exposing genitals to a child accounted for 12% of the substantiated cases of child sexual abuse. Six percent of cases involved an adult sexually exploiting a child for purposes of financial gain or other profit, and 4% of cases involved sexual harassment (including proposition, encouragement or suggestions of a sexual nature). In 2002, according to the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UC2) Survey, children and youth accounted for 61% of the victims of sexual assaults reported to a subset of 94 police departments. This included crimes such as sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault and a range of other sexual crimes including sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation and incest.

Perpetrators

Perpetrators are more often individuals who know the victim, rather than strangers. About half (51%) of sexual assaults against children and youth reported to a sub-set of police departments in 2002 involved friends or acquaintances, while a quarter of these assaults (25%) involved family members. About 18% involved assaults by strangers. Most (but not all) are male. According to the CIS, most alleged perpetrators of sexual abuse were either "other" (non-parental) relatives (44% of cases) or non-relatives (29%), and only very few (2%) of substantiated cases of sexual abuse involved a stranger. Alleged perpetrators who were related to the victim were equally likely to be a biological father or step-father and less likely to be the child's biological mother or a foster or adoptive parent. Individual factors associated with sexual offending are complex, however, some of the common elements that child sexual abuse offenders may share are family histories marked by physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as frequent experiences of failure, problems in social functioning and unsatisfactory peer relationships. Some perpetrators use child and/or adult pornography and others do not.

What Factors Play a Role in Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Youth?

Many factors may play a role in the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth. At the societal level, the dynamics of socialization as well as society's collective history of

denial of child sexual abuse and exploitation may contribute to environments in which opportunities for abuse and exploitation can occur. At the community level, the absence of adequate safety precautions and educational supports in spiritual, cultural, recreational, child care, educational, residential and therapeutic care settings may place children and youth in situations of risk. Inter-generational patterns of abuse within the family, as well as family problems such as substance abuse and inadequate supervision are also considerations.

At the individual level, the developmental age and gender of the child may also contribute to risk. While any child or young person is potentially at risk, the interactions between various risk factors can be complex. Some children and youth may be more vulnerable due to factors that isolate and marginalize them in their homes and communities, such as poverty, disability, racism and other forms of discrimination.

For Aboriginal peoples, the experience and devastating consequences of colonization – in particular the undermining of traditional beliefs and values and family and community structures through the residential school system — have contributed to social problems (including sexual abuse and exploitation) experienced within some Aboriginal communities today.

What are Some Potential Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation?
It is important to remember that the signs of sexual abuse and exploitation may vary based on factors such as the victim's age and developmental stage, gender, their experience of abuse, family functioning and community support. Moreover, current research suggests that approximately one-third of victims do not show signs of abuse (even when they have disclosed the abuse). Criminal justice practitioners and professional clinicians employ various investigative and assessment strategies to determine the possibility of sexual abuse and/or exploitation and to address its impacts.

Sexually abused and/or exploited children and youth who do show signs of sexual abuse and exploitation may, for example:

- Express sexual statements or demonstrate sexual behaviours when they are not typically old enough to possess that knowledge (for example, in cases where they have not received any sex education, or are unlikely to have peers who might have exposed them to sexual materials, and are unlikely to be sexually active).
- Express sexual aggression towards younger or more naïve children.
- Make verbal or behavioural sexual advances towards older individuals.
- Engage in promiscuous behaviour as a consequence of their victimization (for example, they may have low-self esteem and perceive sex as a way to gain acceptance and acquire relationships).

They may also show a range of non-sexual signs, however many of these signs may also be responses to other types of abuse (such as psychological or physical abuse). They may show:

- Physical signs, such as sleeping problems, eating problems (in particular anorexia or bulimia) and bowel and bladder problems. There may be physical evidence of trauma to their oral, genital and/or anal areas.
- Emotional signs, such as becoming quiet and depressed, preoccupied, hyperactive or anxious.
- Behavioural problems, such as physical aggression, running away, suicidal behaviour, substance abuse.
- Developmental signs, such as lags in their cognitive development and school performance.

What are the Consequences of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Youth?

Being sexually abused and exploited may have immediate impacts on a young person's experiences of childhood and personal development. According to the CIS, children who are sexually abused may experience disruptions in their developing view of themselves and the world. These disruptions can result in significant emotional and behavioural changes as they find ways to cope with these events. Their sense of personal integrity, safety and security is violated. They may experience shame and guilt.

Opportunities to play, learn and have healthy social interactions with others may be lost. They may try to cope with the abuse by acting in a secretive manner and behaving in a helpless way. They may delay disclosure, or disclose in conflicting and unconvincing ways. They may retract their statements. The impact of sexual abuse and exploitation may have far-reaching effects that may not be apparent until later in the individual's life. For example, some research suggests that child sexual abuse experiences may (among other factors) also contribute to a young person's later experiences of sexual exploitation. Many young people who are sexually exploited ran away or were abandoned at an early age from home environments that
frequently included physical, sexual and emotional abuse. The impacts of sexual abuse and exploitation may persist into adulthood. Adolescent and adult women sexually molested as children are more likely than non-victims to suffer from both physical and psychological problems. Research indicates that women who have a history of child sexual abuse are also significantly more likely than non-victims to experience a subsequent sexual revictimization.
Although the research on male victims of child/youth sexual abuse and exploitation is limited compared with research on female victims, it also indicates that male victims are also more likely than non-victims to experience physical and psychological problems. They may suffer from depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts and behaviour and adopt poor coping strategies, such as substance abuse.

Impacts on perpetrators
Perpetrators may experience negative consequences of their behaviour — including

criminal sanctions and incarceration. They may experience shame, personal rejection and social condemnation. Many were victims of sexual abuse and exploitation as children and youth. Few seek treatment on their own initiative. Clinicians may conduct non-forensic and forensic assessments of offenders who enter the criminal justice system, to assist in determining appropriate sentencing and treatment options.

GUIDELINES:

In order to establish a safe environment the following guidelines need to be understood and adopted by each staff member.

For Discipline of Children:

- Counsellors may, under no circumstances, hit a child.
- Counsellors may not use abusive or derogatory language with campers.
- Counsellors need to ask for help.
- A staff member who encounters a particularly difficult child will seek the assistance of supervisory or administrative staff.
- In all dealings with campers, counsellors should strive to respond as opposed to react to children.
- No corporal punishment is permitted. No harsh or degrading measures that would humiliate or undermine a child's self respect. No deprivation of basic needs - food, beverage, shelter, clothing or bedding. No isolation or confinement of a child is permitted.

For Camper-Counsellor Contact:

Staff should understand and accept that when touching campers, the following guidelines should be followed:

- On the hand, shoulder or upper back;
- Never against a child's will (unless in the case of clear and present danger of the child);
- Never against a child's discomfort, whether expressed verbally or non-verbally;
- In the company of other adults;
- Never when it would have the effect of over-stimulating a child;
- Never in a place on a child's body that is normally covered by a bathing suit, unless for a clear medical necessity, and then only with supervision by another adult.

Counsellor Responsibility:

- A counsellor is the care-taker of campers

- A counsellor must understand there is a clear power difference between the counsellor and campers
- Inappropriate sexual contact with or physical abuse of campers can have severe emotional psychological effects on the camper and can last a lifetime

Staff/Camper Relationships:

- There is no "hazing" of campers by campers or counsellors;
- Campers will not be subjected to "initiation" rites that are abusive in any manner;
- There will be coverage of campers by adults during changing times;
- Younger children should be encouraged to change their own clothes as much as possible;
- Campers will not be alone individually with a counsellor in the cabin;
- A staff member will under no circumstance share a bed or sleeping bag with a camper;
- Counsellors will set limits with children who "cling" or hang on them;
- Counsellors will not give back rubs unless another adult is present, and then only with clothes on;
- Tickling or teasing a camper to the point where that camper is out of control is unacceptable;
- Pillow fights or wrestling matches and the like can become over-stimulating in short order and need to be limited and carefully supervised;
- Counsellors sleeping together on overnights, or on canoe trips, is grounds for dismissal;
- Romantic lives of counsellors can, under no circumstance, be shared with campers;
- Whatever is done with campers should be done in broad daylight, with company!

POLICY STATEMENT CONCERNING CAMPERS

Intent:

- All campers are entitled to a harassment free environment. The rights of the child are a matter of fundamental concern to Camp Northland.
- Campers need to be able to trust staff members and to expect a physically and emotionally safe environment.
- Camp Northland will make every effort to make its staff aware of behaviour characteristics of the campers they work with so that each staff member can establish the level of expectations for campers commensurate with the age and level of maturity

of each camper so that harassment in any form will not be a part of the behaviour of staff.

- Harassment will not be tolerated. Any staff member who commits harassment or knowingly condones harassment of a camper will be subject to disciplinary action and/or dismissal. Nothing that Camp Northland will do will impede an official investigation of child abuse.
- Staff members under investigation for child abuse will be presumed innocent until such allegations are investigated and substantiated. However, they may be relieved of direct duties with campers during the time of the investigation, given other responsibilities or given paid leave of absence.
- Confidentiality will be maintained in the strictest sense pertaining to the identity of the alleged victim and the alleged abuser.
- It is important to note that child welfare laws in Ontario require that any adult and, in particular, individuals in positions of trust report suspected child abuse.
- It is essential that the protocols outlined in this policy be followed when abuse is suspected.

DUTY TO REPORT

As an organization that provides care to children, Camp Northland and its employees have a legal duty to report suspicion - based on reasonable grounds - of child abuse or that a child may be in need of protection.

"Despite the provisions of any other Act, if a person, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, has reasonable grounds to suspect [any type of abuse], the person shall immediately report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a society…"(CYFSA section 125-1)

This mandatory reporting falls under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act for professionals working with children, specifically "youth and recreation workers" (*CYFSA section 125-6*). The person who actually suspects abuse, or to whom a disclosure has been made, shall make the report directly to the society and shall not rely on any other person to report on the person's behalf. (*CYFSA section 125-3*).

Any Camp Northland staff member who suspects abuse or to whom a disclosure has been made will have to make the report to Child Services personally, but will have the support of the Director and the Leadership Team. Further, there is an ongoing duty to report so even if a previous report was made, if additional reasonable grounds arise, the person who made the initial report must inform Child Services (*CYFSA section 125-2).*

Full Disclosure:

It is essential to take all allegations of sexual misconduct or child abuse seriously. In the case where a child directly tells an employee of Camp Northland about abuse, the person must follow these steps:

- Reassure the child that the employee will do what he/she can to keep the child safe from further harm, but will not promise to keep the disclosure a secret.
- Inform the Camp Director of the disclosure and that Child Services must be contacted. Child Services can determine whether the police will need to be involved. This is for children under the age of 16.
- Where the abused is between the ages of 16 and 18, the Police should be contacted directly. It is not likely that Child Services will be involved in that case and, if they are, it will be at the Police department's discretion. This applies to both campers and staff, if applicable, under the age of 18.
- Although the Camp Director must be made aware that an investigation process will be initiated by Child Services or the Police, it should not be divulged or discussed with any other person, whether an employee of Camp Northland or

not. This is to respect the child's privacy, protect the child's safety, and to ensure the legitimacy of the investigation.

- Make a written report of the information on which the claim is based within 12 hours of disclosure, and comply with interview requests from Child Services or any branch of the police.
- In the case of physical or sexual abuse that occurs at Camp, the camper must be seen by a doctor within 24 hours of the abuse occurring, as a means to provide for the child's safety and to collect relevant evidence.
- Parents will be notified of the allegation of abuse by Child Services. Camp Northland (the Director, a member of the Leadership Team, or the employee making the claim) may be asked to assist in developing a strategy to inform the family, but Camp Northland employees may not inform parents that a report has been made without consultation with Child Services.
- In the case where a child makes a disclosure and subsequently denies or recants the statement, a report must still be made to Child Services* It will be up to the investigative team (Child Services and the Police) to determine the validity of the abuse claim and whether to commence an investigation.

** "False denials of sexual abuse (saying it did not happen when it did) and recanting a disclosure of abuse (denying that it happened after having told someone about being abused) are much more common than false reports." (Public Health Agency of Canada – Child Abuse Fact Sheet)*

<u>Suspicion of Abuse:</u>

It is not necessary to be completely sure that a child is or may be in need of protection to make a report to Child Services. "Reasonable grounds" are what an average person, exercising normal and honest judgement, would suspect. In the case where an employee of Camp Northland suspects abuse the person must follow these steps:

- Inform the Camp Director or a member of the Leadership Team of the suspicion, and how that suspicion arose. Together, determine whether to contact Child Services immediately, or to monitor the camper (if the "reasonable grounds" are shaky or unclear). Often, children will not disclose abuse through words, but through their behaviour (when physical evidence is not present) which is much harder to interpret. Questioning of the camper must be done with care, if at all; questioning should be done only to the point where the Director has a reasonable suspicion that the child is in need of protection. Leading or suggestive questions may impede an investigation if it is thought that a child has been prompted on what to say. For that reason, it is the Camp's policy to err on the side of caution, and report suspected cases of child abuse when several indicators are present.

Reporting Abuse By a Staff Member:

In order to prevent allegations of abuse by Camp Northland employees towards campers, staff will be trained and given guidelines to follow so that actions are not misinterpreted as abuse. These kinds of precautions are especially important in a residential setting, where the employees live in the same place as the campers, and there is room for misunderstanding. Any employee who unknowingly or mistakenly engages in an act that may be considered to be abuse will be reprimanded by the Camp Director and/or undergo further training to increase awareness of appropriate conduct.

Where it is suspected that a staff member has willingly and/or intentionally committed abuse, an investigation by the Camp Director and Leadership Team, including direct questioning of the employee, will commence immediately, and the employee will be removed from direct care of children until the investigation is complete. Where it is known that a staff member has willingly and/or intentionally committed abuse, that employee will immediately be terminated. Further, the Camp Director will contact Police and make a report of abuse**
This action may not fully absolve the Camp of liability in the abuse, but it may be taken into consideration in the case of a civil and/or criminal lawsuit.

** *The Criminal Code identifies a variety of offences which criminalize sexual abuse by any adult and also criminalizes physical assault (The Criminal Code, R.S.C 1985, c.46).*

It is the legal and moral obligation of any employee of Camp Northland who witnesses or suspects abuse by another employee to report the information to the Camp Director immediately. The Camp Director, Leadership Team, and employees of Camp Northland, will participate willingly and cooperate in any investigation of an allegation of abuse by a Camp Northland employee which is initiated externally (ie: by a parent upon a child's return from camp, etc.).

- As a facility operator, where health services are provided by professionals (RN, RPN, etc.), Camp Northland has a duty to report incidents of abuse by a Health Care professional to the appropriate College or governing body (for example, the Ontario College of Nurses) under the Regulated Health Professionals Act. Sexual abuse must be reported when the name of the alleged abuser is known and is a registered member of one of the health regulatory Colleges, where the person being abused was a camper, and/or where there are reasonable grounds to believe that sexual abuse occurred.