



# Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures

At Beacon we are committed to the well-being and safety of our campers. We want to present a consistent picture between God's love for each individual camper, and the care that we provide for them throughout the camp session. Below are a number of policies that are in place to protect both campers and staff while they are here at camp, and afterwards. Beacon Bible Camp will not tolerate any type of abuse by a staff member and if investigation shows it has taken place, will release the staff member from service at camp.

Staff must be extremely cautious to avoid any actual or perceived incident of abuse. The good reputation of Beacon could be discredited in a moment and irreparable damage done to the reputation of the staff member involved.

Together, we want to ensure that Beacon is a safe place for children and youth to grow in their relationship in Christ and create lifelong memories and friendships.

## Definitions

<b>Abuse</b>	Constitutes sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, sexual assault or sexual harassment and includes physical, emotional or sexual harm.
<b>Emotional Abuse</b>	Occurs when anyone attempts to control another person through the use of derogatory language, threats or intimidation.
<b>Physical Abuse</b>	Occurs when anyone inflicts physical harm on another person, or uses force that is unwarranted by the situation.
<b>Physical Neglect</b>	Means to fail to meet the physical needs of a child in one's care. It constitutes harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care or failing to intervene to eliminate the risk when able to do so.
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	Means any sexual touching, invitation to sexual touching or other sexual acts. In determining whether the touching or the act is sexual touching or a sexual act, one should ask whether a reasonable observer, looking at the touching or the act in its context, would conclude that it is. This definition would exclude normal affectionate behaviors and excludes normal health or hygiene care. Sexual activity



between children or youth may constitute “sexual abuse” if the difference in age or power between the children is so significant that the older or more powerful child is clearly taking advantage of the younger or less powerful child. However, this definition would also exclude consensual, developmentally appropriate sexual activity between children; where there is no significant difference in age or power between children. In other words: normal behaviour that is age-appropriate is not considered abuse.

**Sexual Assault**

A criminal act involving unwanted or forced sexual contact and/or activity.

**Sexual Harassment**

Any behavior which subjects a person to unwanted verbal or physical attention of a sexual nature. This may involve an incident or a series of incidents that consist of verbal, emotional, mental or physical conduct, or any combination thereof. It includes a wide range of behaviour, such as innuendos and lewd comments, sexual jokes, unwanted or inappropriate touching, and overt demands of sexual favours.

**Sexual Misconduct**

Includes any sexual contact between a staff person and a camper with whom there is or has been a counselling relationship.

**Open Door Policy**

To protect staff from any potentially compromising situations, or false accusations, we ask that if you ever find yourself alone with a camper in the cabin that the door always be kept open. Either wait until someone else comes, or wait until the camper is finished and has left before closing the door. Always avoid situations where you will be alone with a camper out of sight of others. In depth and private conversations should still take place in a public space. Campers should never be invited into staff residences.

**Discipline**

No staff member should ever physically hit a camper. Discipline should not include physical or emotional punishment, verbal abuse or denial of needs (sleep, food, shelter or clothing). Serious or repeated offences need to be reported to camp administration for disciplinary action.

Below are some suggestions to help you as staff stay in control and maintain the respect needed to lead your cabin to a fun, respectful and safe time at camp: Limit the times when you raise your voice. Children do not respond well to being yelled at.



- Although general camp rules are non-negotiable, we suggest having a cabin meeting and letting the campers take an active role in rule setting for the cabin
- Be firm and consistent from day one
- Be positive in your instructions and directions
- Avoid favouritism
- Do not threaten campers with taking away privileges (i.e. tuck, swimming, desert etc.). This should only be done in consultation with your Session Director.
- Talk only when campers are listening
- Talk to the campers, not at them
- Come and talk to your Session Director if the misbehavior is repetitive or of a serious nature.

### **Showing Affection and Appropriate Touch**

Appropriate touch should only involve the hands, arms, upper back or shoulders of others, including other staff members. Minimize front to front hugs. Side hugs, with arms around each other, are less likely to cause problems or send the wrong message. Refrain from physical contact with campers unless they are in a public place. Take precautions against inadvertently touching the more personal areas of a camper. Inappropriate force used while playing games is unacceptable. Do not give massages to campers or other staff members. Remember; staff must be cautious to avoid any actual or perceived incident of abuse.

### **Reporting Child Abuse**

Just as Beacon feels a spiritual obligation to present Christ as Saviour and Lord to a camper, we also have a moral and legal responsibility to promote the best interest, protection and well-being of our campers. The Child and Family Services Act of Ontario recognizes that persons working with children and youth have a special awareness of those who may be in an abusive situation. If, in working with any young camper, we have reasonable grounds to suspect that there are or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse, either physical, sexual or emotional, we must report the suspicion and the information we base it on to the local Family and Children's Services (Children's Aid Society). When you report suspected abuse to your Session Director or the Executive Director, they will bring the full child abuse policy and procedures to bear on the situation.

### **Reporting Procedures**

Calling a Children's Aid Society or Police is a very serious step. The welfare of our campers must be of greatest importance. We need to remain in calm control of the decision making process and carefully investigate the way the incident has unfolded. Then we need to act with the best judgment we can, taking the most appropriate step. This means we need to proceed prayerfully, asking God for wisdom. We are



only human in our responses but He can be trusted to guide us and bring help to each person involved.

If abuse happens before arrival at camp: If a child is suspected of being abused, either by observation or through confiding in a cabin leader or other staff member that he/she has been abused, the following steps should be taken.

1. The cabin leader or staff member should inform ONLY the Session Director and/or Executive Director
2. The Executive Director and Session Director will hold a meeting to consider and weigh circumstances, decide appropriateness of calling the parents and Children's Aid Society and then do so with the reporting staff member present.
3. Executive Director is to consult with the camp attorney (David Lees 416.682.7159) as soon as possible for legal advice regarding compliance with reporting laws.
4. Notify the investigating authorities and file the necessary reports within the appropriate time frame. If requested, arrange to meet with the Children's Aid Society Bracebridge (705-645-4426). If you get an answering machine or answering service, identify it as an emergency and ask to speak with the duty worker.
5. The purpose of this meeting is to learn more fully of the allegation. Reassure the child that they have done nothing wrong, and encourage them that it was right to report the incident. Allow the child to speak freely. Do not coach responses, and do not become defensive.
6. Co-operate fully in the investigation by the authorities to best help the child and family.
7. If at any time the reporting cabin leader or staff member is unsatisfied with how camp administration is dealing with the allegation then it is their responsibility to notify the appropriate authorities.

If abuse happens at camp:

1. If a staff member at Beacon Bible Camp is suspected of child abuse the Executive Director must be informed immediately.
2. The Executive Director and the Session Director inform the staff member of the accusations and discuss them with him/her.
3. The name of the informant will be kept confidential to the extent possible
4. Relieve the alleged offender from duties while a confidential investigation is conducted
5. Be sure to remove the accused person from any contact with the alleged victim.
6. Notify the investigating authorities and file the necessary reports within the appropriate time frame. The Staff Member that made the report should be present when the call is made. If you get an answering machine or answering service, identify it as an emergency and ask to speak to the duty worker.



7. Secure medical attention if necessary, then with the reporting official, meet with the child's parents, and with their permission, with the child. Comply with Family and Child Services requirements.
8. Notify camp's liability insurance company. Camp's insurance policy may require immediate notification if coverage is to apply to any resulting lawsuit.
9. Also notify the Ontario Camping Association Emergency number.
10. All inquiries by the media will be handled by the Executive Director or Session Director. It is important that only one person speak on behalf of the camp regarding any crisis situation in order to eliminate rumours or false information which could damage both camp and any families or individuals involved. A sample media statement might say: "Beacon Bible Camp is fully committed to promoting the best interest, protection and well-being of every camper and guest. The camp policies clearly and explicitly forbid any form of child abuse and require that all staff personnel report any suspected incidents of abuse. The individual suspected/accused involved in this incident has been reported to the Muskoka Family and Children's Services by camp administration. The camp and its staff are cooperating fully with these authorities in their investigation".
11. Cooperate fully in the investigation by the authorities.

## Helping a Victim of Child Abuse

It has been a traumatic event for an abused child to disclose the fact of abuse to someone. The following guidelines will be a useful starting point in helping them deal with the abuse upon disclosure. Always remember that the best way you can help is to report any incident to the appropriate authorities, so that they can get the professional help they need.

- **Listen:** Do not panic or over-react. Give the child permission to talk about the abuse to you. Listen carefully to everything the child says, and note his/her behavior. Do not fill in words for them. Do not ask leading questions. Never promise that you will not tell anyone else, but promise that you will be discreet with any information they provide.
- **Believe:** Never criticize the child or claim that the child has misunderstood what happened. Support the child for disclosing the event. It is not your responsibility to determine whether the allegation is true. Children may embellish the actual facts, but seldom lie about abuse.
- **Protect:** Take the child to a private place (but never out of sight of others). Discuss the situation only with the Session Director and/or the Executive Director and the Family and Children's Services when and if they become involved. Try to avoid repeated interviews about the incident. Do not make the incident a topic of conversation with other staff members. Never promise everything will be ok. You can promise that you will do what you can.
- **Affirm:** Children who have been victimized may feel sad, angry, anxious and depressed. Accept and understand the child's feelings. Avoid telling the child how he/she should feel, rather emphasize that the child is not to blame for what has happened. Praise them for their courage and honesty and promise



that you will help. Do not promise that the abuser will be arrested, only that you will do the best you can to see that he/she receives the help they need

- **Refer:** Tell only the Session Director or the Executive Director. When the call is made to CAS be there to answer any questions that they may have. Do not attempt to handle the problem alone. This is important for the well-being of the child as well as for your own protection. As a child care custodian you are required to report child abuse.
- **Bring Christ into the Situation:** You are God's channel to bring help, comfort and healing into this young person's life. Share useful scripture with them. Pray with them. Help them to know that God is there for them in any situation in life. And then show that, in a practical way by your love and care for them, both at camp and after camp.

