

Policy: Anti-Abuse Policy

Policy # 8 **Number of Pages: 5** **Date of Approval:** September 2005

Approved By: Board of Directors, Management **Review Date:** April 2024

References: Program specific Policies and Procedures
Screening Policy, Serious Occurrence Policy, Workplace Violence Policy

Statement:

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Greater Toronto Central Council (hereinafter referred to as the Society) is committed to ensuring that all residents, clients, Neighbours in Need, employees, volunteers and Vincentians are safe and secure in our residences, programs, offices and outreach locations.

Any acts of abuse or situations which may be physical, verbal, sexual or psychological in nature, and which demean, harm or infringe upon the personal rights or dignity of a person, or places an individual at risk in terms of their personal health and safety will not be tolerated.

It is the responsibility of all employees and volunteers to report any suspected or observed acts of abuse immediately to their supervisor or to the Executive Director. Vincentians shall report any suspected or observed acts of abuse to their Conference or Council President and to the Executive Director. Information regarding an alleged abuser shall be treated with the utmost discretion and confidentiality.

In addition to Society policies, employees and program volunteers abide by policies provided by funders including, but not limited to, the City of Toronto, the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health. Employees receive annual training on crisis prevention and policy review.

Vincentians must always conduct all interactions with Neighbours in Need in the presence of another Vincentian. Program volunteers do not have unsupervised access to residents and must follow employee policies.

Section 1 of the following procedures applies to Employees and Program Volunteers;
Section 2 applies to Vincentians.

Section 1: Employees and Program Volunteers

Procedure for Reporting incidents involving Employees and Program Volunteers:

Any employee or program volunteer encountering an abusive situation shall follow these steps:

1. Intervene to ensure the victim's health, safety and well-being, following the principles of crisis intervention and program specific training.
2. Notify another employee, or trustworthy adult in the vicinity of the situation where possible, to secure support.
3. Immediately provide First Aid care calling 911 for emergency services as necessary.
4. For incidents involving employees or program volunteers, immediately contact the supervisor or program Director or, if unavailable, the Executive Director. Should the alleged abuser be the Executive Director, contact a senior manager.
5. Management will meet with the person reporting the incident as soon as possible and within 24 hours. Appropriate external authorities (the Police, Victim Services) shall be contacted depending on the severity of the situation. Parents or guardians will be notified by the program Director where appropriate, and as soon as practical.
6. The Society will investigate all reported allegations.
7. An interview shall be conducted with all those involved in the incident. Where the investigation warrants further steps, the following apply:
 - The alleged abuser shall immediately be removed from the victim's contact. Be mindful that the alleged abuser is innocent until proven guilty.
 - Pending the completion of the investigation by the appropriate internal or external authorities, the alleged abuser shall:
 - a) work in an administrative capacity with no client contact; or
 - b) not work and receive full pay until resolution of the matter; or
 - c) not work and not receive pay.
8. Any proven occurrence of abuse or neglect by employees of the Society shall result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. Any proven occurrence of abuse or neglect by program volunteers will result in loss of placement.

Purpose of Investigating incidents involving Employees and Program Volunteers:

The Society will not tolerate abuse of any kind, having particular regard for the nature of the vulnerable persons served by, and placed under the care and trust of the Society. The Society will endeavor to resolve all allegations of abuse in an expedited manner, maintaining confidentiality and support for all involved.

Procedures for Investigating:

The process as outlined in the Procedure for Reporting above shall be followed and provides the framework for the investigation.

1. Any person receiving or witnessing information regarding alleged abuse shall act upon such information immediately.
2. The investigative team shall be comprised of the alleged abuser's supervisor, or the program Director, and the Executive Director who may request additional support. This investigation shall begin within two business days of the allegation being reported. Detailed written notes of this meeting shall be maintained. Confidentiality will be honoured during this process.
3. Be aware that the alleged abuser is innocent until proven guilty. It is critical that the person receive appropriate support during the process.
4. Depending on the nature of the alleged abuse, media may request a statement or interview. Only the Executive Director, the Chair or designate of the Society is authorized to interact with the media.
5. In the event of inconclusive findings, and out of respect for the residents and employees, the Society may consider transferring the employee involved to another area of its operations. Volunteers and Vincentians may be assigned to another conference, team, or outreach.
6. Upon the conclusion of the investigation, the Executive Director will advise all those affected of the outcome as appropriate; and as necessary, enact transfers, discipline or termination of position or role.

Funders who require notification through Serious Occurrence protocols will be notified of any proven situations of abuse and situations where outside authorities have been called in as part of the investigative process.

If at any time the Executive Director is the individual who is the suspect, the Chair of the Board shall lead the process of reporting and investigating.

Section 2: Vincentians

Procedure for Reporting incidents involving Vincentians:

Any Vincentian member encountering an abusive situation shall follow these steps:

1. Intervene to ensure the victim's health, safety and well-being, contacting 911 as necessary.
2. Notify the appropriate external authorities (the Police, Victim Services) depending on the severity of the situation.
3. Notify the Conference President of the incident, who in turn will seek direction from the Particular Council President. The Executive Director must be notified of all alleged incidents of abuse.
4. The Society will investigate all reported allegations.
5. An interview shall be conducted with all those involved in the incident. The Executive Director will determine in consultation with the Conference or Particular Council President, who will conduct the interview.
 - The alleged abuser shall immediately be removed from the victim's contact. Be mindful that the alleged abuser is innocent until proven guilty.
 - Pending the completion of the investigation by the appropriate internal or external authorities, the alleged abuser shall be removed from all Vincentian activities, including Home Visitation during the course of the investigation.
 - The Chair of the Board of Directors shall be notified by the Executive Director

Purpose of Investigating incidents involving Vincentians:

The Society will not tolerate abuse of any kind, having particular regard for the nature of the vulnerable persons served by, and placed under the care and trust of the Society. The Society will endeavor to resolve all allegations of abuse in an expedited manner, maintaining confidentiality and support for all involved.

Procedures for Investigating:

1. The process as outlined in the Procedure for Reporting above shall be followed and provides the framework for the investigation.
2. Any person receiving or witnessing information regarding alleged abuse shall act upon such information immediately.

3. The investigative team shall be determined by the Executive Director in consultation with the Conference or Particular Council President. The Chair of the Board will be notified of the alleged incident. This investigation shall begin within two business days of the allegation being reported. Detailed written notes of this meeting shall be maintained. Confidentiality will be honoured during this process.
4. Be aware that the alleged abuser is innocent until proven guilty. Support must be provided to the alleged abuser during the investigative process.
5. In the event that media requests a statement or interview, only the Executive Director, the Chair of the Board or designate of the Society is authorized to interact with the media.
6. In the event of inconclusive findings, and out of respect for all involved, the Society may recommend that the Vincentian be assigned to another conference, team, or outreach.
7. Upon the conclusion of the investigation, the Executive Director will advise all those affected of the outcome as appropriate.
8. All documentation associated with the incident, reporting and investigation shall be submitted to the Executive Director to be kept on file. Documentation must not be retained by the Conference.
9. If at any time the Executive Director is the individual who is the suspect, the Chair of the Board shall lead the process of reporting and investigating.