



TURKISH SOCIETY CANADA

CHILD, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULT

SAFETY and PROTECTION POLICY

Turkish Society of Canada (TSC) has a responsibility to ensure to make provision for children, young people and vulnerable adults and must ensure that:

- the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount
- all children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- the rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and their families are respected and listened to
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately

Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy aims to ensure that the actions of any person in the context of the work carried out by are transparent and safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults associated with the organisation. The Policy provides guidance on appropriate standards, including reducing any opportunities for abuse, harm or bullying, staff and participant recruitment and training, behaviour towards children and vulnerable adults, professional boundaries, ethical behaviour, acceptable and unacceptable relationships, how to avoid or better manage difficult situations and how to report suspicions, allegations or incidents.

Implementation

- All volunteers working with young people must review the policy and follow, the Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.
- The Policy is publicly available on the website www.info@turkishcanada.org and provided to all volunteers

Framework for communication

All board members, volunteers and event participants have a duty to report any suspicions, allegations or incidents of abuse. Volunteers and participants who are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred and should record the details as accurately as possible and immediately refer any suspicions, allegations or incidents to a TSC Board of Directors member in the first instance, who will consider the information and decide upon the next steps.

Policy statement

TSC has a duty of care to safeguard all children and vulnerable adults involved in from harm. All children and people have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. TSC will ensure the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults involved in TSC through adherence to the TSC Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection guidelines adopted by TSC and described below.

Zero-tolerance statement

TSC maintains a zero-tolerance policy for the sexual abuse of children or vulnerable adults by TSC staff, contractors, subcontractors and participants in their care. Anyone found guilty of such an offence will be subject to immediate dismissal and prosecution within the law of the relevant jurisdiction.

Definitions

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18.

A vulnerable adult is defined as a person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

Assigned TSC Board Member: An individual or multiple individuals from the TSC Board of Directors will be assigned prior to every event to act as the Assigned TSC Board Member who will have breaches of this policy reported to them during the event.

Policy aims

The aim of the TSC Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- providing children and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of TSC

- allow and helping all staff and participants to make informed and confident responses to specific child and vulnerable adults protection issues.

Promoting good practice

Abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school, sporting and participant environment. A volunteer or participant may have regular contact with children and vulnerable adults and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

Good practice guidelines

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote welfare and reduce the possibility of harm and abuse. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- All staff and participants must work in an open environment and remain visible when working with children and vulnerable adults, e.g. avoid private or unobserved situations, whenever practical and possible, and ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children and vulnerable adults.
- Encourage open communication with no secrets.
- Treating all children and vulnerable adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting welfare first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children and vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process.
- Making TSC activities fun, enjoyable and promoting fairness
- All lesson and seminar areas must be smoke and alcohol free.
- Being an excellent role model - this includes following all local laws, not smoking and drinking alcohol inappropriately in the company of children and vulnerable adults.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity and avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or participants to have an intimate relationship with a child or a vulnerable adult or to share a room with them).
- TSC staff and participants should not enter a child or vulnerable adult's room or invite them into their rooms unless accompanied.

- Ensuring that if any form of manual / physical support is required, it should be provided openly.
- Involving local partner staff and parents wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure people work in pairs.
- Ensuring that young people have access to both a male and female member of staff. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur, as can female to male abuse and young person to young person abuse.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.

Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone of the local partners, the assigned TSC board member or the child's parents or next of kin. For example, a child or vulnerable adult sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent / carer fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session

- Avoid spending time alone with children or vulnerable adults away from others.
- Avoid taking or dropping off a child or vulnerable adult to an event or activity.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Cause direct physical, including purposely hitting, hurting, or physically assaulting a child or vulnerable adult.
- Cause direct emotional harm, including acting in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or vulnerable adults, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional harm.
- Use language that could be abusive, offensive or inappropriate.
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child or vulnerable adult.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control.
- Condone or participate in behaviour which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment or favour to the exclusion of others.
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult

- Do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults, that they can do for themselves
- Spend anytime outside specified programme hours with a child or vulnerable we work with;
 - Invite or allow children or vulnerable adult to stay with you at your home unsupervised
 - Sexually exploit any child, vulnerable adult or any person
 - Non-consensual sexual contact

For further detail on some of the definitions above refer to the General Sexual Misconduct and Inappropriate Behaviour Definitions document.

This list is not exclusive therefore our staff and participants should avoid any other activities that may be considered to constitute poor practice.

N.B. It may sometimes be necessary for staff or participants to do things of a personal nature for children and vulnerable adults, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents, care workers and local partner staff, an assigned TSC board member and any other relevant parties and should be avoided wherever practical. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child or vulnerable adult to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained and wherever possible, ask local partner staff or parents to complete the task and work to ensure the task is not required of TSC volunteers and participants in the future.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate Assigned TSC Board Member and record the incident. You should also ensure the local partner staff and parents are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a child or vulnerable adult
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- If a child, vulnerable adult or any other person appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a child, vulnerable adult or any other person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Use of photographic/filming equipment

There is evidence that some people have used volunteering as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children and vulnerable adults in vulnerable

positions. All staff and participants should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Assigned TSC Board Member.

There is no intention to prevent staff or participants from taking photos of program activities, however, local partner organization staff should be made aware of the reasons for the photographs, the intended use of the photos, and their consent obtained. There should be project guidelines for participants and staff regarding photography of people on the project, which should be managed and enforced by TSC staff. All TSC photos should be stored and used appropriately.

Training of the volunteers and participants

TSC recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure potential offenders are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults.

- All volunteers and participants should be referred to the Policy

Training (training will be through reviewing the policy) will help volunteers and participants to:

- Understand their requirements and responsibilities
- Understand TSC's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and identify areas where further explanation or training are required.
- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is not likely to result in allegations being made.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or vulnerable adult.
- Work safely effectively with children and vulnerable adults.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in TSC to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to an assigned TSC Board member who will decide the next steps.

TSC will assure all staff/participants that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child or vulnerable adult.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff or participant, there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection investigation

- a disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

Reporting concerns about poor practice

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice as opposed to a suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse, the Assigned TSC Board Member will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the Assigned TSC Board Member or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the TSC Board of Directors who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

Reporting concerns about suspected abuse

Any suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused by either a member of staff or a participant should be reported to an assigned TSC Board member who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child or vulnerable adult in question and any other person who may be at risk.

All suspicions, allegations and incidents should be recorded.

If after consideration, a TSC Board members concerned, they will refer the allegation to the local social services department.

If the assigned TSC Board member is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the TSC Director.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a **need to know** basis only. This includes the following people:

- the Assigned TSC Board Member s
- the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- the person making the allegation
- social services/police
- the TSC Board of Directors

The Assigned TSC Board Member should be contacted in the first instance and they will advise as to who needs to know and who should inform them, normally through liaison with local social services.

Social services will decide who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Enquiries and further action

Internal enquiries and possible suspension

The TSC Board of Directors will make a decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the TSC Board of Directors Members and the Assigned TSC Board Member will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff, participant or any person working on behalf of / representing the TSC should be re-instated and if so how this can be sensitively handled.

This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Assigned TSC Board Member must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult should remain of paramount importance throughout

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse

Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents, participants and members of staff may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process.

Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff or participant who is still currently working with children or vulnerable adults within TSC or elsewhere).

Where such an allegation is made, procedures as detailed above should be followed, the matter should be reported to the assigned TSC Board member who will decide the next steps and, if relevant, report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children or vulnerable adults may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

Bullying

Every child and vulnerable adult has the right to experience a safe environment free from abuse and bullying.

TSC plays an important role in creating a positive ethos that challenges bullying by empowering people to understand the impact of bullying, how best to deal with it and agree standards of behaviour.

Providing information to police or social services

Information about suspected abuse must be accurate and a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. It should ideally include the following, where possible:

- The child's or vulnerable adult's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's or vulnerable adult's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's and vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents or next of kin been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If the child or vulnerable adult was not the person who reported the incident, has the child or vulnerable adult been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

It is important to remember that as TSC board of directors, our responsibility is to report all suspicions, allegations and incidents to assigned TSC Board member who have been trained to advise as to the next steps to be taken.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection Services

<https://www.protectchildren.ca/en/>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/child-welfare-and-child-protection-services>

<http://www.torontocas.ca/>

Phone: 416-924-4646