

Precious Minds Support Services
**A Plan To Protect
Children, Youth and Workers**

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Precious Minds Support Services

A Plan To Protect Children, Youth, and Workers

Introduction

Purpose

Precious Minds is committed to supporting families with children who experience barriers to learning. This includes the full spectrum from children and youth at risk to those identified with learning, behavioural, developmental and/or physical disabilities.

We whole-heartedly recognize the need for a place of learning where kids can grow and be safe. At the same time, we are concerned about the safety and reputation of the adults and teens who work with Precious Minds to make our programming possible. In order to serve this commitment, Precious Minds has formulated the following policies and guidelines.

Maintenance

Under the guidance of the Executive Director, these policies will be reviewed and updated every three to five years as needed.

Precious Minds Support Services

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Screening and Training

Policy

Contract Staff

All paid contract staff will submit to a screening process as approved by the Board of Directors. This process will include a reference check and criminal records check for their own and the charity's protection.

Known Abuse or Questionable References

Individuals with a known history of having committed abuse as defined in this document or anyone with questionable references will not be permitted to work with Precious Minds' clients.

Volunteers

All volunteers will sign a Volunteer Contract and will submit to a screening process as approved by the Board of Directors. This process will include a reference check and criminal records check (over the age of 16) for their own and the charity's protection.

Known Abuse or Questionable References

Individuals with a known history of having committed abuse as defined in this document or anyone with questionable references will not be permitted to volunteer with Precious Minds' clients.

Other Criminal Records

In situations where Precious Minds feels that sufficient time has passed from the date of criminal activity and there is legitimate and validated remorse on the part of the individual – a recommendation for accepting this individual as a volunteer in areas outside of Child and Youth programming and Family Support programming (i.e. finance or fundraising) can be made to the Board of Directors for review.

Permanent Staff

All paid staff will submit to a screening process as prescribed by the Board of Directors. This process will include criminal records checks for their own and the charity's protection.

The Program Co-ordinator is responsible for screening and records management for all volunteers and staff.

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Screening and Training, continued

Procedures & Guidelines

Screening and Records Management

The Program Co-ordinator is responsible for:

1. screening all volunteers recruited to work with children and youth
2. assisting with annual policy awareness and training sessions
3. conducting reference checks and completing the associated paperwork
4. soliciting criminal record searches
5. maintaining a master list of individuals accepted for children/youth work
6. ensuring completed contracts, application forms, records of training undertaken by those working with minors, and related documents are stored securely in perpetuity in a central registry file, and
7. maintaining the confidentiality of personnel records

Volunteers

All volunteers serving our children/youth will be required to:

8. complete and sign a Volunteer Agreement acknowledging having read this policy and related guidelines and agreeing to comply with the policies and guidelines
9. request and submit a criminal record check from the local Police detachment (minors 16 years and under are exempt from CRC)

All volunteers serving our children/youth will be encouraged to:

10. participate in seminars or workshops and read resource material as prescribed by the Precious Minds team directed at issues such as:
 - discipline & behaviour management,
 - special needs,
 - child abuse and identification & reporting obligations
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Precious Minds Support Services

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Privacy Policy

Policy

Staff and volunteers of Precious Minds Support Services are entrusted with personal information as it relates directly to the children, youth, and families we support. Personal information is effective to provide:

1. Perspective
2. Context for correct and safe support
3. At times, a public awareness of the hurts and real needs of those around them

We acknowledge that this personal information is shared in full confidence and that it will be managed respectfully.

Thus, we will not use any personal information/'stories' in part or in whole without the confirmed or written permission of the parent or guardian in authority.

Procedures & Guidelines

For our families, clients and professional partners protecting their privacy means that we will not sell or rent their personal information to any third party. We collect personal information only with their consent and by fair and lawful means and for the purpose(s) for which they have given consent. We keep their personal information confidential and we employ appropriate security safeguards.

In accordance with the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), Precious Minds is committed to protecting the privacy and security of our families, clients, and professional partners' personal information.

Precious Minds collects personal information on individuals who:

- *Register for a program*
- *Register for our mailing list*
- *Request materials*
- *Enter into a rental agreement*
- *Make charitable investments*
- *Make a cash donation*

Precious Minds is committed to ensuring the security of collected information. To prevent unauthorized access, maintain data accuracy, and ensure the appropriate use of information, we have put in place appropriate physical, electronic, and managerial procedures to safeguard and secure the information we collect.

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Staffing and Supervision

Policy

Programs that involve children and youth must always include adequate supervisory personnel.

Supervision should also be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

Workers are to avoid one-on-one situations with children/youth, except in parentally pre-approved situations where the adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child.

Procedures & Guidelines

Staffing Expectations

As a general rule, there is to be a minimum of two workers in any room with children under the age of 10. The rooms should be staffed with at least one female adult worker to better facilitate observance of the washroom guidelines.

For our youth aged 10+ one worker plus a volunteer (14+) are to be present in each room.

Ratios

Due to the special needs of our clientele it is difficult to establish set ratios. Each program will be individually assessed according to the needs.

The following will be included in the assessment process:

- toileting,
 - lifting,
 - feeding/self-help,
 - behavioural concerns.
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Toileting and Diapering

Policy

Volunteers should never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door. Toileting and diapering guidelines are provided and should be followed for all children and youth.

Procedures & Guidelines

Diapering

- Diaper changing must always take place in such a way that another worker can easily see the child/youth that is being changed, as well as the other children and workers in the room.
- At the Resource and Learning Centre use the change table.
- If off-site, work on the floor for safety and visibility.

Children/Youth Requiring Assistance

- When children/youth need assistance in the washroom, an adult may enter the washroom cubicle to assist only when a second adult is within visual contact. If this is not possible, inform another adult when taking a child to the washroom and when returning.
- In light of the fact that most reported abusers are male, and for the protection of our male workers, it would be wise for men to avoid assisting boys or girls of any age in the washrooms. We suggest that only women assist children in the washrooms.

Independent Toileting

- If washrooms are isolated from the area(s) of activity, children/youth should not be sent to the washroom alone and above procedures for assistance utilized.
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Precious Minds Support Services

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Security and Identification

Policy

General

All staff and volunteers should be easily identified.

Nursery

Security precautions are to be taken for all children admitted to programs. Children must be signed-in and released only to those authorized by the parent/caregiver.

Names of parents and children and the names of any alternate approved by the parent will be carefully maintained.

Classrooms and offices

All classrooms must have windows or doors with windows, allowing for easy viewing by parents and supervisors. Sight lines through these windows are to remain unobstructed at all times.

Storage and Utility Areas

All storage and utility areas are to be kept locked and made accessible only to those who have a need for access.

Procedures & Guidelines

Identification

All those working/volunteering in children's programs must wear name tags provided by Precious Minds or approved clothing, which identifies them with the program.

Security

Children are never to be dropped off without a worker present.

Parents/caregivers are not to enter the classroom when picking up their child unless requested to do so. This better enables the child-care staff to maintain order and provide the level of security that parents would expect.

Doors are to be supervised to ensure children are not able to exit alone and/or cannot be taken from the room without the adult worker's awareness

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Security and Identification, continued

Procedures & Guidelines, continued

Unobstructed Windows

Classroom windows are to remain unobstructed at all times to allow supervisors to look in occasionally without interrupting the teaching process and to provide for worker security.

One-on-One Situations

Staff or volunteer workers must obtain the consent of the child's parent or guardian before spending one-on-one time with that child. Workers must also notify the Program's Co-ordinator of such meetings in advance and the meeting should occur in a public place with parents dropping the child off and picking the child up.

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Health and Safety

Policy

Precious Minds recognizes its moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe and healthy work environment for staff, volunteer workers and visitors and will endeavour to ensure they do nothing to place themselves or the local community at risk of injury or illness.

Precious Minds will endeavour to:

- Provide safe buildings, plant, and systems of work.
 - Ensure compliance with legislative requirements and standards.
 - Provide staff and volunteer workers with information, instruction, training, and supervision for their safety.
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Procedures & Guidelines

Sick Children

A child who is ill and could therefore expose other children and workers to illness should not be received into a program. Some signs of illness are unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth, and throat. Any child with a known communicable disease should not be received into a program.

Medication

- Precious Minds staff or volunteers are not to give or apply any medication without instruction and a signed release from the parent/guardian.
- No medication will be left in the room or with a worker or child.

Emergencies

- In the event of a life-threatening or medical emergency:
 - Call 911
 - Assure the patient that help is on the way
 - Keep the phone line clear after the 911 call is made
 - Direct someone to wait out front to meet the ambulance and lead the way
 - Start first aid
- Procedures for fire/evacuation are posted in the upper and lower halls and state the planned route of escape.
- Procedures will be reviewed semi-annually for emergencies.

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Precious Minds Support Services

A Plan To Protect Children, Youth, and Workers

Health and Safety, continued

Procedures & Guidelines, continued

First Aid

- First aid boxes are located in the:
 - upstairs kitchen
 - main office
 - multi-purpose room
- The Program's Co-ordinator is to be notified when supplies are used so that they can restock.
- Contents are to be reviewed semi-annually by the Program's Co-ordinator.

Procedures for Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood

- Separate the injured child from the other children. Isolate the area where any blood may have dropped on carpet, toys, etc. Apply first aid measures and send someone to locate the parents.
- If other children have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury, their parents should be informed.
- Put on latex gloves (available in the first-aid kit) and bandage the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears, and eyes.
- Carefully wipe up all blood and bloody bandages and remove to a secure, inaccessible waste removal receptacle.
- Any blood on the floor or toys must be washed away using a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water.
- Remove and properly dispose of latex gloves. Wash carefully with sterilizing soap (in first-aid kit).

Cleanliness

- Sanitize the childcare areas weekly.
 - Regularly clean all surfaces, toys, tables, trays, bedding, bibs and doors.
 - Clean toys used by children with colds with special solution provided by your nursery coordinator.
 - Area carpets in nursery and pre-school classrooms will be cleaned quarterly or as required.
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Allergy Awareness and Avoidance

Policy

Definition

Allergic reaction: The hypersensitive response of the immune system of an allergic individual to a substance.

Anaphylactic shock: A widespread and very serious allergic reaction. Symptoms include dizziness, loss of consciousness, labored breathing, swelling of the tongue and breathing tubes, blueness of the skin, low blood pressure, heart failure, and death. Immediate emergency treatment is required,

Precious Policy

Children/Youth with a known allergy that may require the administering of medication or immediate emergency treatment must complete a profile with treatment directions and authorization for treatment by staff and volunteers. This profile will be posted on the designated bulletin board.

At all times, diligence needs to be on the part of the parent whose child has the allergy.

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Precious Minds Support Services

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Allergy Awareness and Avoidance

Procedures & Guidelines

Insect Sting Allergic Reactions

The majority of allergic reactions from stinging insects are from Bees, Yellow Jackets, Hornets and Wasps. Severity of reactions to stings varies greatly. For children with a known bee sting allergy avoidance and prompt treatment is essential.

Food Allergic Reactions

Because so much food is brought into the Centre and off-site locations it is unrealistic and unsafe for us to guarantee an allergen-free and especially a nut-free environment.

We ask everyone to avoid the use of nuts and nut products in baking or purchasing snacks for our programs and events. For other identified allergens, we ask volunteers to work with the parents/caregivers and avoid the use of the allergen in their specific program.

As well it is important to provide parents/caregivers/leaders with the means to make an informed decision – this requires bringing in the label on purchased food items so ingredients can be checked and eliminates bulk bin purchases.

General Procedures

Children and Youth Programs

- all snacks purchased for children's programs must have a label (so a parent can check ingredients – we are ensuring they have the means to make a decision)
- “no sharing” policy with snacks

Events

- please be careful when preparing food, especially desserts to ensure you do not use nuts or peanuts
- when purchasing food please bring the label so a parent/individual can check the ingredients

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Precious Minds Support Services

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Allergy Awareness and Avoidance

Procedures & Guidelines

Sample Nut Allergy Letter –

For distribution at each program start or to all new families

Dear Parents, Caregivers, and Friends,

Several children attending programs at Precious Minds have a potentially life threatening allergy to peanuts, nuts, and nut products. This allergy is known as anaphylaxis. Even a tiny amount of any of these products can be potentially fatal.

Your support and sensitivity would be appreciated in order that all of our children can remain safe and healthy.

Here are some suggestions on how you can help:

- **AVOID** sending snacks that contain nuts and nut products.
- **DO NOT** purchase snacks from bulk bins.
- **BRING THE INGREDIENT LISTING** when providing a purchased snack so that parents can check the ingredients and make an informed decision.
- **STRESS** that trading and offering snacks could potentially put a child at risk.
- **FEEL FREE TO DISCUSS** this situation with your family and reinforce the severity of this allergy.

We do not expect families to necessarily avoid products that may contain trace elements of nuts. If you already read labels you know that such avoidance can be overwhelming not to mention frustrating. All we ask is that you avoid sending lunches, snacks and food items that clearly contain nuts.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

Sincerely,

Precious Minds Programming Staff

Precious Minds Support Services

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Field Trips, Special Events & Transportation

Policy

Activities conducted away from the Precious Minds Resource and Learning Centre or other designated program locations are to be pre-approved by the Program's Co-ordinator (or designate) to ensure that potential risks have been addressed.

Consent forms must be completed for each participant.

Attendance must be taken before leaving and prior to the return to ensure the safety of all participants.

Procedures & Guidelines

Approval Process

A standard Precious Minds consent form needs to be completed by the trip/outing supervisor and should be submitted for approval two weeks prior to the event.

Parent/Caregiver Notification

Parents are to be notified at least one week prior to the trip/outing and the standard Precious Minds consent form is required for each child participating in the event.

Consent forms must be completed in full and must accompany the supervisors for the duration of the trip or outing.

Supervision

All trips and outings must be supervised by a minimum of two approved adult workers. If it is a co-ed trip, co-ed supervision is required.

For children without identifications (i.e. Sibling Support Group) the ratios should be:

Children to Grade 6: Events should have a minimum ratio of 1 approved adult worker for every 5 children with a minimum of 2 workers at all times.

Grades 6 and 7: Events should have a minimum ratio of 1 approved adult worker for every 7 youth with a minimum of 2 workers at all times.

Grade 8 and High school: Events should have a minimum ratio of 1 approved adult worker for every 10 youth with a minimum of 2 workers at all times.

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Precious Minds Support Services

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Field Trips, Special Events & Transportation, continued

Procedures & Guidelines

Transportation By Car

- When the transporting of children/youth is involved in an activity, all drivers must be at least 18 years of age, have a valid G driver's license (or higher) and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts.
- To ensure an accurate headcount, written attendance must be taken when entering the car both at the starting point and when leaving the destination.

Transportation by Bus

- Every person being transported (including youth and adult supervisors) must have a place to sit down on the bus. The number of people being transported must never exceed the bus company guidelines.
- To ensure an accurate headcount, written attendance must be taken when entering the bus both at the starting point and when leaving the destination.

PLEASE NOTE: WHICHEVER MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION A CHILD/YOUTH TAKES ON A TRIP THEY MUST RETURN THE SAME WAY UNLESS WRITTEN CONSENT IS PROVIDED FROM A PARENT/CAREGIVER.

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Discipline and Behaviour Management

Policy

At Precious Minds, it is our aim to facilitate a safe environment for parents/caregivers and their children. We have established clearly defined rules and a discipline procedure for programs working with children and youth at risk or with identified learning disabilities.

- Classroom rules and the discipline procedure will be posted in each classroom.
- Children and parents will be made aware of the established rules and discipline procedure.

Ongoing problems in discipline are to be brought to the attention of the Program's Co-ordinator. The Program's Co-ordinator will work with the program's team and parent/caregiver to resolve the discipline issue.

Procedures & Guidelines

Classroom Rules

- One voice talking at a time.
- Keep your hands, feet, and chairs to yourself.
- Raise your hand if you need help.
- Participate and have fun!
- Respect each other.

Discipline Procedure *(written from child's perspective)*

1. If I forget and break the rules:
My teacher will remind me ONCE.
2. If I don't listen:
I will have a time-out to think about what I have done and how I will make it right.
3. If I am not quiet during my time-out and/or continue to disrupt my class by repeatedly breaking the rules:
My parents/caregivers will be contacted to come and get me.

An example of making it right would be telling the person I hurt I am sorry and not doing it again.

* Please note: This discipline procedure is not appropriate for all children, especially those with developmental or communication delays.

Precious Minds Support Services

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Discipline and Behaviour Management, continued

Procedures & Guidelines, continued

Preventative Discipline

- Create a loving, caring atmosphere.
- Arrange your environment for children and for learning.
- To gain respect you must grant respect.
- Establish and communicate realistic expectations for the children.
- Be sure the activities that you provide are meaningful and age-appropriate.
- Be fair and consistent with all children.
- Be sure your focus is on positive actions.
- Be aware of needs of children with special needs.

Remedial Discipline

- Try to deal with the problems individually.
- Explain to the child why the behavior is unacceptable.
- Redirect the child to positive action.
- Explain the consequences of unacceptable behavior by defining the correct way to behave as well as the result of the wrong behavior.
- Offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the child.

Some examples of appropriate discipline within the ministry setting are:

- Praising the specific behaviors, you want to see in your group (i.e. “good listening”, “thank you for waiting”)
- A firm gentle voice addressing and redirecting the behavior (i.e. “you are running; walk please”)
- Confidential parental discussion when necessary.
- Age appropriate “time outs” or withdrawal from activity.

Some examples of inappropriate discipline within a ministry setting are:

- Corporal punishment of any kind, including jerking, shaking, spanking, slapping, hitting, squeezing, striking, or kicking a child or other means of inflicting physical pain or bodily harm.
 - Any words or tone that would cause a child to think he or she is the “problem” rather than a specific behavior being addressed (e.g., screaming at a child)
 - Any words that could cause feelings of condemnation or shame in a child about any aspect of their person—including derisive references to anything physical, emotional, mental, or position (or station) in life, such as saying, “Are you a strong boy? Strong boys don’t cry” or “Shame on you.”
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Precious Minds Support Services

**A Plan To Protect
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Discipline and Behaviour Management, continued

Procedures & Guidelines, continued

Aggressive Incident/Injury Report

To ensure consistency in communicating incidents of aggression to parents and caregivers an Aggressive Incident/Injury Report must be completed and returned to the Program's Co-ordinator following any incident of aggressive behaviour.

Precious Minds Support Services

A Plan To Protect Children, Youth, and Workers

Proper Displays of Affection

Policy

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate.

Procedures & Guidelines

The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine, and positive displays of care:

Appropriate Touch

Love and caring can be expressed in the following age appropriate ways, by:

- Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully
- Taking a child's hand and leading him or her to an activity
- Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs quieting or comforting.
- Taking both of the child's hands as you say, "You did such a good job!" (or "I'm so glad to see you. We've missed you!" etc.)
- Patting a child on the head, hand, and shoulder or back to affirm him or her.
- Gently Holding a child by the shoulders or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behavior.
- Holding a preschool child who is crying
- High fives and clicking knuckles

Inappropriate Touch

At all times, you must avoid:

- Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging, and tickling.
 - Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child with toileting as outlined previously).
 - Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.
 - Being alone with a child.
 - Prolonged physical contact.
 - Opposite sex piggyback rides.
 - Seductiveness or suggestive contact.
 - Any physical contact of any kind that is done for the pleasure or satisfaction of care providers.
 - Any touching used to express power or control over a child.
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Precious Minds Support Services

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Allegations of Abuse and Reporting

Policy

Child abuse is a violation of moral law within the context of trusted relationships. It is criminal behaviour that causes emotional, physical, and spiritual trauma to victims and has destructive consequences for abusers.

Concerns for a child's safety are to be reported in accordance with procedures prescribed in this document.

Precious Minds will not engage in denial, minimization, or blame. Our response strategy will be based on the following underlying principles:

- All allegations will be taken seriously.
- Situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
- Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of legal counsel.
- Adequate care must be shown for the well being of victims. The victim should not be held responsible in any way.
- Any Precious Minds contract or permanent staff found in contravention to Precious Minds' policy of abuse will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Procedures & Guidelines

How to File an Occurrence Report – Within Precious Minds

Any individual (volunteer, parent, or member of the community) who witnesses inappropriate touch or verbal abuse should contact a member of the Precious Minds Team:

- Staff names are posted on the charity's website and annual report.

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Precious Minds Support Services

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Allegations of Abuse and Reporting, continued

Procedures & Guidelines, continued

Abuse Definitions & Behaviours

“Child abuse” is defined as follows:

Physical Abuse is using physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child or youth. It is more than reasonable discipline. Sometimes injury is caused by over-discipline. Injuring a child or youth is not acceptable, regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline. Note: it is not permissible to strike a child.

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of hurting a child’s feelings to the point of damaging their self-respect. It includes verbal attacks on the child, insults, humiliation, or rejection. A child or youth who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behaviour.

Sexual Abuse occurs when a child or youth is used by somebody else for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may also be sexual abuse if older or more powerful children or youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful.

Neglect means the failure of those responsible for the care of the child to meet the physical, emotional, or medical needs of a child to an extent that the child’s health, development, or safety is endangered.

Symptoms of Abuse and Molestation

Volunteers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioural and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit. A one-time event would not necessarily constitute a potential abuse case; sudden unexplained changes, however, would warrant investigation. Some of the more common signs are:

Physical signs may include:

- lacerations and bruises
- irritation, pain or bleeding in the genital area or difficulty with urination

Behavioural signs may include:

- nervous or hostile behaviour toward adults
- sexual self-consciousness or “acting out” sexual behaviour
- withdrawal from activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- (Particular person) does things to me when we’re alone
- I don’t like to be alone with (particular person)
- (Particular person) fooled around with me

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Precious Minds Support Services

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Allegations of Abuse and Reporting, continued

Procedures & Guidelines, continued

Your Legal Responsibility

It is everybody's personal duty to report suspected abuse. Please contact the Precious Minds' Program Co-ordinator to assist you.

- If an individual suspects abuse, they should call Children's Aid Society (CAS). They should not try to investigate on their own. The CAS may have had other calls of concern that don't give them enough of a case to investigate, but another call could complete the picture and allow them to intervene and assist a child.
- If an individual suspects abuse, they should not tell the child or the parents/guardians that they are going to call CAS. If parents/guardians are aware of a report to CAS they may leave/move, prepare the child for questioning or the child could be put at increased risk.
- An individual suspecting child abuse must report directly to CAS or the police if they fear the child is in immediate danger. They must not rely on someone else to report for them. Please contact the Program Co-ordinator to assist you – you are not alone.
- Anonymous reporting – An individual can call the CAS intake number to “run a concern by” an intake worker to see if it is a reportable concern. An individual can consult anonymously with an intake worker in this way, but if the worker feels that the concern is reportable, the caller may be asked to leave their name and contact information.
- The CAS worker that intervenes with the family and investigates the concern would never identify the origin of the complaint to the family of the child. For example, she would just explain to the family that some concerns had been raised, but would never say by who.
- If the case was serious enough to go to criminal court, (which isn't common), anonymity could not be guaranteed.

The above issues are outlined clearly in Durham Region Children's Aid Society website www.durhamcas.ca
