



Code of Conduct to Protect Children

Effective Date: **February 3, 2022**

1 | This Code is intended as an example only. Organizations must adjust for use, taking into account any existing policies, local legal and licensing requirements, and risks facing the organization.

About this Code of Conduct to Protect Children

What is it?

This Code of Conduct to Protect Children is a component of the *Commit to Child Protection* guide for smaller child-serving organizations – a supplementary resource of the Commit to Kids™ child sexual abuse prevention program. The objective of developing and implementing such a Code of Conduct is to help increase the safety of the children in your care. The Code of Conduct ultimately adopted by your organization should establish boundaries for all employees/volunteers in your organization interacting with children, assist individuals in identifying concerning behaviour, and clarify the steps they should take to address such behaviour.

When Should it be Used?

This Code of Conduct is intended for use after your organization has gone through the *Commit to Child Protection* guide for small child-serving organizations.

How Should I Use it?

The Code of Conduct for Protecting Children is a sample that is meant to be used as a starting point only and must be tailored by your organization to meet its unique needs. It is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive, nor is it meant to anticipate each and every risk your organization may face. It is intended and expected that your organization will amend and adjust the content to meet its particular needs.

What are some Unique Challenges for small child serving organizations?

There are many smaller organizations whereby the owner and leader may be the only person to receive reports of abuse or inappropriate behaviour and/or the only person with authority to take action. Transparency and accountability are particularly important within these dynamics; as is the need to prioritize these situations even when there are limited resources and competing priorities. In managing these challenges, smaller organizations might choose to adopt a consultation process with an independent third party when reports of inappropriate behaviour or abuse arise. The third party, for this purpose, might be an individual from another child-serving organization or an entity familiar with child sexual abuse issues. Engaging in such consultation demonstrates objectivity and a commitment to an independent process and helps to underscore the importance the organization places on the protection of children:-

****Sample**:** Code of Conduct to Protect Children

Introduction

ICSF has developed the following Code of Conduct to Protect Children to guide our employees/volunteers in their interactions with children. The safety, rights and well-being of children we serve are at the core of our daily operations. We nurture supportive relationships with children while balancing and encouraging appropriate boundaries.

Why a Code of Conduct to Protect Children?

Our organization is committed to ensuring all children are protected and safe. A Code of Conduct to Protect Children is an important part of creating safe environments for children. The safety, rights and well-being of children participating in our programs is a priority in our daily operations.

The intent of the Code of Conduct to Protect Children is to guide our employees/volunteers in developing healthy relationships with the children involved in activities or programs delivered by our organization and to model appropriate boundaries for children.

Treating Children With Dignity and Maintaining Boundaries

All employees/volunteers must:

- Treat all children with respect and dignity
- Establish, respect, and maintain appropriate boundaries with all children and families involved in activities or programs delivered by the organization

It is important to monitor your own behaviour towards children, and pay close attention to the behaviour of your peers to ensure that behaviour is appropriate and respectful, and will be perceived as such by others.

All of your interactions and activities with children:

- should be known to, and approved by, your supervisor/designated person and/or the parents of the child
- tied to your duties, and
- designed to meet the child's needs not your own needs.

Always consider the child's reaction to any activities, conversations, behaviour or other interactions. **If at any time you are in doubt about the appropriateness of your own behaviour or the**

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behaviour of others, you should discuss it with the designated person within your organization. .

Examples of unacceptable behaviour toward a child:

- criticizing
- embarrassing
- shaming
- blaming
- humiliating

General Rules of Behaviour

Employees/volunteers of the organization must not:

- Engage in any sort of physical contact with a child that may make the child or a reasonable observer feel uncomfortable, or that may be seen by a reasonable observer to be violating reasonable boundaries.
- Engage in any communication with a child within or outside of job/volunteer duties, that may make the child uncomfortable or that may be seen by a reasonable observer to be violating reasonable boundaries.
- Engage in any behaviour that goes against (or appears to go against) the organization's mandate, policies, or Code of Conduct to Protect Children, regardless of whether or not they are serving the organization at that moment
- Conduct their own investigation into allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal or inappropriate behaviour – it is an employee/volunteer's duty to report the matter to his/her supervisor/designated person or Child Welfare Agency, not to investigate.

What Constitutes Inappropriate Behaviour

Inappropriate behaviour includes:

1. **Inappropriate Communication.** Communication with a child or his/her family outside of a work/volunteer context, regardless of who initiated the exchange. For example:
 - Personal phone calls
 - Electronic communications (email, text message, instant message, online chats, social networking (including “friending”), etc.)
 - Personal letters
 - Excessive communications (online or offline)
2. **Inappropriate Contact.** Spending unauthorized time with a child or the child's family outside of designated work times and volunteer activities. *You must report all contact with a child or the child's family outside of designated work times and activities BEFORE the contact occurs to the designated person within your organization.*
3. **Favouritism.** Singling out a child or certain children and providing special privileges and attention. (for example, paying a lot of attention to, giving or sending personalized gifts, or allowing privileges that are excessive, unwarranted or inappropriate.)

4. **Taking Personal Photos/Videos.** Using a personal cell phone, camera or video to take pictures of a child, or allowing any other person to do so, as well as uploading or copying any pictures you may have taken of a child to the Internet or any personal storage device. Pictures taken as part of your job duties (when known to your supervisor) are acceptable, however, the pictures are to remain with the organization and not be used by you in a personal capacity.

Inappropriate behaviour also includes:

5. Telling sexual jokes to a child, or making comments to a child that are or is in any way suggestive, explicit or personal.
6. Showing a child material that is sexual in nature, including, signs, cartoons, graphic novels, calendars, literature, photographs, screen savers, or displaying such material in plain view of a child, or making such material available to a child
7. Intimidating or threatening a child
8. Making fun of a child

Inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated, especially as it relates to the well-being of the children involved in activities or programs delivered by the organization.

Whether or not a particular behavior or action constitutes inappropriate behaviour will be a matter determined by the organization having regard to all of the circumstances, including past behaviour, and allegations or suspicions related to such behaviour.

Reporting Requirements

All employees and volunteers must report suspected child sexual abuse, inappropriate behaviour or incidents that they become aware of, whether the behaviour or incidents were personally witnessed or not.

Where to report:

1. All allegations or suspicions of **potentially illegal behaviour** (for example, child sexual abuse) that an employee/volunteer witnesses first-hand, must be promptly reported to police and/or child welfare.
2. To ensure the protection of all children in our care, all allegations or suspicions of **potentially illegal behaviour** that an employee/volunteer learns of must also be promptly reported to police and/or child welfare. Police and/or child welfare will make the determination as to whether the allegation or suspicion requires further investigation.
3. All allegations or suspicions of **inappropriate behaviour** (see above examples), that an employee/volunteer learns of or witnesses first-hand, must be reported to your supervisor.

Keep in mind that you may learn of potentially illegal or inappropriate behaviour through the child or some other third party, or you may witness it first-hand. Examples of the type behaviour you may learn of or witness and that you must report as set out above includes:

- a. Potentially Illegal behaviour by an Employee/Volunteer of the organization
- b. Potential Illegal behaviour by a third party, such as a Parent, Teacher, Babysitter, Coach)

If you are not sure whether the issue you have witnessed or heard about involves potentially illegal behaviour or inappropriate behaviour, discuss the issue with the designated person within your organization who will support you through the process. Remember: You have an independent duty to report all suspicions of potentially illegal behaviour directly to police and/or child welfare.

Follow up on Reporting

When an allegation or suspicion of potentially illegal behaviour is reported, police and/or a child welfare agency will be notified. The organization will follow up internally as appropriate.

When an allegation or suspicion of inappropriate behaviour is made, the organization will follow up on the matter to gather information about what happened and determine what, if any, formal or other disciplinary action is required.

In the case of inappropriate behaviour, if:

- multiple behaviours were reported
- inappropriate behaviour is recurring, or
- the reported behaviour is of serious concern

the organization may refer the matter to a child welfare agency or police.

I agree to comply with the Code of Conduct to Protect Children for ICSF.

Employee/volunteer's signature

Date