Policies and Procedures for Child Care Programs -

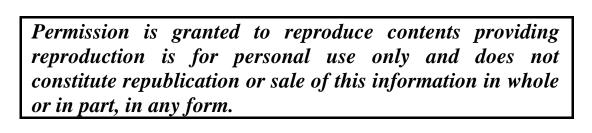
Tough and Sensitive Issues Part I

Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre

Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre

Tough and Sensitive Issues

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Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre

October 2002 Revised February 2015

Please note:

The information presented is intended to give an overview of policy and procedures in several areas that are titled 'tough and sensitive issues'. **It is not legal advice.**

It is recommended that Chapter 8 of the Westcoast INFORM Guide be read as an introduction to legal issues and liability. If legal advice is needed, consult with a qualified lawyer who has the particular expertise the organization requires.

This information is presented as a resource for licensed non-profit child care facilities. Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre does not assume responsibility for actions taken based on information provided.

Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre

Introduction

Policies and procedures are critical to the effective delivery of quality child care programs. The process for developing and decision making regarding policies and procedures will vary from organization to organization. Typically:

- The board of directors in a non-profit organization is liable for the overall management of the organization.
- The board has authority for final approval of policies for its programs.
- Once the board has adopted policies, staff who deliver the child care programs have primary responsibility for developing and implementing procedures that fulfil the intent of each policy.

Developing Policies and Procedures

1. The Foundation - Statement of Philosophy

Policies and procedures are typically built on the philosophy of the child care programs and the mission statement or purpose of the sponsoring organization.

Statement of Philosophy

At ABC Child Care Centre, we believe that:

CHILDREN are entitled to environments and opportunities that foster positive emotional, social, cognitive and physical development and that value inclusion, multiculturalism, interdependence and dignity.

FAMILIES are entitled to be involved in a meaningful way in their child care experience and deserve assurance of quality care for their children while they are involved in work commitments, educational and/or personal fulfillment or while child care is part of a care plan for a family.

STAFF are entitled to a working environment which recognizes and respects their training, skills and commitment to child care and which demonstrates this through respectful communication and personnel policies.

The CENTRE enhances the lives of children, their families and the community by providing a caring, supportive and vital community service.

2. Assumptions

Child care staff and the sponsoring non-profit organizations experience many common challenges in endeavouring to operate non-profit, quality, affordable child care.

To be responsive to many of these challenges, it is the responsibility of management to develop policies and a financial plan that enhances the opportunities for child care staff to access ongoing professional development. It is the responsibility of all early childhood educators to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary to support the well-being of children and families.

As professionally competent early childhood educators we need to understand, be sensitive to and respect that:

- Families are unique in terms of their values, experiences, expectations and needs.
- Families share a common goal of wanting the 'best' for their children, but the definition of 'best' varies.
- Customs, traditions, languages, and communication behaviours differ from culture to culture.
- Our work is a partnership with families "supporting them in meeting their responsibilities to their children". (ECEBC Code of Ethics).
- In our work, we are faced with some complex issues. Some children and adults have witnessed and/or are victims of abuse and/or violence. Many experience emotional and behavioural effects as a result.
- The focus of our work is providing quality child care. In supporting children
 and families, we need to be familiar with current community services and
 resource and referral information so that we can "work in partnership with
 colleagues and other service providers in the community to support the
 well-being of families". (ECEBC Code of Ethics).
- It is our job to listen not assume; to resist making judgements; to show patience and caring and to support families in seeking appropriate expertise and services.

In addition to the common challenges, there are challenges that are a daily reality when working in some communities.

We are aware that:

- Some families face serious financial hardships. The daily realities include lack of money for adequate housing, nutritional requirements and appropriate clothing. Some families may also be dealing with the difficulties of substance abuse and poor family health.
- The daily and long term negative effects of poverty on children and families are reflected in health, educational achievement and self esteem.
- Newcomer families often experience language difficulties and lack of familiarity with the social service, health and education systems.

3. Other Critical Factors

In addition to basing policies on a statement of philosophy and assumptions, the information prepared by Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre also reflects:

- a) the related legal factors -
 - All relevant policies and procedures must be developed and implemented within current regulatory requirements. All organizations are expected to comply with legislation, regulations and court orders.
- b) the professional code of ethics for early childhood educators ECEBC Code of Ethics.

4. Next Steps

It is hoped that this information will:

- provide ideas and facts
- encourage discussion and support informed decision making
- alert staff and board members to 'best practice' approaches, the legal and other important factors that influence policy, and
- assist each organization in it's important work of developing and/or reviewing and revising policies and procedures around sensitive issues related to children and families.

This second printing of Part 1, covers fourteen sensitive issues. And, just like "Tough and Sensitive Issues" (March 1997), each topic will include:

- an introduction;
- guidelines;
- for more information; and
- a sample policy.

Samples are provided for you to consider and to use as a starting place. It is important to keep in mind that all revisions to existing policies and new policies must be reviewed and adopted by the board of directors that is ultimately liable for managing the organization and its programs.

Enrolment

All organizations need to be aware of the importance of maintaining enrolment to secure a child care program's financial health. Balancing this intent with the fairness of an enrolment policy and at the same time responding to the changing needs of families is a challenge.

- Enrolment policies should be developed to cover issues such as:
 - waiting list procedure
 - order of priorities for available spaces
 - acceptance of children needing part-time care
 - acceptance of children needing extra supports
 - transition to next age group in a multi age child care centre
 - absence of a child for an extended time e.g., during the summer or for medical reasons.
- Enrolment policies must take into account the requirements of the Community Care and Assisted Living Act, Child Care Licensing Regulation and typically will reflect the mission statement of the organization.
- Clear admission policies and procedures will reflect the purpose of the centre and set priorities for enrolling children regarding:
 - recruiting children
 - maintaining a waiting list
 - accepting children
 - enrolling children in the centre
 - a probationary period (if applicable).
- Some programs are intended to serve a particular group of children and their families. For example, some child care centres may be set up to serve the children of employees at a particular workplace, to serve children whose parents/guardians are furthering their education or to serve certain communities or neighbourhoods. Other programs simply operate on the principle of first come first served.
- It is important for all new families to be introduced to the program when enrolling their children. Often, enrolling parents/guardians are invited to attend an orientation session with the supervisor to learn about the child care centre (the philosophy, program, financial policies and governing structures). This will also provide the supervisor with the opportunity to learn about the child and the family and to ensure registration forms are complete.

Enrolment

ABC Child Care Society will maintain a waiting list for each group of children. When there are vacancies, new children will be accepted.

Priority for admission and readmission are:

- 1. Children currently enrolled in one age group and moving to the next age group, if space is available and setting is suitable for the child.
- 2. Children currently enrolled part-time and increasing to full-time.
- 3. Siblings of children already enrolled.
- 4. Children who recently left the program (last left, first priority).
- 5. Children applying for admission for the first time.

The staff person in charge of admissions will contact parents/guardians on the waiting list to ensure that they are still requesting a space. No family will be discriminated against on the basis of race, language, socio-economic status, gender or sexual orientation.

Orientation for New Families:

The senior supervisor of the program will arrange an orientation with each family enrolling a child. Information will be shared about the purpose and philosophy of the child care programs, the policies, the program, the board, committees and opportunities for family involvement.

Each family will complete all registration forms, health records, emergency and permission forms, authorization for pick up forms, and any other required records.

Each family will sign an agreement between themselves and ABC Child Care Society indicating that they understand the policies and procedures and agree to abide by them.

Part-Time Enrolment:

Upon registration each child is enrolled in a specified program with a set schedule of attendance for part-time children. All schedule changes will require planning and any requests for changes should be made in writing and as early as possible. A change must be authorized by the senior supervisor and will only be accommodated if space is available. All schedule changes will require an amendment to the original family agreement noting the correct fees and new schedule.

Children Who Require Extra Supports:

Children who require extra supports will be welcome in the program according to the enrolment policies. In addition to the orientation with the family, an orientation will be arranged with any professionals providing support on-site at the child care centre.

For more information, please refer to:

Westcoast INFORM Guide: An Administration Manual for Non-Profit Child Care in B.C.

Pick Up

Each organization can determine how 'late pick ups' will be handled. Typically, the centre's philosophy will be reflected in this policy. Policies should include clear information on staff responsibilities regarding contacting families/authorized pick up persons and lateness. If there is a late fee charged to families, the fee and how it is administered needs to be explained. The policy should define what is considered to be frequent lateness and what steps will be taken to address it.

- Late Pick Up -- In the case where a child is not picked up by a certain time, it will be
 necessary for the centre to contact the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
 At what point the contact is made, by whom and how families are notified should be
 included in the policy.
- Alleged impaired authorized person -- It is always a difficult situation when an authorized person comes to pick up a child and staff allege that the person may be impaired. Some considerations are necessary before action is taken.
 - Clearly stated behavioral indicators that lead one to suspect that a person may be impaired should be included in the written policy.
 - Staff should bear in mind that at times this may be a judgement call. The delicacy of the situation and the resulting difficulty staff may have needs to be considered when developing a sensitive policy. Also, there is the possibility that the person might become upset at the suggestion and may be abusive to the staff person who is speaking with them.
 - A plan to protect the child's emotional well-being and physical safety during such a situation is an important consideration.
- Without Car Seat -- Occasionally staff might encounter a situation where an authorized person attempts to take a small child, by car, without a car seat. To enable staff to handle the issue sensitively and consistently, it may be wise to include some guidelines in this policy. Some centres try to have extra car seats on hand for such emergencies, however, steps for ensuring their return are helpful.
- Custody and Related Court Orders -- If a custody or court order exists within a family, a copy of the order should be placed in the child's file and the instructions followed at all times. Families need to inform staff of all custody and court order changes.

- Unauthorized Pick Up -- If an unauthorized person arrives to pick up a child, staff should be clear about the next steps. The child's file should be checked to verify that the person is not included on the authorized pick up list. The child should not be left alone with the person at any time. In an emergency or on occasion, some organizations allow verbal permission from the enrolling parent/guardian, while others accept only written permission. If the decision is not to release the child to the individual, an explanation of the policy is necessary. The person should be asked to leave the premises and no family information should be shared with the individual.
- Any child being picked up by an older child or any expectations regarding school age children leaving on their own should also be addressed.

For more information, please refer to:

- INFORM Guide: An Administration Manual for Non-Profit Child Care in B.C.
- Policies and Procedures for Child Care Programs Tough & Sensitive Issues Part 1, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre
 - Enrolment, page 6
 - Custody and Access Arrangements, page 15
 - Preventing & Addressing Violence in the Workplace, page 22

Pick Up

Alleged Impaired Authorized Pick Up:

It is the staff's legal responsibility to the extent that this is possible, not to release a child to an authorized person who is unable to adequately care for a child. If a staff member believes that a child will be at risk, the staff person in charge will:

- Offer to call a relative or friend to pick up the person and child or
- Contact the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

If the person is driving a vehicle, the staff person will explain that driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol is against the law and staff are obligated to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and adult. If the presumed impaired person chooses to get in the car with or without the child, staff will immediately notify the police. The senior staff person will call the Ministry of Children and Family Development if they feel that the child is in need of protection.

Late Pick Up:

All families and authorized pick up persons must pick up their child(ren) by 6:00 p.m. If an emergency arises, the pick up person is expected to notify the centre as soon as possible and make alternate arrangements for pick up no later than 6:00 p.m.

If a child is not picked up by 6:15 p.m. and the authorized pick up person or enrolling family has not called, the centre will try to contact the family and then someone from the authorized pick up list for that child. If all efforts are unsuccessful, the staff person in charge will call the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The staff person in charge will also try to leave a message for the family and/or with an authorized person.

If late pick up is a repeated problem, the senior supervisor and the enrolling parent/guardian will meet to try to address the problem. All efforts will be made to successfully address the problem. If unresolvable, then one month's notice may be given and termination of services required.

Unauthorized Person:

If an unauthorized person arrives to pick up a child, the child will remain under the supervision of the child care staff. The staff person in charge will speak with this individual and explain the policy that no child will be released without written authorization from the enrolling parent/guardian.

In a rare emergency situation, verbal permission via the telephone will be allowed from the enrolling family as long as the parent/guardian confirms information about this person (name, address, telephone number, relationship to the child) and the pick up person presents photo identification to verify the information. Staff will document the time of the call and information shared. Whenever difficulties exist, all reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the safety of the child, other children and the staff. If necessary, the staff person in charge may need to call the police for assistance.

Termination of Services

Family Handbooks should contain a clear policy stating the circumstances and the steps that will be followed when:

- a family may be asked to remove their child from the program
- a family chooses to withdraw their child or
- the child is no longer in the custody of the enrolling parent/guardian.

- Procedures related to termination of services should be explained both when the
 centre has decided to ask the family to remove the child from the program and when
 a family chooses to withdraw their child. Amount of notice required, refund status
 and return of post dated cheques (if applicable) should be mentioned. It is also
 helpful to outline steps if a family decides after a short time (e.g. 2 weeks) to remove
 their child.
- Many centres reflect their philosophy in an opening statement referring to the
 centre's commitment to accommodate the needs of all children. Some centres
 implement a probationary period of one to three months in order to assess the
 suitability of placement for each child. Termination of services will only be instituted
 in circumstances where all feasible existing avenues have been tried.
- If this policy includes statements about the needs of children with challenging behaviours, then a step by step guideline will be helpful to staff and parents/guardians. A description of the responsibilities for observing and documenting and for accessing external resources to assist the centre in dealing with aggressive and disruptive behaviours should be included in the step by step process. It is helpful to avoid a 'punitive disciplinary action' type policy.
- If it is determined that non payment of fees is one reason for withdrawal, this will also need to be explained in the financial policies.

Termination of Services

At ABC Child Care Society, staff are committed to providing a caring and supportive environment for all children and families. However, termination of services may be required if:

- fees for service are not paid according to the financial policies in the family agreement and suitable arrangements cannot be agreed upon.
- the family does not abide by the expectations in the family agreement and successful resolution of the differences is not achieved.
- the child is no longer in the custody of the enrolling parent/guardian.
- a family member harasses, threatens abuse or commits a violent act toward a staff person, child or other family involved in the child care program.
- the centre is unable to satisfactorily resolve problems of late pick up with a family.
- the child's behavior is severely disruptive or physically threatening to the well-being and safety of other children or staff, and additional supports to accommodate the child are unavailable.
 - if a child is not adjusting well, recorded observations will be discussed with the enrolling parent/guardian.
 - programs will be planned and implemented to help the child. If the child is not responding, the family will be consulted. Other options may be explored with the family.
 - the centre may have to request that other arrangements be made for the child.

If either the parent/guardian or the centre wishes to terminate service, one month's written notice is required. A parent/guardian requesting termination may make payment of one month's fees in lieu of notice. (This excludes a situation where non payment of fees exists - see financial policy.)

Custody and Access Arrangements

Child care centres should have clear and consistent policies regarding the status of children when family arrangements are governed by custody and related court orders. The most common types of custody arrangements are:

- Informal arrangements -- usually emerging from a situation of abandonment by one parent/guardian or an agreement within a family.
- Written agreements -- developed by a family, a court appointed family advocate, or mediator determining custody and access arrangements.
- Court orders -- including temporary, continuing and permanent custody orders, supervision orders, interim orders and restraining orders.

Guidelines

- Enrolment or registration forms should request information about the existence and details of a family's custody arrangement and separation agreement.
- It should be made clear to enrolling families that copies of written custody arrangements, either legal or informal, should be submitted to the centre to be placed in the child's file. Without the information in custody and court orders, centres will not be able to honor legal or informal arrangements.
- The policy should include reference to who has access to a child's files and information about the child's progress.
- Some centres develop policy regarding visitation of parents/guardians on-site where there are custody arrangements.

For more information, please refer to:

- Westcoast INFORM Guide: An Administration Manual for Non-Profit Child Care in B.C.
- Policies and Procedures for Child Care Programs Tough & Sensitive Issues
 Part 1, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre
 - Enrolment, page 6
 - Preventing and Addressing Violence in the Workplace, page 22

Custody and Access Agreements

If the parents/guardians have agreed to live separately, ABC Child Care Society will assume that the information from the enrolling parent/guardian will be followed. However, without a custody or court order on file at the centre, ABC Child Care Society cannot deny access to the non enrolling parent/guardian. If this arises, the policy on unauthorized persons will be implemented.

If custody has not been legally determined and conflict between the parents/guardians and/or other family members is evident, ABC Child Care Society may not be able to care for the child unless both parents/guardians and/or other family members sign a written agreement confirming details re authorization for pick up and access to information about the child.

If a family has a custody or court order, a copy must be placed in the child's file and details about all arrangements contained in the legal documents will be followed at all times.

Staff of ABC Child Care Society will call the police if assistance is required to enforce a custody or court order.

Verbal and written information about the child will be shared with the enrolling parents/guardians unless otherwise agreed upon. Permission to share information with others will reflect the policy on confidentiality.

Child Abuse

The Child, Family and Community Service Act states that all children in the Province of B.C. are entitled to be protected from abuse, neglect and harm or threat of harm. The Act, also states that any "person who has reason to believe that a child needs protection must promptly report the matter to a director or a person designated by a director." It is therefore essential for organizations delivering child care to have current policies and procedures about child abuse that:

- reflect an understanding of the legal requirements and the reporting process
- respect the confidential nature of the information.

While the Act clearly defines when protection is needed and the duty to report the need for protection, each organization must have internal procedures to ensure that all staff and board members of the Society are aware of their obligations and responsibilities to the children in their care.

- The Child, Family and Community Service Act indicates that a child is in need of protection if:
 - the child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed, neglected, sexually abused or exploited, or emotionally harmed by the child's parent/guardian
 - 2) the child is deprived of necessary health care
 - 3) the parent/guardian is unwilling or unable to provide protection for the child from another person who presents a danger to the child.
 - 4) the child has been abandoned and adequate provision has not been made for the child's care
- The legal requirements are outlined in the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, and include, but are not limited to,
 - 1) the duty to report a need for protection
 - 2) the definition of reason to believe
 - 3) confidentiality of information
 - 4) removal of child and parental notification of removal.

Child care providers should understand that duty to report does not mean proving the allegations.

Reporting of allegations of abuse to the Ministry of Children and Family
Development is outlined in the Act as is the confidential nature of the information.
Each organization needs to determine in written policies and procedures who is
responsible for reporting within each child care facility, who has a 'need to know',
and what information can be shared in an ethical manner.

For more information, please refer to:

- > INFORM Guide: An Administration Manual for Non-Profit Child Care in B.C.
 - Chapter 3 Regulation & Licensing
 - Chapter 6 Health and Safety
 - Chapter 8 Legal Issues and Liability
- > ECEBC Code of Ethics
- Taking Care, ECEBC, A Child Abuse Prevention Manual for Canadian Early Childhood Educators
- B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect for service providers, published by Ministry for Children and Family Development
 www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child protection/pdf/handbook action child abuse.pdf
- Child, Family and Community Service Act www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96046_01

Apprehension by the Ministry of Children and Family Development

The *Child, Family and Community Service Act* defines when a child is in need of protection, alternatives to apprehension, **best interests of the child** and when, how and where the Ministry of Children and Family Development can and/or will apprehend a child. The Act also states, in its guiding principles, that "a family is the preferred environment for the care and upbringing of children and the responsibility for the protection of children rests primarily with the parents" and "if, with available support services, a family can provide a safe and nurturing environment for a child, support services should be provided." The deciding factor that will determine what action is necessary, is what is in the **best interests of the child**. The responsibility for that decision lies with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The challenge for child care programs is to develop policies and procedures that:

- 1) incorporate obligations and responsibilities under the law, and
- 2) nurture and support children and their families. If the organization chooses, these policies might include an agreement with the Ministry of Children and Family Development that no child will be apprehended at the child care centre, unless all other alternatives have been unsuccessful.

The guidelines set out below only reflect the need for policies and procedures when it has been determined by the Ministry that apprehension is the course of action that is necessary.

- The Act states that the Ministry of Children and Family Development may remove a child and that they "may, without a court order and by force if necessary, enter any premises for the purposes of removing a child." It is the responsibility of the child care program to ensure that the person apprehending a child is a representative of the Ministry of Children and Family Development and that they have the authorization of the Ministry to apprehend the child.
- The Act states that the Ministry "who removes a child must promptly make all reasonable efforts to notify each parent of the child's removal." The child care centre staff need to be aware of and understand the procedures the Ministry uses to accomplish this.
- Confidentiality and disclosure of information are outlined in the Act. While a general
 confidentiality policy would cover most areas of involvement in a child care facility,
 specific concerns may arise when the issue is apprehension.

- The Act gives the court the right to allow the Ministry to access records of individuals
 or organizations if "there are reasonable grounds to believe the record contains
 information necessary for determining whether a child needs protection." It is the
 responsibility of child care programs to ensure that information is documented
 accurately.
- When a child is apprehended, it is possible that the care plan will include the child's continued involvement in the child care centre. It is imperative at this time that the child care staff update emergency contact information stating who has access to the child and who has authorization to pick up the child.

Apprehension by the Ministry of Children and Family Development

When a social worker from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and/or the police intend to apprehend a child at the child care centre, the senior staff member on duty will be responsible for responding to the situation.

The staff member will require the social worker or police officer to show identification. The staff member will record the name and title of the person apprehending the child and the address and phone number of the Ministry office involved, as well as the date and time of the apprehension. The staff member will then phone the Ministry office to verify with the supervisor that the social worker has authorization to apprehend this child, prior to the child being removed from the child care centre.

Preventing & Addressing Violence in the Workplace

Workers' Compensation Regulations Definition of Violence:

"Violence means the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behavior which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that the worker is at risk of injury."

- Staff in child care facilities are covered by the Workers Compensation Act and Regulations, including the Industrial Health and Safety Regulations, Industrial First Aid Regulations and Occupational Environment Regulations.
- Regulations called 'Protection of Workers from Violence in the Workplace' state that where a risk to workers from incidents of violence exists, the employer must take appropriate action to eliminate or minimize this risk. The Regulations require every employer to:
 - conduct a risk assessment to identify possible risk of violence within the workplace. Where the assessment identifies a risk of violence, appropriate written policies and procedures for eliminating or minimizing the risk must be developed and put in place
 - 2) inform all employees who are at risk about that possibility, and provide appropriate training to enable employees to recognize the risk, take preventive measures and report incidents
 - respond to, and investigate, all incidents of violence against employees that arise out of the worker's employment, and take steps to prevent or minimize repeat occurrences. Employers must also advise employees who are reporting injuries as a result of an incident of violence to consult a physician for treatment.
- The Regulations also state that:
 - "Every employer shall ensure the adequate direction and instruction of workers in the safe performance of their duties."
 - 2) "Every supervisor shall be responsible for the proper instruction of workers under his direction and control, and for ensuring that their work is performed without undue risk."

- Employees also have responsibilities under the Workers' Compensation Regulations, including:
 - 1) not undertaking activities of a hazardous nature
 - 2) identifying potential risks to the employer
 - 3) reporting any incident of violence to the employer
 - 4) understanding and following policies and procedures developed by the employer to eliminate or minimize the risk of workplace violence.
 - The provincial Human Rights Code declares that all employees in this province should have fair treatment in the workplace, including the right to work in an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment. Under the Human Rights Code, it is the responsibility of the employer to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and if sexual harassment occurs, the employer could be ordered to pay for financial losses and compensation to the person harassed. A strong policy prohibiting sexual harassment and preventive strategies should be incorporated into the policies relating to violence in the workplace.

For more information, please refer to:

- Westcoast INFORM Guide: An Administration Manual for Non-Profit Child Care in B.C.
 - Chapter 8 Legal Issues and Liability
- Human Rights Code
- Workers Compensation Act, Regulations

Website: www.worksafebc.com - Publications

Preventing and Addressing Violence in the Workplace

The board of directors recognizes and respects the right of all staff to:

- work in an environment free from harassment and violence, including sexual harassment
- be aware of potential workplace risks
- confidential handling of any incident of harassment or violence
- have any incidents of harassment or violence dealt within a timely manner
- expect the Board to eliminate or minimize the risk of harassment or violent threats or acts against staff.

The board of directors will establish a Health and Safety Committee to deal with all issues relating to the health and safety of employees. Representatives of the board and staff on this committee will:

- identify any risks to employees by conducting a risk assessment as outlined in the Workers Compensation Act and Regulations
- 2) recommend policies and procedures to the board relating to any identified risks
- 3) recommend policies to the board to reduce the opportunity for violence or harassment
- 4) outline the responsibilities of the board, the supervisor and the staff, to include training requirements
- 5) receive and investigate all incident reports in a timely manner and initiate corrective action to eliminate or minimize the risk
- 6) maintain confidentiality regarding incident reports other than on a 'need to know' basis
- 7) evaluate the effectiveness of all policies and procedures and make recommendations to the board.

Safety and Security

Safety and security issues need to be addressed in all child care programs.

Policies relating to the safety and security of staff are addressed in the *Workers' Compensation Act* and *Regulations*; in the *Human Rights Code* of B.C.; and in the Preventing and Addressing Violence in the Workplace section of this document, and therefore will not be addressed in this section.

Safety and security issues relating to children and families are addressed in the Community Care and Assisted Living Act, Child Care Licensing Regulation; in the Child, Family and Community Service Act; and in the Fire Services Act and Regulations; as well as in the sections of this document relating to child abuse, apprehension, pick up, custody and access arrangements, confidentiality and enrolment. This section will only address issues not covered in other policies.

Arrival and Departure

The arrival and departure times at child care facilities are a very busy time for staff, children and family members - taking off outer wear, putting personal belongings in cubbies, and putting on indoor shoes; signing in, reading notices, talking to caregivers, etc. This process can be streamlined if everyone is aware of the policies and procedures and the rationale for them.

- It is helpful to keep all procedures for arrival and departure as simple and efficient as possible.
- The family handbook should outline the rationale for policies and procedures about arrival and departure.
- A simple sign in and sign out system is desirable.
- As it is important for caregivers and families to communicate at arrival and departure times each day, it is helpful to develop a system to ensure coverage of child care responsibilities as well as adequate opportunities for contact with families.

Arrival and Departure

It is imperative for staff to know when children arrive and when children leave each day. The parent/guardian or authorized pick up person will be responsible for signing in and signing out on the daily attendance sheet. Staff will be responsible for completing the daily intake form.

In order to ensure that the care givers have time to communicate with parents/ guardians, and ensure that the children are supervised during this busy time, the staffing plan will ensure enhanced ratios at the busiest arrival and leaving times at the end of the day.

Procedures

- The parent/guardian or authorized pick up person will complete the daily attendance form indicating the time their child arrived and the time their child departed.
- The parent/guardian is requested to phone the child care program by 9:30 a.m. if their child will not be attending on that day or if their child will be arriving at a later time than usual.
- Staff will complete the daily intake form upon the arrival of each child and will add relevant information throughout the day.
- Staff will ensure that the daily attendance forms are completed.
- Staff will record any messages regarding absenteeism or later arrival in the daily log book.

Missing Child

Policies and procedures need to be developed in every child care program to prevent the disappearance of a child. These policies should include recording procedures; staff responsibility for verifying the number of children; outdoor play policies and procedures including toilet routines; procedures for inspecting field trip locations prior to visiting; requirements for enhanced ratios for field trips; and the expectations of staff, volunteers and children while on a field trip.

The intent of developing the above preventive policies and procedures is to eliminate or at least significantly reduce the risk of a child missing from the child care centre, outdoor area, or while on a field trip. Having guidelines for policies and procedures about a child that is missing, while in care, will hopefully ensure that the process is as efficient and as expedient as possible and reduce the emotional stress involved in a critical situation.

- Staff should be aware of their roles and responsibilities prior to a child becoming lost.
- Actions need to be described to identify which child is missing and to notify all other staff and adults.
- Areas of responsibilities need to be assigned, i.e. who will search and who will supervise the other children, who will contact police, parent/guardian and the licensee, the time frame for contacting each and who will document the information.
- A search plan needs to be implemented. Designate areas for each person to search, starting with areas that present the most danger.
- If the search is unsuccessful, and police are contacted for assistance, documentation to that point as well as emergency card information will be required.
- Information about the role of child care staff will need to be shared with the police officer in charge.
- All relevant times, names, titles and details of the search will need to be recorded and reported.
- Actions to debrief with children, families, staff and police/emergency personnel will be required.
- Follow up actions to evaluate the effectiveness of the policies and procedures, to
 evaluate the actual implementation of the procedures in this situation and a
 summary of recommendations to avoid a repeat of the incident will be necessary.

For more information, please refer to:

| > | Planning an Effective Response to Critical Incidents, Westcoast Child Care | Э |
|---|--|---|
| | Resource Centre | |

Missing Child

The safety of children is of utmost importance in a child care program. Preventive strategies are addressed in many of the policies and procedures throughout the staff and family handbooks. The board of directors and staff of ABC Child Care Centre believe that it is important to have policies and procedures to eliminate or reduce the possibility of a missing child. To ensure that the search for a child will be as efficient and expedient as possible, it is also important to have policies and procedures in place in case a child is missing.

The following procedures outline the steps to follow in case where a child is missing.

Procedures

- The accompanying adult or staff person will determine which child is missing.
- The adult or staff person will notify the senior staff member present who will then notify all staff, field trip adults and other relevant adults (for example, if you are visiting a museum, notify the staff of the museum).
- The senior staff member will, depending on the number of available staff and adults, designate a team to search and a team to supervise the other children. Whenever possible there will be a qualified E.C.E. staff member on each team.
- The senior staff member will designate a meeting place, preferably close to the nearest telephone, and a time frame for the initial search.
- The senior staff member will designate areas to search in order of priority, starting with areas that present the most danger.
- The staff member responsible for the supervision team will gather the other children at the meeting place and then access the emergency card of the missing child and the first aid kit. The time will be documented.
- The senior staff member will contact police by dialing 911 if a search of the immediate area is unsuccessful.
- The senior staff member will then notify the parent/guardian and the licensee.

- The senior staff member will then gather and document as much information as
 possible a description of the child, when and where the child was last seen, what
 the child is wearing, what areas have been searched, who has been notified and any
 other relevant information.
- When police arrive, the senior staff member will clarify the role of child care staff with the police officer in charge.
- The senior staff member will stay at the search venue until the child is found and returned to the parent/guardian or to the centre, or is relieved of duty by the licensee.
- The senior staff member will record and report all relevant times, names, titles and details of the search, including preparing an incident report.
- If the venue is a field trip site, the other staff members and field trip adults will return with all of the other children to the child care centre.
- The senior staff member on-site at the child care centre, will ensure that telephone coverage is maintained until notified by the senior staff member at the search venue.
- Child care staff members will not issue any information to the media without the written consent of both the board of directors and the parent/guardian.
- Senior staff will debrief as soon as possible with the children, families, staff and police/emergency personnel involved in the incident.
- Resources will be offered to children, parents/guardians, field trip adults or staff who
 have difficulty dealing with the incident.
- Follow up will include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the policies and procedural implementation, as well as recommendations to avoid a repeat of the incident.
- Prevention policies and procedures will be reviewed to identify ways to eliminate or reduce the possibility of a similar incident.

Visitors Entering the Child Care Centre

The safety and security of children, families and staff in child care programs depend on everyone involved participating in identifying potential risks or hazards. As unauthorized visitors could present a danger, it is important that a senior staff member be informed when visitors are on the premises.

While most child care centres have an open door policy for families of children enrolled and community partners, it is important that visitors be screened prior to entering the child care premises, including the outdoor play area.

- Information in staff and family handbooks should outline the child care centre's policies about visitors.
- It is useful if all staff and family members help to inform a senior staff member if they see a visitor on the premises.
- A plan to post notices for staff and parents/guardians if authorized visitors or service personnel are expected is helpful.
- Senior staff members should be familiar with community partners.
- Staff should understand the reasons why unauthorized visitors are not allowed and be able to relate the information to families and any visitors.

Visitors Entering the Child Care Centre

Authorized visitors and community partners will be welcomed in the ABC Child Care Centre with the consent of the board of directors or senior supervisor. All other visitors wishing the opportunity to view the child care centre will be invited to attend one of the semi annual open house days.

Unauthorized visitors will not be allowed to visit the child care centre. The senior staff member will be responsible for addressing this situation, however, all staff and parents/gardians are requested to inform senior staff when a visitor is on the premises, including the outdoor area.

Procedures

- All staff or parents/guardians will inform the senior staff member when they
 encounter a visitor on the premises.
- The senior staff member will explain the policy and rationale for the policy.
- The senior staff member will invite the visitor to attend an open house.
- The senior staff member will ask the visitor to leave the premises immediately.
- If the visitor does not comply with the request to leave, the senior staff member will ask a second time, and if the request is not complied with, the senior staff member will call the police for assistance.
- The senior staff member will record the incident in the daily log.

Confidentiality

- While there are some options for how an organization chooses to handle confidentiality, there are also obligatory procedures as set out in legislation.
- For non-profit organizations delivering child care, the majority of legal obligations are outlined in:
 - Community Care and Assisted Living Act and Child Care Licensing Regulation – regarding the role of Licensing and access to records and files
 - Child, Family and Community Service Act
 - Criminal Record Review Act regarding staff and volunteers on site at a child care facility
 - Society Act regarding the affairs of the incorporated organization and publicly accessible information
 - Employment Standards Act regarding information for and about employees
 - Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) BC's privacy act regarding the rules to protect the collection, use and disclosure of personal information (children, families, donors, volunteers and employees)
 - Personal Information and Protection of Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) – federal act regarding the handling of personal information for those provinces that do not have a provincial act (such as BC, noted above) or organizations who fall under federal jurisdiction including Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve
 - Human Rights Code regarding the rights and obligations of employers and employees
 - Court orders details regarding a particular child and /or family

- Definitions Policy developers will find it helpful to be familiar with the following terminology:
- Records refers to information about children and their families in client files, contracts with caregivers and services providers, reports and records about investigation results, personal information about employees and volunteers.
- Control of a record this refers to the authority of an organization to manage information in a child's file. When ABC Child Care Society has control of a record, it means that the Child Care Society makes decisions about releasing or not releasing information contained in the file.
- Custody of a record this refers to where the records are stored and who is responsible for maintaining and storing the files. When ABC Child Care Society has custody of a record, it means that the Child Care Society is responsible for preparing, maintaining and storing this information.
- Subpoena a court authorized demand for attendance in court to give information under oath. Sharing of records may be required.

For more information, please refer to:

- Westcoast INFORM Guide: An Administration Manual for Non-Profit Child Care in BC
- Privacy Protection for Child Care Organizations, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre

Confidentiality

Confidentiality at ABC Child Care Society refers to all verbal and written information about potential, enrolling and former:

- children and families
- employees

It also refers to information related to 'in camera' board discussions and decisions.

All staff and board members will be expected to fulfil their obligation to respect protection of privacy. Each individual will ensure that no private or personal information is revealed that may cause another individual harm.

This excludes the responsibility that service providers and others have as outlined in legislation and/or when information is subpoenaed by the court.

Custody and Control of Records:

Custody and control of the children's records will belong solely to ABC Child Care Society unless contractual arrangements and/or legislation alter this policy.

Client Information:

The principle of 'need to know' will guide all service providers and board members in judging who will have access to information about children and their families and how much information about a child and/or their family will be shared.

No information will be released about a child and the enrolling parent/guardian without first receiving written permission of the enrolling parent/guardian.

This excludes the responsibility service providers have as outlined in legislation (e.g., duty to report need for protection) as well as access to information that is subpoenaed by the court.

Storage of Client Information:

All written information that is confidential will be properly kept in files and stored in the locked filing cabinet in the child care office. Access to these files will be restricted only to those 'who need to know' such information.

Personnel Information:

If there is a request for information about an employee, written or verbal permission will be sought. If verbal permission is sought, documentation will be kept noting the date, time and information to be disclosed.

This excludes the responsibility individuals and organizations may have as outlined in legislation (e.g., Income Tax Act, Employment Standards Act) or as subpoenaed by the court.

Communicating with Families

Communicating with families on tough and sensitive issues is a challenge for most early childhood educators. Respecting diversity and supporting and acknowledging different languages and styles of communication requires sensitivity and skill. Positive communication with families is crucial to quality service delivery, and viewing the parent/caregiver relationship as a partnership based on joint concern and involvement will foster successful communication.

Guidelines

Practical Tips:

- Choose a time that is convenient to both you and the family member.
- Demonstrate respect and the importance of privacy by moving to a place, whenever possible, that is at least semi private. If appropriate, provide care for the child in another area during the meeting/discussion.
- Avoid intimidating families by using formal written notices and lots of documentation.
 When written notices are required, access translation in the language of the home.
- Be aware of the power of body language and placement. Sit side by side or at angles in comfortable seats rather than across a desk.
- If space and time are too difficult to coordinate during the day, you may find it helpful to call the family at home at a time that is convenient.
- Depending on the issue, you may need to be prepared for a possible emotional reaction. Have tissues handy for tears or help ready nearby to intervene where you expect there might be difficulties.
- If meeting with a family member who has been aggressive in the past or has exhibited threatening behavior, it is wise to have another person present in the meeting.
- "Communication can be fostered by Early Childhood Educators who, while aware of their own cultural values, can accept that others hold a broad range of beliefs and attitudes." (Early Childhood Education for a Multicultural Society, Chud and Fahlman)

- Show understanding and sensitivity of other learning styles and interests. It would be
 unwise to provide written materials if the families won't or cannot read them. If
 written information is crucial to the meeting, read it aloud and ask for a signature if
 necessary.
- You may need to access verbal translation of all critical information families require.
- "Forming good working relationships with parents is one of the most important elements in meeting the needs of the child. It is necessary to understand the issue from the parents perspective as well as from your own. There is no typical parent. Our ability to relate to parents is challenged by the multitude of individual differences that exist among them. It is interesting that, while we embrace the concept of individual differences among children, we often treat such differences as a problem when it comes to parents." (A Resource Guide for Early Childhood Educators, Vancouver Health Department)
- Other relevant wording may be contained in a centre's inclusion/anti bias policy, the ECEBC Code of Ethics, staff manual or statement of philosophy.

For more information, please refer to:

- ECEBC Code of Ethics www.ecebc.ca
- Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre:

www.wstcoast.org - Publications

Westcoast Library

Communicating with Families

At ABC Child Care Centre, staff will at all times demonstrate respect for, and recognition of, a variety of traditions, languages, communication styles and cultural diversity.

The organization will respond to the multilingual needs of the families and provide as much written information as possible in translation, and whenever possible provide critical verbal information through interpretation in the home language.

If the information to be shared with a family is considered to be confidential and a translator is utilized, the policies regarding confidentiality will be followed by all involved.

Information about families obtained during discussions or meetings, recorded on forms, or learned through working with the child and family is confidential and must not be released without consent of the enrolling parent/guardian as outlined in the confidentiality policy.

Conflict Resolution

Achieving effective communication is a part of daily life in child care – employer to staff; staff to staff; families to staff; children to children; and staff to children.

Guidelines

- The goal of conflict resolution is to resolve differences of opinion and conflict in a
 peaceful way. The goal is to reach solutions that everyone involved 'can live with'.
- Participants need to first define the issues and state their points of view.
- The conflict resolution motto is:

'It's you and me against the problem.'

NOT

'It's you and me against each other.'

Respectful communication and effective negotiation are the foundation for conflict resolution.

Conflict Resolution Between Adults

Staff at ABC Child Care Society will make continuous efforts to practice effective communication with all colleagues and adults at the centre. When there are differences of opinion and disputes, staff will initiate opportunities and attempt to problem solve the differences in a timely way.

All staff will utilize skills that demonstrate constructive discussion and respectful communication. All involved will endeavor to agree on meaningful solutions to each dispute.

If individuals have unsuccessfully tried to negotiate resolution of conflict, they may ask another staff person to facilitate further dialogue. All efforts will be made to mutually agree on identifying a facilitator and time lines for a meeting. The goal will be to work towards mutually agreed upon solutions.