

ICOF Protection Book:

A Guide to Reporting Abuse and Neglect

My Expectations

"It is my expectation that I will be treated with the utmost respect, kindness, care, consideration and dignity at all times. My Support Network and I have adopted a zero tolerance guideline when it comes to abuse. This includes all definitions of abuse and neglect under the Vulnerable Person's legislation as well as undignified or disrespectful acts. These definitions can be found in the ICOF Protection Booklet – A Guide to Reporting Abuse and Neglect.

Under this legislation any and all allegations of abuse or neglect will be reported and investigated. Thus any knowledge of or suspicion of abuse or neglect must be reported to my LIFE Resource Coordinator. Failure to report such an incident will result in disciplinary action."

Signature _____



Why are we talking about abuse and neglect?

We live in a complex world that challenges us every day with a wide range of issues. These issues can be difficult to understand, or even explain. Talking about the issue of abuse and neglect of people with disabilities is difficult for us all. It is sensitive in nature, often bringing to the forefront some of the worst fears for parents, siblings, or friends of the individual who has been mistreated. In reality, those involved in supporting an individual with a disability should prepare to support the individual through this difficult and often scary time. Providing the individual, and those we offer support with the information is one way to ensure his/her own safety.

In the spirit of prevention, creating awareness about the issue of abuse ensures we can respond, understand, and surround the person with the love and support they need to feel safe in these challenging and often life changing circumstances.

The VPA directs us to report abuse or neglect that has occurred or is suspected. Your relationship, connection, knowledge and experience with the individual receiving ICOF funding makes you best prepared to take notice when things aren't right or if he/she is acting out of the ordinary. Observations and experience can help detect concerns.

It is the role of the Department of Family Services to investigate incidents of abuse and neglect. Innovative LIFE Options Inc. (LIFE) takes a back seat when these issues occur. As a result, one of your most important roles is to report suspected abuse and neglect.

The information in this booklet is difficult, yet important. It is essential that those involved with ICOF be knowledgeable of their responsibilities as they relate to supporting, documenting and reporting abuse and neglect. An overview of the principles of the VPA and issues of protection will help everyone involved understand their role and how to respond when issues occur. Reviewing this information with each Support Network, staff, and the individual is an important step towards prevention.

Definitions of abuse and neglect

The following definitions, are taken from the Department of Family Services *Protecting Vulnerable Persons From Abuse and Neglect; Reporting Requirements for Direct Service Providers*. These definitions are important in understanding the legislation and reporting abuse and neglect.

Abuse - Refers to mistreatment, whether physical, sexual, mental, emotional, financial or a combination of these, that is likely to cause death, or that causes/is likely to cause serious physical/psychological harm to a vulnerable person, or significant loss to his/her property.

- ❖ **Physical Abuse** – refers to any action by a person that intentionally causes or could cause physical pain, injury or death to a vulnerable person. It includes the use of force or threat of force against a vulnerable person. Physical abuse can include physical assault such as striking, punching, kicking, pushing, shoving, and biting, throwing, burning or violent shaking. The use of unauthorized restrictive or restraining procedures can also constitute physical abuse. Momentary physical restraint is only permissible in an emergency (ex: non-violent crisis intervention). Physical abuse can also include giving unauthorized or improper medication.
- ❖ **Sexual Abuse** – refers to any sexual advances, exploitation or behaviour by any person toward a vulnerable person without the vulnerable person's informed consent. This includes sexual harassment, fondling, masturbation, penetration, or any exploitation of the vulnerable person for pornography or prostitution. Sexual harassment includes any conduct, comment, gesture or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to offend or humiliate him/her.

Any sexual activity between a vulnerable adult and his or her service provider, even with the vulnerable person's consent, constitutes sexual abuse. The use of perceived or actual power by a person to gain sexually from a vulnerable person constitutes sexual abuse.

- ❖ **Emotional Abuse** – refers to action(s) or omission(s) by a person that causes or could cause emotional trauma, stress or anguish for the vulnerable person and detracts from the vulnerable person's quality of life. Emotional abuse includes actions or omissions that are humiliating, degrading, rejecting, ignoring, intimidating or terrorizing for the vulnerable person. Emotional abuse also includes excessive and repeated demands upon the vulnerable person that he/she cannot meet, and the use of threats, demeaning language

(ex: written or verbal) or gestures towards him/her. Denying or restricting access to family and friends could also constitute emotional abuse.

- ❖ **Financial Abuse** – *refers to the unauthorized or illegal use of a vulnerable person's funds and other personal property. It can include the improper use of the person to work or provide personal services for inadequate compensation or using the vulnerable person's funds/property for personal gain constitutes financial abuse.*

Neglect - Refers to an act or omission whether intentional or unintentional that is reasonably likely to cause death or that causes or is reasonably likely to cause serious physical or psychological harm to a vulnerable person, or significant loss to his or her property.

- ❖ *Neglect generally refers to repeated or chronic failure or omission by a person to provide the necessities of life including food, clothing and shelter. It also includes failure to provide care and supervision appropriate to the vulnerable person's age or development including protection from harm and the provision of appropriate personal hygiene and health care.*
- ❖ *Neglect can be repeated failures or omissions that could result in serious physical harm or illness, psychological harm or loss of personal property. Neglect can also be a one - time event that results or could result in serious physical harm or illness.*
- ❖ *Neglect includes the repeated failure to administer medications as prescribed.*

If you are having trouble with any of these definitions, call your LIFE Resource Coordinator to help you sort through the pieces and offer some clarity!

When an incident of abuse or neglect occurs?

When an allegation of abuse has occurred. You may feel overwhelmed, scared, hurt, or highly emotional. To help you through these challenging moments the following charts outline everyone's responsibilities.

If the abuse happens to you (the individual) - Here's what you do!	Here's what you don't do!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Tell someone you trust what has happened! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Don't stop telling

If you are aware of abuse or suspected abuse - Here's what you do!	Here's what you don't do!
<p>SUPPORT - Offer support to the individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Remain calm and composed ✓ Offer support and comfort to the individual to speak about his/her situation. ✓ Ensure he/she is removed from immediate and eminent danger. ✓ Find a private place to speak with the individual. <p>Ensure he/she receives medical care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Take the individual to the hospital or doctor`s immediately. ✓ Take care to provide any immediate first aid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do not overreact or let your emotions interfere with the individual talking.
<p>DOCUMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Complete an Incident Report. ✓ All reports must be completed as soon as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Don't question - only note what is shared by the individual.
<p>REPORT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Call your Resource Coordinator and inform him/her of the incident. ✓ Send the Incident Report to your Resource Coordinator. ✓ All incidents of abuse and neglect must be reported to the Resource Coordinator within 24 hours of the incident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Question anyone involved in the suspected abuse or disclosure. ✓ Discuss the incident amongst those involved. ✓ Break the confidentiality of those involved by discussing the incident or disclosure. ✓ Attempt to mediate resolution.

LIFE Here's what we do!	LIFE Here's what we don't do!
<p>REPORT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Receive and review the Incident report. ✓ LIFE sends a copy of the incident report to the CSW for further action or investigation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Question anyone involved in the suspected abuse or disclosure. ✓ Discuss the incident. ✓ Break the confidentiality of those involved by discussing the incident or disclosure with others. ✓ Attempt to mediate resolution.
<p>SUPPORT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Offer support to those involved during this challenging time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Investigate.

Family Services & the CSW Here's what they do!
<p>REVIEWS THE INCIDENT REPORT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Upon receiving the incident report from LIFE, the CSW reviews the information and decides how to proceed. Follow up is initiated.
<p>INVESTIGATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Conduct interviews - questioning anyone involved in the suspected abuse or disclosure. ✓ Discuss the incident. ✓ Attempt to mediate resolution between parties involved. ✓ Involve authorities as needed. ✓ Provide recommendations based on findings.

ICOF Incident Reporting

If you hear about a situation that may constitute abuse or neglect, staff and Support Network must immediately report this situation to your LIFE Resource Coordinator by completing an incident report.

An incident report is a record of an event or suspected event, relating to the abuse or neglect of a vulnerable person. According to the Vulnerable Persons Act you must fill out an incident report when you know, or suspect abuse or neglect. Incident reports are important because they provide documentation that can be tracked and referred to when needed.

What is the time line for reporting?

- ✓ All incidents of abuse and neglect must be reported to your LIFE Resource Coordinator as soon as possible.
- ✓ Your Resource Coordinator must report the incident to the Department of Family Services within **twenty-four hours**.

What needs to be documented?

- ✓ **Just the facts!** (See the accompanying template on pages 9 and 10)

What are the qualities of an Incident Report?

- ✓ Factual
- ✓ Honest
- ✓ Non - judgmental
- ✓ Legible
- ✓ Objective
- ✓ Document observations only, no hearsay or assumptions.
- ✓ Make sure you write exactly what you are being told - be objective.

When you write a report, presume that the person receiving the report has no idea of what has happened prior to, during, and after the incident - so add it all! You have to provide all the information! The following pages outline an **Incident Report Template**. You may choose to use it, use the formal template offered by the Department of Family Services, or you may decide to create a template of your own. The format of your report is not as important as the content. If necessary, practice and discuss incident reporting at one of your team meetings to ensure all staff are knowledgeable about the document and their responsibility to report abuse.

Incident Report - Template

**ICOF
INDIVIDUAL:** _____

DATE _____

NAME(S) OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED AND CONTACT INFORMATION

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1. DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED

2. DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE INCIDENT

3. DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE INCIDENT

4. FOLLOW UP: INCLUDE MEASURES TAKEN OR PLANNED TO PREVENT SIMILAR INCIDENTS IN THE FUTURE

SIGNATURE OF PERSON COMPLETING THE REPORT:

Support Network is aware an incident report has been written?

Yes _____ No _____

Signature _____

DATE: _____ TIME: _____

**Please submit this report to your LIFE Resource Coordinator as soon as possible via fax or email. Connect with your Resource Coordinator for alternate forwarding instructions.
YOUR RESOURCE COORDINATOR WILL ENSURE THE CSW RECEIVES THE REPORT WITHIN 24 HOURS.**

Being proactive is a key to prevention!

LIFE urges each individual receiving ICOF funding to implement a guideline around abuse for his/her employees. This should include an enforced zero tolerance guideline. (That means that it will not be allowed!) Ensure all employees are aware of the guideline at the onset of employment by making it a part of employee training! Providing these guidelines, educating employees about abuse, and being clear about the individual's expectations with respect to abuse is another step towards prevention.

What if the alleged offender is an employee?

If an allegation of abuse has been made about a member of the community, friend or acquaintance, or even a family member, your only responsibility is to fill out an Incident Report.

If an allegation of abuse or suspected abuse has been made about an employee you will have some decisions to make. Creating a guideline around abuse will ensure clear expectations for all involved. If everyone knows what to expect, things will be much easier during this already difficult time.

Consider:

- ✓ Are your employee's familiar with your expectations around abuse? Are they aware of your abuse guidelines?
- ✓ Have you communicated to your employees what will happen if an allegation of abuse occurs?
 - ❖ Will the employee be paid for time missed pending an inconclusive, substantiated, or unsubstantiated outcome? If so, would they be paid their regular rate of pay or will a different formula be used?
 - ❖ When an allegation is brought forth will the employee in question be suspended without pay pending the outcome of the investigation?

Suggestion:

- ✓ It may be beneficial to ask employees to sign the individual's abuse guideline indicating his/her knowledge and understanding of the protocol.

When an employee allegation comes forward the **employer** should be informed:

- ✓ That an investigation is being conducted.
- ✓ Who they can contact with questions or concerns pertaining to the investigation.
- ✓ That the investigation may be lengthy.
- ✓ That they can expect to be approached by the CSW for an interview related to the allegation.

Sample Guideline – Here is an example of a guideline that you might create and share with your staff.

“When an allegation is brought forth, the employee in question will be suspended without pay, pending the outcome of the investigation and discussions between myself and my Support Network on how to proceed.

Any employee guilty of abuse, neglect, mishandling or ill treatment will be subject to immediate dismissal and or prosecution pursuant to applicable law. If the results of the abuse investigation are unsubstantiated, steps must be taken to re - build my sense of safety, renew my trust and confidence in the employee, and work towards re - building our relationship.”

Signed: _____



Potential risk indicators of abuse and neglect

The following indicators of abuse are taken from the Department of Family Services Protection Booklet - Vulnerable Persons From Abuse and Neglect; Reporting Requirements for Direct Service Providers. It is important to realize that most indicators themselves cannot confirm abuse.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- o unexplained marks on body (ex: bruises in various states of healing, welts, injuries forming patterns [teeth, belt, handprint])
- o unexplained burns (circular burns [ex: soles of feet, palms of hands], rope burns, patterned burns [ex: iron, liquid splash burn])
- o unexplained fractures/dislocations (ex: historical fractures, skull, facial bones, dislocations)
- o inappropriate or unexplained change in behaviour (ex: wary of others, reluctant to talk, vacant stares, frozen watchfulness, extreme behavioural responses, insomnia, nightmares, fatigue, changes in eating habits, indiscriminate behaviour/boundaries)
- o other (ex: signs of confinement [tied to furniture, locked in room], bald spots on scalp, retinal haemorrhages, malnutrition, eating disorders)

SEXUAL ABUSE

- o pain while walking or sitting with evasive or illogical explanation
- o significant change in sexual behaviour
- o stained, torn or bloody clothing or undergarments
- o semen in mouth, genitals or on clothing
- o pain, swelling or itching in genital area or pain during urination
- o bruises, bleeding or lacerations of the genitalia or anal areas
- o in a sexually non - active person, vaginal infections, sexually transmitted disease, vaginal or penile discharge, or pregnancy
- o sore throat (choked or forced oral sex)
- o reactions similar to post traumatic stress (ex: regressive behaviour, sudden fears or phobia, abuse of drugs/alcohol, personality changes, and self-mutilation)
- o reactions related to sexual abuse (ex: inappropriate sexual behaviour, sexually aggressive behaviour, bizarre sexual behaviour, overly seductive or adverse to sexual intimacy, promiscuity, extreme mistrust, confusion about sexual identity, boundaries, or love) other reactions (ex: complaint about caregiver, anger with non - offending caregiver/parent)

NEGLECT

- underweight, overweight, fatigue, listlessness or lethargy
- hunger, dehydration
- pale, thin and unkempt
- poor physical hygiene (ex: skin rashes, dirty hair and face, body odours)
- consistent lack of supervision/abandonment
- dull, passive, inactive
- frequent absences or arriving very early or leaving late
- inappropriate or inadequate clothing for the weather
- clothing dirty or torn frequently
- constant squinting when reading
- swollen eyes or ankles, decayed or no teeth
- bites, fleas, sores, lesions or lacerations
- untreated injuries
- untreated pressure sores
- drunk, overly medicated
- lying in urine, feces
- old food

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- unexplained changes (ex: speech disorder, sleep disorder, presence of psychosomatic complaints, involuntary twitching of muscles)
- regressive behaviour, hyperactive/disruptive behaviours
- behaviour extremes
- too adaptable or compliant
- unusual fear of consequences (ex: leading to lying)
- threatened or attempted suicide
- statements about being uncared for, unloved, being no good
- compulsively clean/neat
- anxiety about returning to certain place
- lack of attachment to caregiver and others

FINANCIAL ABUSE

- confused about own finances and belongings when not usual for vulnerable person
- theft by the use of undue influence, harassment, duress, deception, false representation or false pretences
- minimal clothing and personal belongings although has income/resources
- lack of money and disappearance of personal belongings without valid explanation-unexplained change in spending habits

Further thoughts

- ❖ Although difficult to think about, what if the person in question was not an employee? Rather, a community member, family member, or friend? Take the time; have this sensitive yet necessary discussion. Your LIFE Resource Coordinator can help.
- ❖ Take the time; discuss the issue of abuse with the individual receiving ICOF funding. Let him/her know it's okay to tell, and in fact that is what needs to happen. Create a climate of openness and understanding around the topic of abuse.
- ❖ Encourage all involved to recognize the types and indicators of abuse, how to respond, how to support the individual during this traumatic time.
- ❖ Consider training. The Department of Family Services offers protection training throughout the province. Your Resource Coordinator can also be of assistance.

Summary

In all situations, the focus should be on reducing the risk of any further abuse. Strengthening the individual's Support Network, social circle, providing training for his/her staff, reviewing resources, educating the individual, developing guidelines seem to be a positive step in prevention and increased awareness around abuse. The focus of these steps is to ensure the individual feels safe. If an incident of abuse occurs it is important that the people involved have an opportunity to work through the events in a healthy and productive way.

If you would like further information LIFE can offer you a copy of the Department of Family Services's document-*Protecting Vulnerable Persons From Abuse and Neglect; Reporting Requirements for Direct Service Providers*. Although designed for a structured agency there are additional tips you may find helpful.

Where to find us?

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Other Publications:

An Introduction to LIFE
LIFE and the CSW! A Unique Partnership
ICOF Entrance Process and First Steps!
ICOF Guidebook - Tips For the Individual and Support Network
ICOF Support Network Planning
Thinking about your Future? What will life look like after Graduation?
What Every Family, Friend and Community Member Should Know!
What You Should Know! - A Guide for the Individual

Notes:

A large, empty rectangular area with a light green background, intended for taking notes.

***"Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible
and achieves the impossible."***

-Unknown

www.innovativelifeoptions.ca

Revised August 2013