

1. Introduction

As a Christian organization, ABWE Canada affirms the Bible as the final rule and authority for our lives and ministry (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Psalm 18:30) which are both to be visible demonstrations of God's love and purity in this world.

ABWE Canada also affirms the Bible to be the final authority in evaluating culture. We recognize that Biblical standards of holiness may prevent us from engaging in questionable behaviour even if it is acceptable in some cultures. Similarly, our spiritual sensitivity may keep us from certain behaviour that would otherwise be permissible according to Biblical standards, but not appropriate to the culture in which we are serving or offensive to the people among whom we serve. (1 Corinthians 10:23-24)

ABWE Canada seeks to maintain a living and working environment that honours God, expecting missionaries, staff and volunteers to follow the Biblical standards for holy living, as interpreted in ABWE Canada's Policy Manual and to be above reproach in every way. (1 Corinthians 10: 31; Titus 2:7; 2 Timothy 3:2, Ephesians 4:29-32)

Where inappropriate conduct by a missionary, staff person or volunteer is alleged, ABWE Canada will take the allegations seriously and will make every effort to respond with sensitivity and concern for all involved, handling complaints/allegations in a fair and just manner, consistent with Biblical guidelines.

ABWE Canada has within its care many children. ABWE Canada takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of these children. As a result, this policy has been created to lay out ABWE Canada policy and guidelines for the protection of these children. ABWE Canada is committed to listening to, relating effectively with and valuing children whilst ensuring their protection when under ABWE Canada care. Any person working with children should be given support and training. Where possible, ABWE Canada seeks to minimize the risk of an event of child abuse by effective recruitment screening and making people aware of the risks and the policy. Paramount, however, is having a system for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.

ABWE Canada has a zero-tolerance policy on abuse, harassment or molestation of any person.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this document, staff refers to: missionaries, paid staff and volunteers. Individuals are considered children when they are fifteen (15) years old and younger. Sexual misconduct is defined in the following terms.

1. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a violation of human rights which may be defined as any sexual comment or conduct that is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be inappropriate. It may involve behaviour or comments of a sexual nature that intimidate, humiliate, or demean another person.

2. Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation is defined as taking advantage of a position of power or authority over another person. A sexual relationship is exploitive if one person has a professional relationship towards another – regardless of consent. It is sexual contact or invitation to contact by a person in a position of power or authority – whether or not there is consent from the other individual involved.

3. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any behaviour where one party is victim to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. The offended party may not resist the behaviour for fear of consequences.

4. Child Abuse falls into five main categories:

(1) Physical Injury

Actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child more than reasonable discipline, or willful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

(2) Neglect

Persistent or severe neglect of a child or failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

(3) Sexual Abuse

Actual or likely exploitation of a child or adolescent. The employment of physical and/or emotional sexual stimuli or acts in the presence (visual, auditory, or physical) of an individual or upon an individual, with or without consent.

(4) Emotional Abuse

Actual or likely persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment. This category is used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.

(5) Organized/Multiple Abuse

Organized or multiple abuses may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children and young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse. Organized and multiple abuse occur both as part of a network of abuse across a family or community, and within institutions such as residential homes or schools. (The basis of some of these definitions 2.4 are taken from the UK Department of Health 'Working Together under the Children Act 1989').

3. Possible Signs and Indicators of Child Abuse

The following signs and types of behaviour may be indicators that abuse has taken place. However, in themselves and in isolation they are not evidence of abuse though they may suggest abuse. Thus the possibility should be considered, especially if a child exhibits several of the signs or a pattern emerges of when or how a child exhibits such signs or behaviour. Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

1. Physical Signs of Abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur to the body in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc. For example, black eyes, unexplained facial bruising, torn inside upper lip (frenulum)
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Neglect – under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, untreated illnesses, listlessness etc.
- Reluctance to change for or participate in games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have an accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse

2. Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and a detailed knowledge of adult sexual behavior
- Inappropriate sexual play/language
- Child who is sexually proactive or seductive with adults
- Severe sleep disturbance
- Disturbed eating patterns e.g. anorexia, bulimia
- Escape attempts e.g. running away, refusing to go home
- Changes in behaviour e.g. bed wetting
- Recurrent urinary tract infections

3. Emotional Signs of Abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour e.g. withdrawal, becoming clingy, aggressive, depressed
- Nervousness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention seeking behavior
- Inappropriate relationships
- Persistent tiredness

Please see Appendix 1 for advice on how to respond to a child who wants to talk about abuse.

4. What to Do If There Is a Suspicion of Sexual Misconduct

1. You must report any concern of sexual misconduct to the ABWE Regional Director, as soon as possible. The ABWE Regional Director will report the information to ABWE Corporate Counsel. A confidential written incident report will be provided to the ABWE Canada President or Chairperson of the ABWE CANADA Board depending on the suspicion or allegation.
2. In the event of a suspicion being reported, the ABWE Corporate Counsel will be responsible for overseeing the case along with reporting to the necessary local police authorities, family members, and sending church if appropriate.
3. If the suspicions involve the ABWE Regional Director, the person should report to the ABWE CANADA President who will oversee the case along with reporting to the local police authorities, if appropriate.

4. The ABWE Regional Director has responsibility for:
 - Ensuring that all people involved with ABWE Canada ministries, including administrative and paid staff, are aware of the ABWE Canada's Sexual Misconduct and Child Protection Policy.
 - After conferring with ABWE Corporate Counsel, coordinating action by staff in cases of suspected sexual misconduct or abuse.
 - Informing the ABWE Canada President.
 - Confidentiality is of utmost importance and suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.
 - Where appropriate, reporting to the Police (if misconduct is of a criminal nature) and Social Services of the country of the victim, after conferring with ABWE Corporate Counsel.
 - Seeking advice from appropriate agencies where necessary.

5. Allegations of Sexual Misconduct

If sexual misconduct is alleged, thorough investigation will take place under the direction of the ABWE Regional Director and according to ABWE's Moral Failure Policy (P&Ps 2.3.14). During the investigation process ABWE Canada will suspend the individual from active participation in ABWE Canada activities until such investigation is complete and closed. Should the investigation prove misconduct, the perpetrator will be dismissed from the organization. ABWE Canada has a zero tolerance policy on confirmed allegations of such misconduct.

The ABWE Regional Director will:

1. Check and verify that there is a cause for concern. It should be noted that even when a case may seem minor, the full extent of abuse might only emerge after time. Also, a minor event may have a major impact on the child.
2. Pending an inquiry, whether by ABWE or by the appropriate authority in the country in which the alleged offence occurred, the accused should be suspended from work. This is necessary to protect the victim and others. ABWE Canada's responsibility must, first and foremost, be to the victim though every attempt will be made to assist the alleged perpetrator/s also.
3. Where emergency medical attention is necessary, the ABWE Regional Director will contact the Medical Officer and also inform them of any suspicion of misconduct.
4. Key questions must be asked when a suspicion of child abuse is raised.
 - (1) Is ABWE Canada able to ensure the safety of the child?
Consideration of moving the potential abuser should be given. The child may also be moved, but this should only be considered after consideration has been made of moving the suspected perpetrator.
 - (2) Is ABWE Canada satisfied that the arrangements made will prevent further acts of abuse?
 - (3) Can ABWE Canada make an appropriate plan for the future of the family?
In response to the first two questions immediately above, the child should not normally remain under the same roof as the perpetrator. Where possible, the child should remain in their home, in order to retain some kind of normality. However, it should be recognized that whoever has to move, the child may feel guilt and skilled intervention is required.

6. Support and Therapeutic Intervention

It is essential for victims and abusers, or those suspected, to receive full and skilled support and therapeutic intervention. This is a specialist area and if ABWE, at that time, does not have the relevant personnel or access to them, repatriation should again be considered. Such counselling of the child should not occur until after the child has given evidence (in the event of a court case) because this could be seen as contaminating the evidence.

Pastoral support should also be offered to anyone involved in the case, such as the person/s who reported the case, the Coordinators and other ABWE Canada members who feel hurt/shock/guilt.

7. Appointing Children's Workers

In appointing children's workers, including those only with ABWE Canada for short periods of time, the following procedure should be followed:

1. All applicants should complete a CV/application form. If their home country law permits, they should also declare whether they have ever been convicted, charged, or cautioned. Criminal (Police) record checks (CRC or PRC) will be provided for the home jurisdiction and the area of mission activity. Such applications and CRC's will be kept on record for 75 years. This information will be needed for evidence in potential defense situations in the future.
2. Any gaps in employment record should be checked.
3. At least two referees should be taken (more for long term applicants) and a telephone follow up should be made if necessary.
4. For long-term members, the psychological assessment should be checked to ensure that there are no unresolved issues in the person's life, which may render them more susceptible to becoming an abuser.

8. Other Procedures Relating to Child Protection

Any group activity outside of normal church/school activities, e.g. school holiday, children's club, should have clear arrangements regarding issues such as: ratio of adults to children; register of children and workers; parental consent requirements; keeping a log book of activities, incidents etc.; sleeping arrangements; first aid; travel; safety. The ABWE Field Team Leader should approve these arrangements.

9. Conclusion

This policy in and of itself cannot prevent sexual misconduct. However, it is a commitment by ABWE Canada to deal with sexual misconduct seriously, fairly and with all consideration to the victim(s). It relies on ABWE Canada missionaries, short-term volunteers, and volunteer staff to be observant and to raise any concern, no matter how minor with the appropriate authority.

Appendix 1

How to Respond to A Child Who Wants to Talk About Abuse:

It is difficult to give precise advice about what to do if a child opens up to you, as each situation will be unique. However, some general points are as follows:

- Show acceptance of what the child says, however unlikely it may sound
- Keep calm and look at the child directly
- Be honest. Tell the child that you will need to let someone else know (do not promise confidentiality).
- Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse
- Be aware that the child may have been bribed or threatened not to tell
- Never push for information. Let the child know that you are always ready to listen if they want to tell you more.

Helpful Things to Say or Show:

- I believe you (or show acceptance of what the child says).
- Thank you for telling me.
- It’s not your fault.
- I will help you.

Don’t Say:

- Why haven’t you told anyone before?
- I can’t believe it/Are you sure this is true?
- Who/why/when/where/how?
- I am shocked!

When Concluding:

- Reassure the child they were right to tell you.
- Let them know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know.
- Contact the person responsible in ABWE Canada.
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed.
- Make notes as soon as possible after the meeting, writing down exactly what was said and what was happening immediately beforehand.
- Keep these records safely for an indefinite period.

I have read the ABWE Canada Sexual Misconduct and Child Protection Policy and it has been explained to me. I am aware of this policy and I will take full responsibility for my actions while I am employed or volunteering with ABWE Canada.

Date (dd/mm/yyyy): _____
Participant’s Full Name (print): _____
Participants Signature: _____
Full Address (Print): _____

If participant is under 18 years of age, Parent/Legal Guardian’s signature and contact is required:
Date (dd/mm/yyyy): _____
Full Name (Print): _____
Signature: _____
Full Address (Print): _____

Initial after reading each page: _____