

EXETER YOUTH FOOTBALL AND CHEER

CHILD ABUSE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. PURPOSE

Exeter Youth Football and Cheer has developed and implemented the following Policies and Procedures in an effort to provide a safe environment for our members, athletes, and coaches. The Board of Directors shall annually review this policy and update it as needed, including the defining of prohibited and discouraged behaviors.

2. DEFINITIONS

Child Abuse: Verbal abuse (ridicule or put-downs), physical abuse (any hurting touching or excessive exercise used as punishment), emotional abuse (threats to perform unreasonable tasks), and sexual abuse.

Sexual Abuse: Refers to a wide spectrum of interactions including rape, physical assault, sexual battery, unwanted physical sexual contact, unwelcome sexually explicit or offensive verbal communication, coercive or expletive sexual contact, verbal sexual harassment, and/or sexualized attention or contact with a minor.

Volunteer: Citizens who perform the various functions entailed in the running of a league without pay including league officers and directors, committee personnel, coaches, managers, scorekeepers, concession workers, etc.

Criminal Background Check (CBC):

Exeter Youth Football and Cheer will conduct yearly Criminal Background Checks on all volunteers within the league.

3. POLICIES ON CHILD ABUSE/MOLESTATION

Limit One On One Contact: It is EYF & C policy that no activities shall take place involving one on one contact between a single, non-related league volunteer and a child, if such activities can be practically avoided. Instead, a “buddy system” is encouraged where two (2) adults should always be present during practices, games, and special events.

Prohibition of Sleepovers: EYF & C does not sanction any sleepover events at any time or for any reason.

Touch Policy: Touch is acceptable only if it is “respectful and appropriate”.

Verbal Conduct Policy: Inappropriate comments of a sexual nature and suggestive jokes are prohibited.

Take Home/Pick-Up: Take home/pick-up of athletes by EYF & C personnel is PROHIBITED because of the difficulty in limiting one on one contact between adult and child (remember the Buddy System). Parent(s) should provide transportation for their own children to and from scheduled events or complete a transportation waiver. The EYF & C or coaching staff will clearly outline the expected start and end time for all events and communicate this with all parent(s). Parent(s) should be instructed to make back-up plans in the event they can't provide transportation. If parent(s) can't provide transportation they must communicate to the organization the name of the person(s) who are authorized to pick up the child by completing a waiver. Such policy will help to protect against potential abductions or being thrust into the middle of any custody dispute. EYF & C will contact Exeter Police for any athlete not picked up in a reasonable amount of time after the "scheduled" end time of an event.

Child Abuse Prohibition: All forms of sexual, physical, verbal and emotional abuse are prohibited.

Name Distribution: The distribution of directories/rosters with names, phone numbers, addresses, and pictures will be limited to persons on a "need to know" basis.

4. EXAMPLES OF ABUSE/MOLESTATION

Emotional Abuse: Yelling or making the following statements:

- *You're stupid;*
- *You're an idiot;*
- *You're an embarrassment;*
- *You're not worth the uniform you play in; etc.*

Physical Abuse: Besides the obvious examples of a coach hitting, kicking, throwing equipment, or shaking a player, watch out for the following:

- Behaviors seem violent versus disciplinary;
- Training practices become abusive
- Fighting is encouraged or ignored;
- Illegal moves, often associated with injuries are encouraged;
- Coaches teach improper techniques or encourage conduct which violates safety rules;
- Coaches allow athlete(s) to become physically or verbally abusive;

- Behaviors result in injuries to athlete(s); etc.

Sexual Abuse: An adult may not improperly sexualize touch by fondling, kissing, or seductive stroking of various body parts. On the other hand appropriate touching can be used when a young athlete needs comfort, reassurance, and support. Appropriate touch is respectful of a person's personal boundaries, public (done in front of others and not secretly), and nurturing (not sexualized).

- Misuse of power and authority;
- Misuse of love and affection;
- Manipulation or tricks:
 - *This is love;*
 - *This is what you need to be a part of the team;*
 - *This is what we do for initiation*
- Grooming: desensitization that begins with appropriate touch, then the touch change.

Examples:

- *You liked the touch before;*
- *What's wrong? Don't you trust me?; or*
- *courting (gifts, time, attention);*
- *romancing (talking of love or attraction);*
- *line (you're special, I don't usually do this sort of thing, you're so mature, you're so attractive); or*
- *secrets (this is our special secret, others wouldn't understand, you or I would get in trouble)*

5. WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE/MOLESTATION

With some forms of abuse, there maybe physical indicators (examples: with physical abuse, bruises, welts, broken bones) or with sexual abuse venereal diseases, genital swelling/soreness, difficulty sitting or walking, pain or itching when urinating or defecating, stomach aches, pain/itching in genital area, and frequently unexplained sore throats. But most often the effects of sexual abuse are less obvious. For example, sudden shifts in behavior or attitudes when outgoing child suddenly builds a protected, closed wall or a generally happy child becomes aggressive and angry or a trusting child becomes fearful may be an indication of abuse. In sports, this can show up as losing interest or wanting to drop out of sports or a sudden decline in ability or functions.

Please note that no indicators or symptoms are absolute. Many of these could be indicators of problems other than child abuse. However, if some of these things are going on, consider them to be a red flag. One difficulty is that some signs are ambiguous. Children may respond in different ways and some may show no sign at all. Some indicators include:

- Disclosure by child. Most children won't just come out and say they have been abused, but instead, may hint at it.
- Observations, complaints, concerns, or allegations about league volunteers.
- Attitudes/behaviors expressed on the part of an adult that may be associated with inappropriate or abusive behavior (racist, poor sense of athlete development, raging temper, extremely controlling, jealous, hypersensitive, poor sexual boundaries, bullying, intimidating manner, unrealistic or inappropriate training practices and risks, etc.)
- Unexplained/unlikely explanation of injuries.
- Extreme fear of a league volunteer;
- Extreme low self-esteem, self worth;
- A child's attachment to a coach/staff to the point of isolation from others;
- A coach/staff with an interest beyond caring concerns, special interest in a child (time, gifts, attention, obsession, unrealistic expectations)
- A child's desire to drop out without a clear explanation, or without one that makes sense;
- A child that misses a lot of practices or games with suspicious explanations or excuses.

Despite increased sensitivity to abuse, there is still a tendency to blame the victims instead of holding the person(s) accountable who:

- lost their temper;
- got a little out of control;
- were just having a dispute;
- misinterpreted the touch;
- is really a wonderful person; etc.
- Listen to what the athlete is saying.

6. ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE/MOLESTATION AND OTHER POLICY VIOLATIONS

Point of Contact: Any suspected level of abuse should be directed to EYF & C President or either of the Vice-Presidents.

Information Gathering:

Upon receipt of a complaint of child/sexual abuse or of a policy violation the Executive Board of Directors will gather all pertinent facts in a fair, respectful, and confidential manner and review with both the accuser and accused.

The Executive Board of Directors will immediately report to the authorities when there is reasonable cause to believe that physical abuse or sexual abuse has occurred. At this point, the Executive Board of Directors will never investigate, as this is the role of the law enforcement authorities.

Suspension/Termination: The findings of the Executive Board of Directors and all proceedings will be confidential. If the alleged abuser or policy violator admits to the conduct, the Board can employ the most appropriate punishment. If the alleged abuser or policy violator denies the conduct, the Board can conduct further investigations (except when reasonable cause of physical or sexual abuse exists that should be reported to the authorities) deemed necessary prior to rendering any appropriate punishment or exoneration.

Remember, the alleged violations range from inappropriate, but not illegal behavior to clear cut child/sexual abuse and the punishment must be tailored to the violation.

Suspension: Less egregious conduct on the part of the volunteer will result in a verbal reprimand for the first occurrence. Any further violation of the same after the verbal reprimand will result in suspension of varying time lengths depending on the nature of the conduct. Suspension could range from one week to one year to indefinitely.

Termination: All volunteers are subject to immediate termination if the Executive Board of Directors deems necessary.

Duty to Disclose/Immunity/Confidentiality:

All volunteers are required by state law to report suspected cases of child/sexual abuse. Any person(s) who makes or participates in the making of a good-faith report of abuse/neglect, participates in the investigation, or in judicial proceedings shall in so doing may be provided with complete and absolute immunity from civil liability.

The identity of the complainant reporting a case of suspected child/sexual abuse will not be revealed. All records and reports concerning investigations and their outcome are protected by various confidentiality laws. Unauthorized disclosure of such records is a possible criminal offense which could subject the violator to fines and /or imprisonment.

7. VOLUNTEER SCREENING

Volunteer Application and Consent/Release Form:

All volunteers who have regular access to or repeated contact with athletes must complete the "Volunteer Application." This would normally include all head coaches, assistant coaches, managers, league administrators, etc. Refusal to comply will result in immediate dismissal from EYF & C even if the volunteer has been allowed to participate in the past.

The Executive Board of Directors will review all such applications and Criminal Background Checks and may conduct a follow-up interview to clarify questions, and will decide whether or not the candidate is disqualified based on this information.

Appeals: Candidate(s) disqualified due to an unsatisfactory Referral or Criminal Background Check and/or other reason(s) will be given the right to appeal upon written notification to the Executive Board of Directors.

The Board will appoint three (3) board members to hear the appeal and they will decide whether or not to uphold or overturn the decision. As a compromise, the appeal committee may decide to reassign a candidate to a more appropriate position or to place the candidate under a probationary period. The results of all criminal background checks and appeals will be kept confidential.

Acknowledgment Of Training: All volunteers who have been accepted must read the Child Abuse/Molestation Policy and must agree to abide by the rules. A yearly sign off sheet will be held by the Board for all volunteers acknowledging they have read the policy.