



## PREVENTION STRATEGIES CHILD CARE

### COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES LICENSING PROGRAM

The protection of children in our society must be our top priority. In British Columbia, the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and the Child Care Licensing Regulation are the provincial legislation, which governs licensed childcare programs. To protect the health, safety and well-being of children in care, Licensing Officers throughout the province license, monitor and support child care providers in their quest to care for children in quality child care environments.

Section 52 of the Child Care Licensing Regulation identifies discipline practices that are not acceptable in licensed facilities. It also states that the Licensee shall ensure that no child enrolled in a facility may be subject to abuse. If inappropriate conduct and/or abuse is reported in a licensed child care facility, your Licensing Officer is responsible to investigate the allegations under the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and Child Care Licensing Regulation.

*The Child, Family and Community Service Act (CF & CS Act)* was proclaimed in the BC legislature in 1996. Section 14 of this legislation states clearly that every citizen by law is required to report to the Ministry of Children and Family (MCFD) if there is reason to believe that a child is in need of protection. This affects you in your work with young children. For example, if you have reason to believe that a child who is enrolled in your facility may need protection due to the possibility of abuse that is occurring outside of your licensed child care facility (for example, by a parent or another person) you must report to MCFD. Section 77(1)(b) of the *CF & CS Act*, and as the matter of policy, MCFD withholds any information that would reveal the identity of persons reporting children in need of protection.

What is important to remember is that reporting abuse to the appropriate agency is not an accusation, but a request for an investigation. Child care providers are not responsible for proving that abuse is taking place in order to make a report. You do not have to be right to make a report! The Licensing Officer is responsible for determining the level of response to reports of inappropriate conduct and/or abuse in licensed child care facilities under the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and the Child Care Licensing Regulation. MCFD Social Workers must determine the level or response under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*.

The following lists some prevention strategies to minimize concerns and allegations in the licensed child care programs:

- Familiarize all staff (staff includes substitutes, volunteers, students and adults whom have access to the children) with the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and Child Care Licensing Regulation in addition to the policies and procedures of the child care facility.
- Work towards exceeding the Licensing standards as outlined in the Child Care Licensing Regulation. This will demonstrate a commitment to quality child care. Remember, the Licensing standards are minimum standards designed to protect the health, safety and well-being of children in care.
- Complete an Island Health Community Care Facilities Licensing Incident Report form as required and submit to your Licensing Officer immediately. In some cases, it may be beneficial to make telephone contact with your Licensing Officer to discuss the serious incident.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the role of Licensing and the Inter-Ministry investigation protocol.
- Provide all parents and staff with a copy of the centre's discipline policy. Post a copy of the policy in the child care facility.
- Ensure that a procedure is in place if the following was to occur:
  - a. If it is suspected that a child was/is being abuse din a licensed child care facility;
  - b. If a child disclosed abuse; or
  - c. If it is suspected that a child was/is being abused by someone outside of the licensed child care facility.

A child is to be supported, comforted and believed. Staff must not question the child. The first step is to follow the appropriate protocol by contacting your Licensing Officer or the Ministry of Children and Family Development. These agencies will advise you accordingly.

Reminder: Contact the Ministry of Children and Family Development if you have reason to believe that a child may have been abused outside of the licensed child care facility. Contact your Licensing Officer if you believe that a child may have been abused in a licensed child care facility.

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- Complete a criminal record check on all staff, substitutes, volunteers and/or other adults routinely on the premises before any of these individuals work/have access to the children.
- Ensure that staff documentation is complete and references have been examined for all staff and volunteers before these individuals work/have access to children.
- Provide adequate support and supervision to new staff and substitute child care providers. Do not schedule new staff and substitutes on shifts that require them to work alone until familiar with the children, families and facility policies and procedures.
- Volunteers, students and substitute care providers should not be responsible for dealing with challenging discipline situations.
- Ensure staff use good judgment in their choice of language and topics of discussion with and around the children.
- Establish a procedure for situations in which a staff member is unable to deal appropriately with a child, which allows another care provider to intervene in the situation. Sole care providers need to have a plan for coping with stressful situations.
- Encourage and support open communication amongst care providers; staff should not work in isolation from each other.
- Offer information to staff and parents on how to handle stress, effective parenting, etc.
- Develop comprehensive field trip procedures that include the following: supervision of the children (duties and responsibilities of staff and adult helpers), toileting routines and missing child procedures.
- Teach children how to protect their personal safety and what to do in a potentially dangerous situation (to be done in collaboration with the parent(s)).
- Keep daily attendance records for both children and staff (including substitutes, students and volunteers).
- Keep the children's records accurate and complete. Records include emergency documentation, a list of individuals who are authorized by the parent(s) to pick up the child from the facility in addition to custody issues.
- Establish a procedure for appropriate intervention when children engage in sexual play.
- Arrange the child care environment to reduce the number of hard to supervise areas while as the same time supporting each child's need for quiet time and privacy.
- Use the correct terminology for body parts.
- Provide opportunities for training both staff and parents around issues of sexuality and young children, in addition to issues around child abuse.
- Inform parents of staff changes at the facility including new staff, substitutes, care providers, volunteers and students.
- Ensure that a procedure is in place, which allows and encourages parents to voice concerns. The Licensee and/or manager needs to ensure that parent(s) and staff feel comfortable bringing forth their concerns. Parent(s) and staff need to be informed of this protocol. Furthermore, ensure that parent(s) and staff are advised of the procedure for contacting a Licensing Officer and/or Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- Invite and welcome parents to observe their child at any time in the facility; establish an "open door policy".
- Observe children when they arrive at the facility and record any concerns. Serious concerns must be reported to the appropriate agency.
- If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Licensing Officer to discuss the situation.

Acknowledgement – contributing sources: Manitoba Child Care Association & North Shore Health