



CAMP NORTHLAND
Duty to Report Policy

As an organization that provides care to children, Camp Northland and its employees have a legal duty to report suspicion - based on reasonable grounds - of child abuse or that a child may be in need of protection.

“Despite the provisions of any other Act, if a person, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, has reasonable grounds to suspect [any type of abuse], the person shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a society...”(CFSA section 72-1)

This mandatory reporting falls under the Child and Family Services Act (*section 72-2*) for professionals working with children, specifically “youth and recreation workers” (*CFSA section 72-5*). Failure to report suspicion of child abuse can result in charges and a fine (*CFSA section 72-4*). The person who actually suspects abuse, or to whom a disclosure has been made, must make the report directly to Child Services, not pass on the information and rely on a third party to make the report (*CFSA section 72-3*).

Any Camp Northland staff member who suspects abuse or to whom a disclosure has been made will have to make the report to Child Services personally, but will have the support of the Director and the Leadership Team. Further, there is an ongoing duty to report so even if a previous report was made, if additional reasonable grounds arise, the person who made the initial report must inform Child Services (*CFSA section 72*)

Full Disclosure:

It is essential to take all allegations of sexual misconduct or child abuse seriously. In the case where a child directly tells an employee of Camp Northland about abuse, the person must follow these steps:

- Reassure the child that the employee will do what he/she can to keep the child safe from further harm, but will not promise to keep the disclosure a secret.
- Inform the Camp Director of the disclosure and that Child Services must be contacted. Child Services can determine whether the police will need to be involved. This is for children under the age of 16.
- Where the abused is between the ages of 16 and 18, the Police should be contacted directly. It is not likely that Child Services will be involved in that case and, if they are, it will be at the Police department’s discretion. This applies to both campers and staff, if applicable, under the age of 18.
- Although the Camp Director must be made aware that an investigation process will be initiated by Child Services or the Police, it should not be divulged or discussed with any other person, whether an employee of Camp Northland or not. This is to respect the child’s privacy, protect the child’s safety, and to ensure the legitimacy of the investigation.

- Make a written report of the information on which the claim is based within 12 hours of disclosure, and comply with interview requests from Child Services or any branch of the police.
- In the case of physical or sexual abuse that occurs at Camp, the camper must be seen by a doctor within 24 hours of the abuse occurring, as a means to provide for the child's safety and to collect relevant evidence.
- Parents will be notified of the allegation of abuse by Child Services. Camp Northland (the Director, a member of the Leadership Team, or the employee making the claim) may be asked to assist in developing a strategy to inform the family, but Camp Northland employees may not inform parents that a report has been made without consultation with Child Services.
- In the case where a child makes a disclosure and subsequently denies or recants the statement, a report must still be made to Child Services* It will be up to the investigative team (Child Services and the Police) to determine the validity of the abuse claim and whether to commence an investigation.

** "False denials of sexual abuse (saying it did not happen when it did) and recanting a disclosure of abuse (denying that it happened after having told someone about being abused) are much more common than false reports." (Public Health Agency of Canada – Child Abuse Fact Sheet)*

Suspicion of Abuse:

It is not necessary to be completely sure that a child is or may be in need of protection to make a report to Child Services. "Reasonable grounds" are what an average person, exercising normal and honest judgement, would suspect. In the case where an employee of Camp Northland suspects abuse the person must follow these steps:

- Inform the Camp Director or a member of the Leadership Team of the suspicion, and how that suspicion arose. Together, determine whether to contact Child Services immediately, or to monitor the camper (if the "reasonable grounds" are shaky or unclear). Often, children will not disclose abuse through words, but through their behaviour (when physical evidence is not present) which is much harder to interpret. Questioning of the camper must be done with care, if at all; questioning should be done only to the point where the Director has a reasonable suspicion that the child is in need of protection. Leading or suggestive questions may impede an investigation if it is thought that a child has been prompted on what to say. For that reason, it is the Camp's policy to err on the side of caution, and report suspected cases of child abuse when several indicators are present.

Reporting Abuse By a Staff Member:

In order to prevent allegations of abuse by Camp Northland employees towards campers, staff will be trained and given guidelines to follow so that actions are not misinterpreted as abuse. These kinds of precautions are especially important in a residential setting, where the employees live in the same place as the campers, and there is room for misunderstanding. Any employee who unknowingly or mistakenly engages in an act that may be considered to be abuse will be reprimanded by the Camp Director and/or undergo further training to increase awareness of appropriate conduct.

Where it is suspected that a staff member has willingly and/or intentionally committed abuse, an investigation by the Camp Director and Leadership Team, including direct questioning of the employee, will commence immediately, and the employee will be removed from direct care of children until the investigation is complete. Where it is known that a staff member has willingly and/or intentionally committed abuse, that employee will immediately be terminated. Further, the Camp Director will contact Police and make a report of abuse**

This action may not fully absolve the Camp of liability in the abuse, but it may be taken into consideration in the case of a civil and/or criminal lawsuit.

*** The Criminal Code identifies a variety of offences which criminalize sexual abuse by any adult and also criminalizes physical assault (The Criminal Code, R.S.C 1985, c.46).*

It is the legal and moral obligation of any employee of Camp Northland who witnesses or suspects abuse by another employee to report the information to the Camp Director immediately. The Camp Director, Leadership Team, and employees of Camp Northland, will participate willingly and cooperate in any investigation of an allegation of abuse by a Camp Northland employee which is initiated externally (ie: by a parent upon a child's return from camp, etc.).

- As a facility operator, where health services are provided by professionals (RN, RPN, etc.), Camp Northland has a duty to report incidents of abuse by a Health Care professional to the appropriate College or governing body (for example, the Ontario College of Nurses) under the Regulated Health Professionals Act. Sexual abuse must be reported when the name of the alleged abuser is known and is a registered member of one of the health regulatory Colleges, where the person being abused was a camper, and/or where there are reasonable grounds to believe that sexual abuse occurred.