

## Child Safeguarding Policy

<b>Authority</b>	Manager of Community Services
<b>Establishing By-law No.</b>	2022-095

### 1. PURPOSE

The Town believes that each caring adult plays a key role in the protection of children and should be serving as ambassadors in all dealings involving children to safeguard and protect them against harm. Moreover, this policy has been designed to guide caring adults in developing healthy, respectful relationships with children and to equip them with the basic tools and knowledge to protect children if they suspect they may be at risk of harm. By providing caring adults with clear guidelines for preventing and responding to child harm, they are empowered to identify and address any concerns at an early stage to help better protect children.

### 2. SCOPE

The Town of Gananoque Child Safeguarding Policy applies to all “caring adults” including Town staff, user groups, event organizers and its volunteers serving children’s programming in recreational, educational and events held on various Town properties.

### 3. AUTHORITY

The Manager of Community Services is responsible for the monitoring and administration of this Policy.

### 4. DEFINITIONS

**Caring Adult:** Any employee or volunteer, including but not limited to employees, volunteers, mentors, buddies and coaches, who services and supports Town of Gananoque programs, activities and/or events.

**Child:** Under provincial child protection legislation, a child is someone who is younger than 18 years of age.

**Child Abuse:** Consists of anything which individuals, care givers, care takers, duty bearers, institutions or processes do, or fail to do, which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood. There are six types of harm most commonly associated with child abuse:

- i) **Physical harm:** Any deliberate force or action, or failure to act, which results, or could result in injury to a child. Examples include but are not limited to bruising, cuts, slapping and punching.

- ii) Emotional harm: The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child which can cause severe impacts on a child's health and development. Examples include but are not limited to criticizing, teasing, belittling, rejecting or ignoring the child.
- iii) Sexual harm: Occurs when a child is forced or enticed to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of or consent to what is happening. Examples include but are not limited to intercourse, indecent phone calls or text messages, fondling and prostitution.
- iv) Exposure to Family Violence: When a child sees, hears or is otherwise exposed to the signs of violence from one family member to another. This includes but is not limited to seeing injuries left on a family member or overhearing violent episodes.
- v) Neglect: The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical (adequate food, drink, shelter, clothing, hygiene, medical attention) and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development. Examples include but are not limited to leaving a child alone or failing to provide adequate supervision.
- vi) Racial, cultural, religious, spiritual safety – Conduct that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture, religion or spiritual beliefs. Such conduct may be overt, such as direct racial vilification or discrimination, or covert, such as demonstrating a lack of cultural respect (attitude and values) and awareness (knowledge and understanding) or failing to provide positive images about another culture. This conduct may result in significant emotional abuse of a child.

**Cumulative Harm:** Involves repeated and ongoing abuse and/or neglect which detrimentally impacts a child's development and well-being.

**Multi-dimensional Harm:** Occurs where multiple abuse types are experienced at the same time e.g., sexual abuse also involves physical and emotional abuse.

**Child Safeguarding:** The responsibility that organizations have to ensure their staff, operation and programs 'do no harm' and to develop policies and procedures that prevent child harm.

**Child Protection:** A critical component of child safeguarding and refers to actions designed to protect children who have already or are likely to experience harm.

**Duty of Care:** The legal responsibility of individuals and organizations to adopt measures to care for and protect their participants. Any suspicions of child abuse and harm must be reported to the relevant child protection services without delay. Being able to identify child abuse and the types of harm is a critical component of keeping children safe. Caring adults should refer to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) website ([oacas.org](http://oacas.org)) to learn more about the types of harm and the subtle signs and symptoms associated with abuse.

**Duty to Report:** The legal obligation of all individuals to report suspected child harm and abuse, and the information on which the suspicion is based, to the relevant child protection services without delay (meaning within 24 hours).

## 5. POLICY

5.1. The Town of Gananoque recognizes that the various user groups that rent or operate Town facilities for children's sport and recreational programming will often have their own set of organizational safeguarding policies that they are required to follow. The intention of this Town policy is not to enforce a strict set of required rules and regulations on safeguarding children, but rather to provide a set of principles and guidelines for all our user groups to actively aim to follow. To uphold the commitment to safeguarding children and protecting them against harm, the Town recommends the following guidelines and practices are followed by caring adults.

- 5.1.1. Participation in a formal screening and selection process when recruiting volunteers.
- 5.1.2. Specific values-based questions that relate to child safety are included in interview and reference check processes for staff and volunteers who are engaged in child related work.
- 5.1.3. All volunteers to complete a vulnerable sector criminal record check every 12 months
- 5.1.4. Treat all children with respect and dignity and maintain appropriate boundaries.
- 5.1.5. Caring adults monitor their own behavior towards children, and be aware of the behavior of others within their organizations, to ensure this behavior is safe, appropriate, and respectful.
- 5.1.6. Respond quickly and report any incidents or suspicions concerning a child's safety or well-being while maintaining confidentiality.
- 5.1.7. Take concerns of children seriously and listen. If a child discloses, they are concerned about someone's behavior towards them or makes a direct allegation or disclosure, keep calm, and encourage the child to tell their story.
- 5.1.8. If a child discloses abuse, it is essential that the information/concern is shared with only one's direct supervisor and the relevant child protection services following proper reporting procedures. Privacy and confidentiality are highly important. Sharing of information, which could identify a child or an alleged perpetrator, should be purely on a 'need to know' basis.

- 5.1.9. All suspicions of unlawful behavior should be reported to police and child protection/welfare services without delay and within 24 hours. Consult child protection services about notifying the child's family as required.
- 5.1.10. To protect a child's safety, all caring adults who have reason to suspect abuse or family violence are not to disclose suspicion or intention to call child protection services with the child's parents, guardians and or family. Sharing this information prematurely could jeopardize a child's safety and/or the subsequent investigation if deemed necessary by child protection services.
- 5.1.11. All user group are encouraged to provide a copy of their policy as it pertains to screening of volunteers and staff, specifically Criminal Record Checks (Vulnerable Criminal Records Checks) upon booking with the municipality.
- 5.1.12. Any suspicions of child abuse and harm shall be reported to the relevant child protection services without delay. Being able to identify child abuse and the types of harm is a critical component of keeping children safe. Caring adults should refer to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) website to learn more about the types of harm and the subtle signs and symptoms associated with abuse.