

## **Children's Circle Montessori School**

### **Child Abuse Policy**

Children's Circle Montessori School has a responsibility to deliver programs that promote the health, safety, and well-being of all the children in its care. Children's Circle Montessori School is committed to taking a pro-active position regarding the prevention of child abuse through:

- Ongoing observation of children (children 16 year of age or younger)
- Acquiring and continuing professional education with respect to early identification, effective response and adherence to legal obligations, including reports
- Reviewing the Child Abuse Policy annually and ensure it is current with legislations
- Communication and support of the child and his/her family
- Working with other community service providers

Children's Circle Montessori School's staff, students and volunteers are responsible for recognizing, documenting and reporting suspicions of child abuse. Before commencing work, all staff, students and volunteers must read and sign, indicating compliance with the Child Abuse Policy.

### **The Child and Family Services Act**

#### **Duty to Report**

In accordance with The Child and Family Act, it is the responsibility of every person in Ontario including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, to immediately report to Peel Children's Aid if she/he suspects that child abuse has occurred or if a child is at risk of abuse. This is called Duty to Report. An individual's responsibilities cannot be delegated to anyone else.

#### **Failure to Report**

It is an offence under The Child and Family Services Act for a professional to not report suspected child abuse. The penalty imposed can be a fine of up to \$1,000. A child's safety must take precedence over all other concerns.

#### **Confidentiality**

The Duty to Report suspicions of child abuse overrides the provisions of confidentiality in any other stature, specifically those provisions that would otherwise prohibit disclosure by a professional or official. This is the only exception to this solicitor/client privilege.

Information related to a suspicion and report of abuse is confidential between the person making the report and the Peel Children's Aid worker or police officer.

Discussing any information with others related to a situation of suspected abuse outside the designated individuals is a breach of confidentiality and may leave you liable for slander.

### **Protection for Liability**

All persons making a report of suspecting child abuse are protected against civil action, unless that person has acted "maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief or suspicion".

### **Reporting Procedure**

Any staff, student or volunteer who suspects that a child has been abused or is at risk for abuse should inform the designated Supervisor of the intention to immediately call the Peel Children's Aid. The person who suspects abuse must call **Peel Children's Aid at 905-363-6131 available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**. This person may not ask anyone to help decide whether or not a report should be made. This person may not ask anyone to make the report for them. This person may not discuss suspicions with anyone else, until the Peel Children's Aid worker has been contacted.

- If reporting after regular business hours, the person reporting the abuse may be required to leave a message, they should leave their name, position, school name, return telephone number and indicate that the call is urgent. Leaving a message with an answering service is not considered a report. The person must speak directly with a Peel Children's Aid worker. If it is believed that the child is in immediate danger, police should be contacted immediately by calling 9-1-1.
- Immediate medical attention may be necessary if a child has sustained injuries. When injuries have been suspected to have been caused by child abuse, do not inform the parent/guardian of the intention to access medical care until the Peel Children's Aid worker has been contacted.
- If the allegation is against another child in the school, the designated Supervisor will consult with a Peel Children's Aid Worker as to how to best protect, supervise and support both the alleged victim and abuser, and other children.
- If a staff, student or volunteer has any further suspicions of abuse a new information with respect to a child, she/he must immediately make another report to Peel Children's Aid.
- No staff, student or volunteer will advise someone not to report suspicions of child abuse, or try to stop the person from reporting or consulting with Peel Children's Aid. There will be no

sanctions or reprimands for anyone who reports suspicion of child abuse. However, disciplinary action will result if there is an attempt to stop someone from their legal Duty to Report.

## **Documentation**

In the event that a staff, student or volunteer suspects child abuse, a “Suspected Child Abuse Report” will be completed as soon as possible in the individual’s hand writing, using pen only. This form is provided at the end of this policy. If applicable, this includes circling bruises/injuries on the body chart attached to the reporting form. The form should only include the facts and not include personal feelings about the incident or personal thoughts about what might have happened. The form must be provided to the designated Supervisor. It will be kept secure and separate from the child’s file.

## **What to Report to Peel Children’s Aid**

The person making a report to Peel Children’s Aid may not have access to all the information listed below. This information should not be investigated, however, may be shared if known.

- Information about the child may include:
  - Child’s name, address, child’s religion
  - Name of family physician
  - Current whereabouts of the child and/or family
  - Present physical and/or emotional condition of the child
  - Any special vulnerabilities, medical conditions, communication issues
  - What incidents or past incidents led to the report to Peel Children’s Aid?
  - Indicate what actions, if any, have been taken prior to contacting Peel Children’s Aid?
  
- **Information about the Child’s Family and/or Alleged Offender may include:**
  - Parents/Guardians’ names, address, phone numbers, places of employment, languages spoken, religion
  - Alleged offender’s name (if not the parents/guardians), relationship to the child, phone numbers, places of employment, languages spoken, religion
  - Current whereabouts of the alleged offender
  - Alleged offender’s access to the child, siblings or other children
  - Parents’ awareness of, admission or reaction to the suspected abuse
  - Concerns for family members with respect to mental health, physical illness, substance abuse, weapons, and/or violence
  - Names of extended family members and others who could be supportive to the family

## **If a Staff, Student or Volunteer is Suspected of Child Abuse**

If a staff, student or volunteer suspects another caregiver in the school of abusing a child or children, she/he should inform the designated Supervisor of the intention to call Peel Children's Aid and the designated Supervisor's obligation to also speak with a Peel Children's Aid worker. If the person suspected of abuse is the designated Supervisor, the second in command should be informed.

The designated Supervisor will speak to the Peel Children's Aid worker to discuss the suspected person's job responsibilities and follow the directions provided. The designated Supervisor will meet with the suspected person to discuss any procedures for a change in duties and responsibilities or a possible leave of absence. The designated Supervisor will follow-up with a written confirmation of any decisions and the reasons for such, a copy of which is to be given to the suspected person, and a copy obtained on file.

The designated Supervisor must follow the procedures of the Serious Occurrences Policy.

The designated Supervisor will contact the school's insurance company when abuse by a caregiver is suspected.

### **When Peel Children's Aid and/or Police Conduct an Investigation in the School**

When child abuse has been reported, the investigation team may request permission from Children's Circle Montessori School to interview a child at school.

1. Children's Circle Montessori School will request for identification prior to any communication with the child.
2. All efforts will be made by staff to cooperate in such a way as to provide the least disruption to the day-to-day operations of the school.
3. The designated Supervisor will document the name of the investigative team, the date, time, how long the authorities were at the school and a relevant outcome. The documentation will be kept in a secure and separate from the child's general file.

### **When Peel Children's Aid and/or Police Conduct an Investigation Telephone Inquiry**

Should the person reporting the abuse receive a call from a child protective worker and or/police officer who telephones Children's Circle Montessori School to gather information with respect to the protection of a child, that person will follow the steps outlined below:

1. The person on the telephone will be asked for their full name, telephone number and name of the agency represented.
2. In order to ensure that the person calling is a child protection worker/police officer, the staff member will inform the person calling that he/she will be called back immediately.

3. The staff member will immediately call the person back, confirming that the telephone number is that of Peel Children's Aid or police division, and that the individual inquiring about a child is a representative of said agency.
4. Questions posed by a child protection worker/police officer may be answered. Information may be provided over the telephone as long as the information is related to suspicions of child abuse and protection of the child.
5. The designated Supervisor should be informed of any telephone conversations that may have occurred between the person reporting the abuse and the Peel Children's Aid worker or the police officer.
6. The person reporting the abuse will document the telephone call, including the date, time, and length of the call, and name of the Peel Children's Aid worker or police officer. All documentation is to be forwarded to the designated Supervisor and must be kept in a secure and separate from the child's general file.

### **Discussing the Situation with a Parent/Guardian or Child**

A staff, student or volunteer who suspects abuse will not tell a parent/guardian or child about the suspicion, the intention to report or that a report has been made until after consultation with a Peel Children's Aid worker and confirmation that it would be appropriate to tell. Discussing any suspicions of child abuse with a parent/guardian or child before consulting with a Peel Children's Aid worker could jeopardize the child and/or contaminate the investigation.

If it is appropriate to clarify any information this should be done in a non-threatening casual way. For example, asking a child "How did you get that bruise?" or asking a parent "Your daughter said that you and she are going on a trip; where to?"

- Use an interested and concerned tone of voice
- Avoid accusatory questions or statements
- Ask what happened and how it happened, rather than why
- Ask open-ended questions

If someone other than the parents/guardians are suspected of abuse, consult with Peel Children's Aid as to who should notify the parents/guardians. If it is appropriate for the person reporting the abuse to inform parents/guardians of the report, emphasize to the parents/guardians both, the concern for the child and the legal obligation to report suspicions of child abuse.

**Children's Circle Montessori School**

**Suspected Child Abuse Report**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe fully the incident, situation, statement, or behavioral and/or physical indicators of abuse including dates and times. Describe fully, using the child's word, the interaction between the child and person to who the child disclosed.

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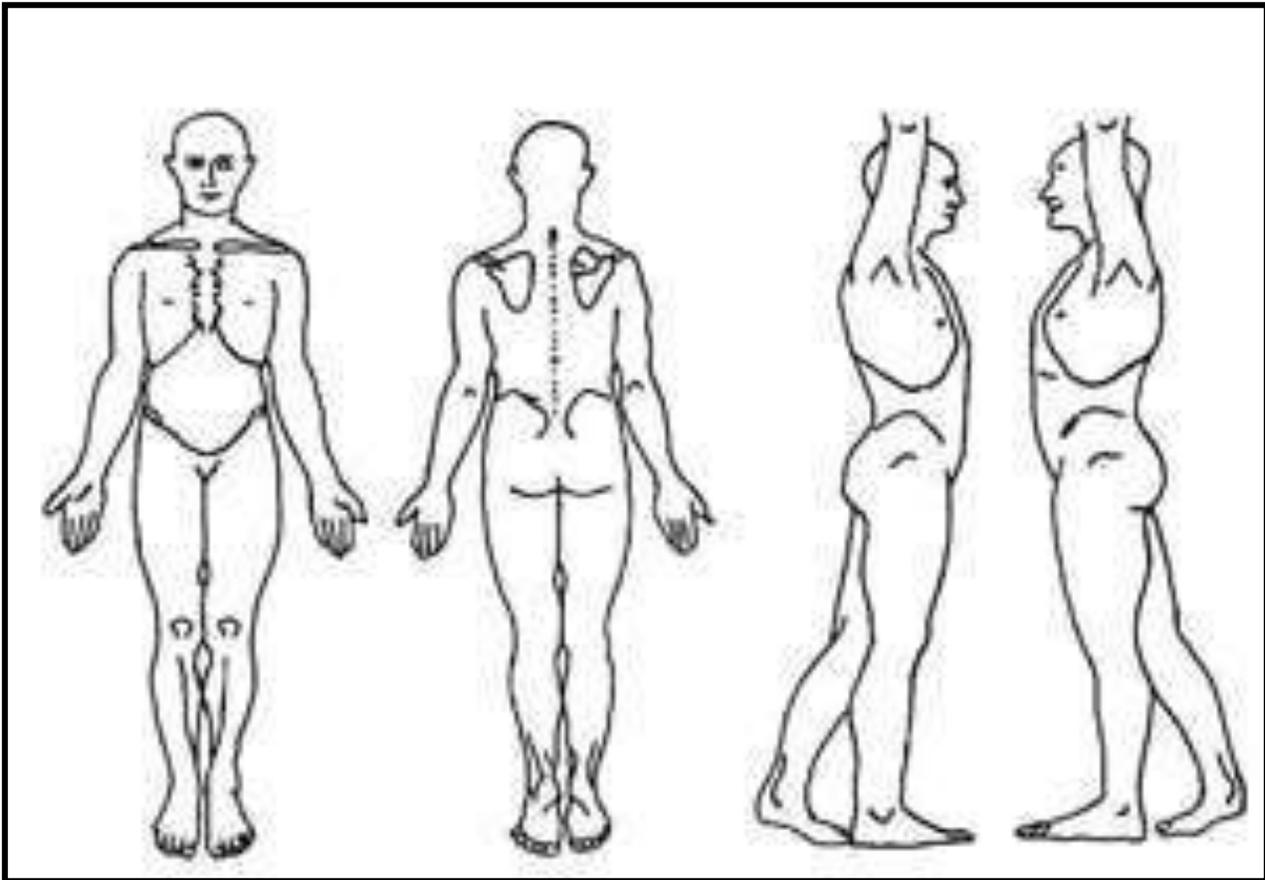
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Describe fully, the physical condition of the child, including injuries, burns, welts and/or signs of illness. Where appropriate, circle bruises or other injuries on the Body Chart below.

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Describe fully the emotional condition of the child, including any behavioral problems, and the child's response upon disclosure. Are there any noticeable changes in the child's behavior patterns?

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If known, describe fully the risk of further abuse to the child, including the access of the alleged abuser to the child.

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Describe fully the action taken on behalf of the child, including any advice/instructions from a Peel Children's Aid.

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Person Making Report: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Reported to PCA: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time Reported to PCA: \_\_\_\_\_  
PCA Worker's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
PCA Worker's Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Outcome of Report to  
PCA Worker: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_