

## **CSE Safe Environment for Vulnerable Participants Policies**

### **Introduction**

The Catholic School of Evangelization (CSE) wishes that its ministries' participants, volunteers, and staff feel at peace, secure, and respected at all CSE events. The following CSE Safe Environment practice guidelines and protocols aim to help protect children, youth, vulnerable adults, and those who minister to them. The policies in this document outline practices that help avoid compromising situations for both participants and leaders, as well as how to deal responsibly with accusations of abuse.

*CSE Safe Environment for Vulnerable Participants policies include:*

- 1) CSE policies for the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults (pp 2-4)
- 2) CSE policies and practice guidelines for dealing with suspected or alleged abuse or neglect. (pp. 5-6)

*CSE Safe Environment for Vulnerable Participants Policies* must align themselves with the policies and protocols regarding sexual abuse and protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults of the St. Boniface Diocese. Any deviations from the diocesan standards should be clearly communicated with, and supported by, the vulnerable persons or their guardian /decision maker.

The board ensures that a CSE staff or volunteer assumes the role of **CSE Safe Environment lead**. He or she is available to liaise and consult with the diocese in respect to safe environment, act as a resource person for staff & parents, and review safe environment practice, policies, and training materials as needed. The CSE Safe Environment lead is also responsible for ensuring that CSE employees/volunteers overseeing recruitment or hiring understand and abide by the background checks, training, and documentation requirements outlined in this document.

## **CSE policies for the Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults**

All CSE staff/volunteers who will be on-sight during CSE activities involving children, youth and/or vulnerable adults must sign acknowledgement that they have received training and orientation on how the CSE Safe Environment for Vulnerable Participants Policies apply to them. These policies may be incorporated in more ministry-specific training and manuals (i.e., CSE camp manual).

### **A. DEFINITIONS:**

**Vulnerable Participants:** Children, youth, and vulnerable adults taking part in CSE events. An adult is considered vulnerable when, for permanent or temporary personal handicaps or circumstances, they are at a disadvantage and unable to fully protect themselves.

**Qualified youth leader** (i.e. senior counselors): Youth staff or volunteer who is 15-17 years old, is at least 4 years older than the participants, and who may be counted in supervisory ratios of vulnerable participants. They must have on CSE file:

1. Signed acknowledgement of having received orientation on the present safe environment policies.
2. Signed acknowledgement of having received training that meets the St. Boniface diocesan training / orientation in respect to child protection.
3. 2 documented reference checks

**Qualified Adult Leader:** Adult staff or volunteers who have on confidential CSE file what is required of qualified youth leaders, plus:

- Criminal Record Check (Wpg) or RCMP check (Rural),
- Child Abuse Registry Check

Criminal Record checks and Child Abuse checks must be completed no more than 2 months prior to commencement of duties, and renewed every 5 years. Photocopies are accepted if adult responsible for recruitment certifies that he or she was shown original copy.

Volunteers or staff without background checks may not alone with, or entrusted with the care or supervision of vulnerable participants.

### **POLICIES**

#### **1. Participant supervision:**

Adult supervision of vulnerable participants and qualified youth leaders will be provided at all time at events where vulnerable persons are entrusted to the care of the CSE.

**1a) Minimum supervisory ratio for children and youth when minor participants are entrusted to the care of the CSE:**

- 1 Qualified Leader to 8 (1:8) – children 8 years and older
- 1 Qualified Leader to 6 (1:6) – children 7 years and younger
- A qualified youth leader may be counted in supervisory ratios when within seeing and hearing distance of a qualified adult.
- A minimum of 2 qualified adult leaders must be present at all CSE events.

**1b) When necessary for a qualified leader to be alone with a group of vulnerable participants:**

- i) The door must be open, or there must be a window providing clear view.
- ii) If the activity is lead by a qualified youth leader, a qualified adult leader must remain within hearing distance and provide pass-by supervision.
- iii) Supervisory ratios must be respected.

**1c) A Qualified Leader will not be alone with a vulnerable participant behind closed doors, or out of ear shot or sight of other participants or leaders:**

When first aid, personal care, or conversations lend to particular attention to privacy, two leaders (at least one adult) must nevertheless be in the room for the protection of both the vulnerable person and the staff/volunteer. The participants may assist in choosing who to invite in the room.

One-on-one personal care (i.e. help with toileting) may be provided with expressed consent from parent or guardian.

**1d) When supervising overnight events:**

- A vulnerable participant will not sleep alone in a room with a teenager or adult (other than their parent or guardian).
- 2 qualified adult leaders must be within easy ear shot and accessible to participants at all times during overnight events. Participants must know where and/or how to find a Qualified Adult during the night.
- 2 qualified adult leaders, or 1 qualified adult and one qualified youth leader, may sleep in the same room as participants (i.e. young campers) to ensure better supervision.
- An adult or youth leader will not enter a bedroom unannounced. Door must be left open if bedroom checks are done by a single person.

**2) Adult / Child boundaries:**

Appropriate child – adult physical boundaries are to be respected by CSE staff / volunteers at all times. Flirtatious behavior is strictly forbidden. Physical contact between adults and children or youth must occur in public.

Grooming, which simply put is the expression of special attention to a particular child by way of gifts, privileges, time spent, etc., should also be avoided and brought to the attention of leadership as it may create a special bond and feeling of indebtedness that can make one vulnerable to abuse.

- 3) **Discipline:** Discipline of children and youth will be done constructively reflecting Christian values. Ridicule, shame, corporal punishment and abusive language are prohibited.
- 4) **Abuse:** The CSE recognizes the worth and dignity of all persons. Neglect, harassment, and abuse (physical, emotional, spiritual, financial) of all kinds will not be tolerated.
- 5) **Bullying:** Bullying is causing someone to feel, through intimidating words or actions, inferior. Bullying will not be tolerated, and action must be taken to ensure that any bullying brought to the attention of staff will be put to an immediate stop.
- 6) **Driving participants:** Only roadworthy passenger vehicles may be used for CSE-related events. Yearly safety checks required on CSE-owned vehicles that will transport vulnerable participants. Proof of insurance and 3<sup>rd</sup> party liability required.

Only qualified leaders may drive vulnerable persons. Proper licensing required, and supervisory ratios to be respected. Written permission to drive vulnerable participants to off-site events or for emergency purposes must be obtained from parent / guardian.

People may not be transported in truck beds, campers, trailers, etc. Lawful exceptions can be made (i.e. hay ride) with the CSE director or delegate's approval, documented safety guidelines, and parent/guardian permission.

7. **Alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs** are strictly prohibited at all CSE youth/child events or activities.
8. **Respect of Privacy and confidentiality:** every effort must be taken to respect the confidentiality of personal information given by, or about, persons being ministered to.

Note: CSE staff / volunteers are never to promise to keep a secret. Although confidentiality is important, it is unlawful and unloving not to disclose reports or suspicions of child abuse or neglect.

The following is a good example of a confidentiality statement:

*“Everything that is said during our small group discussions stays between us unless it is felt that that you or somebody else is in danger, in which case I will tell the appropriate adults.”*

## CSE Policies and Practice Guidelines for dealing with Suspected or Alleged Abuse or Neglect.

### **Dealing with disclosures of abuse or neglect:**

It is a moral and legal responsibility to report any disclosures or reasonable suspicions of child abuse (physical, emotional, neglect, psychological, sexual, etc.) or belief that a child is in “need of protection” (see **Section 17 of The Child and Family Services Act.**)

A CSE staff or volunteer who has reason to believe that a child is “in need of protection” must:

- 1. Avoid discussing potential need for protection alone with a child.** A colleague or, ideally, a direct supervisor will be invited into the conversation so to:
  - (a) Help keep the staff/volunteer accountable and;
  - (b) Help remember what details to put on the incident report.
  
- 2. Advise** his or her direct supervisor and the CSE director unless one of them is believed to be causing or responsible for the child to be in need of protection
  
- 3. Fill an incident report:** The team members involved must complete an incident report within 24 hrs. A copy of the incident report will be given to the CSE director and kept on file for 7 years.
  
- 4. Contact Child and Family Services:** The CSE director or delegate will then contact Child and Family Services for consultation or to advise CFS that a child is in need of protection. A copy of the incident report will be sent to CFS or the appropriate authorities upon request.
  
- 5. If a minor may have been victimized by a CSE staff / volunteer, a cleric, religious, lay employee or lay volunteer employed by the Church (anybody under the jurisdiction of the bishop), the bishop or his delegate must be advised of the reported incident.**
  
- 6. The CSE Director or delegate will inform the parent / guardian of the suspected abuse or neglect as well as steps taken by camp staff** unless, as outlined in Section 18 (1.1) of The Child and Family Services Act (1999), the CSE staff:
  - Does not know the identity of the parent or guardian of the child;
  - Has information that leads the person reasonably to believe that the parent or guardian
    - a. is responsible for causing the child to be in need of protection, or
    - b. is unable or unwilling to provide adequate protection to the child in the circumstances; or

- c. has information that leads the person reasonably to believe that the child is or might be suffering abuse by a parent or guardian of the child or by a person having care, custody, control or charge of the child
- a. The CSE Director or delegate will **relate information back to the staff / volunteer(s) who initially voiced the concern** in respect to actions taken to address the concern. Additional information collected re: the potential need for protection unknown to but thus far unknown to the person initiating the report may not be shared with him or her unless on a “need to know” basis.

If unsatisfied with the steps taken, a concerned staff/volunteer may contact Child and Family Services for consultation (Day: 944-4200; After-Hours: 944-4050).

- b. Staff and volunteers involved in reporting and dealing with the incident **must respect confidentiality**. The incident should be discussed with colleagues, supervisors, and other agencies only on a “need to know” basis.

Any person may contact and consult anonymously with **Child and Family Services (Day: 944-4200 ; After-Hours: 944-4050)**. They are also encouraged to consult with the St. Boniface Archdiocese’s “*Diocesan Protocol and Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse*” available on the diocesan website.