



# **Nova Scotia Fire Fighters' Burn Treatment Society**

## **ABUSE POLICY**

**A general guide for Members and Volunteer Staff**

**Amended: April 9, 2018**

# **SECTION 1:**

## **SCOPE**

This policy establishes the position of the Nova Scotia Fire Fighters Burn Treatment Society (commonly referred to as the "Society") with respect to common conduct, requirements, and procedures of the Executive, Directors, and volunteers used by the Society for the various functions sanctioned by the Society.

## **DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE**

### **Abuse:**

There is potential for abuse occurs in institutional settings, public places or community environments. In regard to the Society, an abuser may be anyone in a position of trust or authority in any setting where the Society functions such as, but not limited to, fundraising events, meetings (including those of a general or personal nature), and camp setting.

### **Physical Abuse:**

Physical abuse involves any deliberate act of violence, rough treatment or use of physical force for coercion, including assault, sexual assault and physical restraint. It may also include threatening, bullying, yelling, hitting, controlling and manipulating.

### **Emotional/ Abuse:**

Emotional abuse is the most difficult to define and recognize. It may range from habitual humiliation of the older adult to withholding life-sustaining nurturing. It can include acts or omissions by those responsible for the care of the older adult or others in contact with the older adult, that are likely to have serious and/or negative emotional impacts. Emotional abuse may occur separately from or along with other forms of abuse and neglect. Emotional abuse can include a pattern of:

- Scapegoating
- Rejection
- Verbal attacks
- Threats
- Insults
- Humiliation

### **Sexual Abuse:**

Sexual abuse involves any sexual behavior directed towards another person without that person's full knowledge and consent, including sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual touching and using pornography.

### **Financial Abuse:**

The misappropriation of funds, resources or property by fraud, deception or coercion for purposes not intended by the Society, including theft of property or personal effects.

### **Neglect:**

Neglect involves an act or omission on the part of a Society member or any staff member sanctioned by the Society that results or is likely to result in physical harm to another person under their charge

In our summer camp setting this may include failure to provide basic necessities, health care or supervision and protection from risks to the extent that a camper's physical health, development or safety is harmed or is likely to be harmed. Not always intentional, neglect may be a result of insufficient resources or other circumstances beyond a person's control.

### **Violation of Civil and Human Rights:**

The unlawful or unreasonable denial of the fundamental rights and freedoms normally enjoyed, including the denial of information reasonable to the individual, access to communication, privacy, visitors, religious worship, health care services or the opportunity to provide informed consent to medical treatment, interference with mail, restriction of liberty or unwarranted confinement in a hospital or institution.

## **RISK FACTORS**

Although much remains to be known about the dynamics of abuse, the following identifies some of the risk factors that may be involved in vulnerable circumstances.

- Vulnerable individuals with specific disabilities or injuries such as developmental disabilities and burn injuries appear to be at greater risk of various forms of abuse.
- Burn injuries and related scarring have the potential of putting burn survivors at greater risk of low self-esteem which could lead to abuse or self-neglect.
- Increased age in conjunction with poor health and/or severe injury seems to increase the risk of abuse.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information relating to abuse of an individual's situation is considered confidential. Discussion about an individual in a situation of abuse, among other staff and/or volunteers is not acceptable, except in the following cases:

- If the individual discloses that they intend to harm themselves.
- If the individual discloses that they intend to harm someone else.
- If there is a recognized team consultation in the best interest of the individual.

## SECTION 2:

### RESPONSIBILITIES

#### 1. Responsibility of the Society Executive and its Directors

The Society Executive and Directors are responsible for:

- Ensuring that a safe environment is maintained in all programs and facilities operated by the Society.
- Implementation of all procedures relating to abuse, neglect and self-neglect and to notify the Society Chairman if a report of abuse has been made to a designated agency, police, or other resource.
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers have read, understand and signed the Abuse Policy.
- Ensuring all Society camp staff / volunteers have completed a criminal record check and child abuse registry check a minimum of every two years.
- Ensuring to keep all conversations related to an individual's disclosure confidential, except for the cases listed above in the confidentiality section.

#### 2. Responsibility of designated Staff and Volunteers

Staff and Volunteers responsible for:

- Ensuring that a safe environment is maintained in all programs and facilities for individuals who access services offered by the Society.
- Ensuring all procedures are followed relating to abuse, neglect and self-neglect and notify your supervisor or Society Executive member if a report of abuse has been made to a designated agency, police, or other resource.
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers have read, understand and signed the Abuse Policy.
- Completing a criminal record check and child abuse registry check a minimum every two years.
- Ensuring to keep all conversations related to an individual's disclosure confidential, except for the cases listed above in the confidentiality section.

### General Procedures

All personnel who are in a position to receive disclosure of abuse from an individual will follow this procedure. **The objectives are to:**

- assure the individual that you can offer appropriate resources, avoiding any inference of disbelief, blame, or promise of specific outcomes;
- inform the individual of the Society's privacy policy as it pertains to the disclosure of information;
- assess the urgency of the situation;
- if known, explain support and resources options available;
- report the disclosure to the Camp Director, Society Director, or Society Executive member;

- if no one is available and the individual is at immediate risk report to the local community police department; make a record of the disclosure that provides sufficient information to allow appropriate follow up. Said record is to be turned over in its entirety to either the Camp Director, Society Director, or Society Executive member.

## **A. When an individual discloses abuse, neglect or self-neglect**

### **1. Stay calm and listen**

- The individual needs to know you are calm and available to help.
- Reactions of shock, outrage or fear may inhibit the individual and make them feel more anxious or ashamed.
- Respond in a non-judgmental and matter-of-fact way.

### **2. Acknowledge**

- It is normal to feel unsure about what to say and to rush.
- Proceed slowly.
- Acknowledge the individual's disclosure.

### **3. Respond**

- When the older adult is calmer or ready for information, assure the individual assistance is available.
- Asking further questions can trigger the individual and create more discomfort.
- If the individual continues to talk, validate their concerns and let them know that you will get a resource that will assist them.
- If the individual is clearly not able to make a call for support, ask if they need assistance in getting connected to a resource that will assist them in getting support.
- Record date, time, circumstances of the individual's disclosure and where you referred them and ensure that this is given, in its entirety, to the Camp Director, Society Director, or Society Executive member.

### **4. Reassure and be supportive**

- Individuals in an abusive situation often need support and reassurance as they may feel anxious and vulnerable about what people think of them and what will happen next.
- Some comments you could make:
  - ✓ I'm glad that you told me about this.
  - ✓ You have done the right thing by telling me about this.
- If requested, connect them to appropriate resources.
- Avoid making promises.
- Provide only reassurances that are realistic and achievable.

### **5. Contact your supervisor immediately.**

- Notify your supervisor that you will be making a report and to discuss the steps that need to be taken.
- If your supervisor is not available, contact a Society Director or Executive member.

### **6. Submit documentation**

- All documentation to be submitted through to the Society's Chairman

## **B. Suspicion of abuse or neglect**

### **1. Document**

- ***Minor and/or recurring incidents***
  - ✓ Record incidents and/or behaviours that arouse suspicions of abuse in writing.
  - ✓ Record facts and observations (what you see and hear) of any incidents, including the date, time and people involved. Sign and date each entry.
  - ✓ Monitor the situation and consult with the Camp Director, Society Director, or Society Executive member to determine next steps.
- ***Serious incidents***
  - ✓ **If the individual is in immediate danger, the police should be called first. Dial 911**

### **2. Contact your supervisor**

- Immediately notify your supervisor.
- Your supervisor will review the information that you will need to include in your report. If you are unable to get in touch with your supervisor and you feel that the case is serious, report immediately to a Society Director / Executive member up to and including the Society Chairman.
- The supervisor is responsible for informing the Society Executive that a report is being made.

### **3. Submit documentation**

- All documentation must be submitted in its entirety to the Society Executive.

## **SPECIFIC PROCEDURES WHEN RESPONDING TO ABUSE**

Specific procedures are in place for various circumstances that may occur when Society Executive, Directors, and volunteers are faced with an abuse situation:

- A. When an individual discloses abuse, neglect, or self-neglect
- B. Suspicion of abuse, neglect or self-neglect

1. The Society will respond appropriately to the disclosure of abuse, neglect and self-neglect of individuals and will provide resources and referrals that are appropriate for the individual.
2. The Society Chairman may assign responsibility for following up on disclosures to appropriately trained individuals.

## **GENERAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR ALLEGATIONS OF INTERNAL ABUSE**

The Society will address allegations of abuse of an individual by one of its members or volunteers in a timely and thorough manner.

## **Responding to an allegation of Abuse by a Society Member or Volunteer**

It is possible that one of our Society members / volunteers will be reported for abuse or will be observed being abusive. This is a serious situation, which could have extreme consequences for the well-being of the individual, the career and reputation of the accused and the reputation of our organization. It may also be appropriate to involve an outside designated agency.

### **General Procedure**

1. If any Society member / volunteer observes or receives a report that a colleague is behaving abusively they will report the matter immediately to their supervisor. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the Society and any future Society sanctioned activities. The Society will not tolerate any retaliation against the individual making the report. The supervisor will inform the Executive Chairman of the complaint.
2. If a report is received from an internal source an external body will be retained to conduct an investigation.
3. If the report is from an external source the Society will cooperate with the investigation.
4. Any accusation of abuse will result in that person being removed from their position of authority until an investigation is complete.
5. The accused will be provided such support and assistance as required to ensure that she/he is fairly treated until culpability is determined.
6. Members / volunteers are to keep information confidential and not discuss allegations with others. Any questions regarding the incident should be referred to the Society Chairman or their designate.
7. A Society member / volunteer found to be abusive will be dismissed from the Society and all future Society sanctioned events.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND UNDERSTANDING OF THIS POLICY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the above policy and agree to abide by the provisions outlined in the policy. I understand violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action as outlined in the policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date