

CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY 2024

Table of Contents:

1. Policy Statement.....	0
2. Child Protection and Duty to Report.....	1
2A. Who is a “Child in Need of Protection”?.....	1
2B. What is the Age of the Child to whom the “Duty to Report” Applies?.....	2
2C. Who is Responsible for Reporting a Child in Need of Protection?.....	2
3. Circumstances Requiring Reporting.....	3
3A. Physical abuse.....	3
3B. Emotional abuse/Neglect.....	3
3C. Sexual abuse.....	4
3D. Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence.....	4
3E. Parent or Guardian Unavailable or Unable to Exercise Custodial Rights.....	4
4. Reporting Expectations.....	4
5. When OBC Employees or others are Suspected of Abuse.....	5
6. Implication of Not Reporting.....	6
7. Family Relationship Management.....	6
7A. In all Scenarios:.....	6
7B. Abuse that occurred by an OBC Personnel.....	7
7C. Abuse that occurred by a non-OBC Personnel (i.e. family member, trusted adult, etc):.....	8
8. Training and Support for OBC Personnel.....	8
9. Definitions.....	8
10. Policy Review Process.....	9
11. References.....	10

1. Policy Statement

Outward Bound Canada (OBC) is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and youth in its care¹. We are committed to promoting equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging and we recognize our responsibility to promote spaces where people can be their authentic selves: where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

¹A *child* is defined as ‘anyone below the legal age of majority’ and a *youth* is ‘a person who may or may not be over the age of majority but because of their age, a disability or other circumstances, is in a position of dependency on others or is at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of trust or authority towards them’. This policy applies to children and youth and the terms are used synonymously.

We recognize that children and youth come from diverse families and strive to mitigate risks and create accessible and inclusive environments that celebrate family diversity and promote positive relationships among children, families, and staff. We recognize that our students come from different experiences, and have differing abilities, cultures, and beliefs. We acknowledge that some children and youth may be at a higher risk of harm due to several factors, such as socio-economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability.

We recognize that Outward Bound Canada Personnel play a critical role in ensuring the protection and well-being of students. Therefore, we are committed to providing ongoing annual training and support to equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to recognize and respond to concerns about a child's or youth's wellbeing in an equitable, and inclusive manner. Additionally, all OBC Personnel who interact with children and youth are required to complete a Vulnerable Sector Check upon being hired and prior to interacting with children and youth. These assessments are renewed every three years. OBC Personnel who do not work with children and youth are asked to complete a Vulnerable Sector Check, however oftentimes they are only eligible for a General Police Check.

OBC Personnel must actively work in the best interests of children and youth by mitigating unnecessary risks that could result in undue harm. Each person working with children and youth has a legal **duty to report** any suspicions of child abuse; it is the responsibility of a Child Protection Agency to investigate.

This policy is meant to clarify the situations (risks, harms, and circumstances) under which OBC Personnel have a legal duty to disclose information about children and youth to Child Protection Agencies.

2. Child Protection and Duty to Report

2A. Who is a "Child in Need of Protection"?

A child in need of protection is a child who is or who is suspected to be suffering from maltreatment, abuse and/or neglect². **Child Abuse** includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse and/or neglect, exposure to intimate partner violence, and any other exploitation which results in actual or potential harm to the child/youth's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship responsibility, trust, or power.

² Evidence of harm is not required for a child to be found in need of protection.

2B. What is the Age of the Child to whom the “Duty to Report” Applies?

The Duty to Report differs across provinces and OBC employees should [familiarize themselves with provincial regulations](#). A list of child protection agencies in Canada can be found on the [Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal](#) (also in Section 9).

If the abuse took place in **Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, or Saskatchewan**, OBC Personnel are required to report all children in need of protection who are or who appear to be younger than 18 years of age.

If the abuse took place in **British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, or Yukon**, OBC Personnel are required to report all children in need of protection who are or who appear to be younger than 19 years of age.

2C. Who is Responsible for Reporting a Child in Need of Protection?

Everyone, including all OBC Personnel, is legally obliged to report to a Child Protection Agency when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is in need of protection, as required by child protection statutes and regulations in Canada³. This includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, exposure to intimate partner violence and risk of future child maltreatment.

All OBC Personnel have an obligation to disclose student personal information without student consent in the circumstances in *Section 3: Circumstances Requiring Reporting*. Before a minor student discloses any abuse, inform them that you have an obligation to report this to your supervisor and the authorities. If a student discloses without understanding the limits of confidentiality, you risk damaging the relationship and breaking trust with the student. In a case where this happens, the duty to report overrides the importance of maintaining student confidentiality and trust.

The ‘Duty to Report’ overrides any other OBC policies, procedures and provincial statutes that would otherwise prohibit OBC Personnel from reporting sensitive student information.

³ [Provincial Child Protection Legislation](#)

3. Circumstances Requiring Reporting

Upon having *reason to believe* any of the following situations, OBC must immediately report the suspicion (including allegations of historical abuse) and the information upon which it is based, to a Child Protection Agency in the region where the abuse took place. See Section 4 for Reporting Expectations.

“Reason to believe” simply means that, based on what you have seen or information you have received, you believe a child or youth has been or is likely to be at risk. You do not need to be certain. It is the child protection worker’s job to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur.

3A. Physical abuse

When a child has been physically harmed, or is at risk of suffering physical harm caused by their caregiver (parent, guardian or person in a position of authority) or caused by, or resulting from, that person’s failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child, or a pattern of neglect.

When aware of a child who requires medical treatment to cure, prevent, or alleviate physical harm or suffering, and the child’s caregiver does not provide the treatment or access to the treatment, or in circumstances where the child is incapable of consenting to treatment under the Health Care Consent Act, refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the treatment on the child’s behalf⁴.

3B. Emotional abuse/Neglect

When a child has suffered serious emotional harm, or is at risk of serious emotional harm, as demonstrated by anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, or delayed development, and there is reason to believe that the emotional harm suffered by the child results from the actions, failure to act, or pattern of neglect on the part of the child’s caregiver (parent, guardian or person in a position of authority). When aware that the child’s caregiver persistently fails to meet the child or youth’s basic needs for their physical or emotional development.

When aware that a child has suffered emotional harm of the kind described above, or there is a risk that the child is likely to suffer emotional

⁴ Most provinces and territories have legislation governing consent to medical treatment. Jurisdictions vary in how they approach [children’s consent to treatment](#).

harm, and the child's caregiver does not provide the treatment or access to the treatment, or, in circumstances where the child is incapable of consenting to treatment under the Health Care Consent Act, refuses, or is unavailable or unable to consent to, the treatment on the child's behalf.

3C. Sexual abuse

When a child has been sexually abused or sexually exploited, or is at risk of being sexually abused or sexually exploited by the child's caregiver (parent, guardian or person in a position of authority).

3D. Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence

When a child is exposed to family violence such as directly seeing and/or hearing the violence; being used as a pawn by the perpetrator; and/or experiencing the physical, emotional and psychological repercussions of violence (e.g., a family member who is physically injured, child protection and/or police intervention).

3E. Parent or Guardian Unavailable or Unable to Exercise Custodial Rights

When a child's parent/guardian has died or is unavailable to exercise custodial rights over the child, and has not made adequate provision for the child's care and custody, or the child is in a residential placement and their parent/guardian refuses or is unable or unwilling to resume the child's care and custody.

4. Reporting Expectations

Any OBC Personnel who becomes aware of, or has reason to believe, a situation or history of child abuse and/or neglect must report the incident directly and immediately to the Regional Safety Officer and/or National Safety Officer and appropriate Child Protection Agency. If in the field, OBC Personnel must document and notify the Child Protection Agency immediately upon their return to base, or as soon as they have access to a telephone and reliable cell coverage.

If the child or youth is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1 or the nearest emergency department first, and then call the Child Protection Agency in the region where the abuse occurred.

When reporting to the Child Protection Agency, OBC Personnel must include all known information relating to:

- The type of suspected abuse or neglect
- The reason for the belief and any description of suspected abuse or neglect
- The date of suspected abuse or neglect

- The date of disclosure/suspicion
- The nature and extent of visible injuries, if any
- The name, address, telephone number, and current location of the student
- The name, address, and telephone number of the parent/guardian
- Any other related information.

After completing the above report, OBC Personnel must also complete:

- An Incident Report (either field or electronic) including the name and position of the Child Protection Worker that the report is made to, the date of the report, and if it is believed to be a single event, or ongoing.
- Any communications with Child Protection Agencies, OBC Personnel or the child's family should be recorded in the Camper Profile Contact Log (see *Section 7: Family Relationship Management* for further instruction).

When dealing with suspicions/allegations of abuse/neglect, OBC Personnel should be aware that:

- Receiving information from a third party relating to suspicions of abuse/neglect imposes a duty upon them to make a report to the appropriate Child Protection Agency.
- The 'Duty to Report' is ongoing. OBC Personnel who are aware that a report has already been made about a particular student must make a further report to the appropriate Child Protection Agency if there are additional reasonable grounds to suspect that the student may need protection.

OBC Personnel who report their suspicions of child abuse and/or neglect are protected from civil actions, unless they acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds.

5. When OBC Employees or others are Suspected of Abuse

Any OBC Personnel who has reason to believe or knowledge that any other OBC Personnel have **abused or are abusing a child or youth** must immediately report their concern to the appropriate Child Protection Agency in their region. The Complainant will also report the person to a Designated person, who will notify the National Safety Officer and Human Resources department. Designated individuals are as follows for the following employment situations:

- Instructors report to the Course Directors
- Course Directors report to Regional Safety Officers
- Vendors and Subcontractors report to Regional Safety Officers
- Regional Safety Officers report to the Head of Regions (Western and Eastern Canada)
- Head of Regions reports to the Executive Director

- Executive Director reports to the Chair, Board of Directors

If the Respondent is the person designated to take the report, the Complainant shall take the report to the person designated at the next level. For example, if a complaint is made against a Course Director then the report shall go to a Regional Safety Officer. If the complaint is against the Regional Safety Officer, then the report shall be made to the Head of Region.

When a concern of abuse or neglect by an OBC Personnel has been raised, the OBC Personnel who is subject of the suspicion or allegation will immediately be removed from any contact with children and/or youth until all required investigations are complete. Suspension of any OBC Personnel who is the subject of suspicion or allegation will be at the discretion of the Executive Director and/or designate.

It should be noted that OBC follows a 'two adult rule' to prevent child abuse incidents and allegations. The 'two adult rule' typically stipulates that there should always be at least two adults present when interacting with children and youth to reduce the risk of abuse or misconduct and to provide a safer environment. The presence of two adults is seen as a preventive measure to discourage inappropriate behavior and to ensure accountability.

6. Implication of Not Reporting

Failure to report to a Child Protection Agency any reasonable suspicion (based on information that has come to your knowledge during professional and/or official duties) that a child may need protection is an offense and carries a fine up to \$10,000, six months in jail, or both.

7. Family Relationship Management

Maintaining sensitivity, empathy, and professionalism is crucial when engaging with families subsequent to OBC's contact with child protection agencies. Here is a structured approach for the following scenarios: a) All scenarios; b) Abuse that occurred by an OBC Personnel; c) Abuse that occurred by a non-OBC Personnel:

7A. In all Scenarios:

Maintain Confidentiality: Respect the confidentiality of the situation while still ensuring that necessary information is shared with appropriate authorities and OBC Personnel.

Escalate the Management of the Relationship: All relationships with the family of a child who has experienced abuse should be managed by either the National Safety Officer or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. For

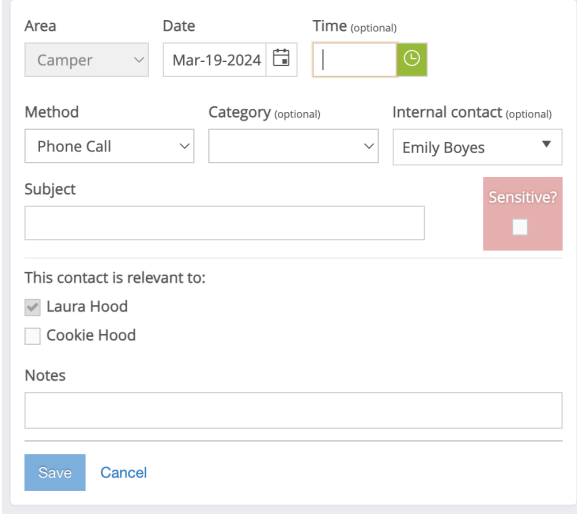
example, OBC personnel who engage with families on a regular basis, such as those in Admissions, should escalate the management of the family relationship to their supervisor (e.g., Admissions Coordinator to Admissions Director).

Document Communications:

Document all interactions and communications with the family, child protection agencies and OBC Personnel accurately and objectively.

These interactions and communications are recorded on **CampBrain using the Camper Contact Log**. Please click the **Sensitive** box to ensure this information remains private.

This helps in maintaining a clear record of the situation and the support provided.

The image shows a screenshot of a web form titled "Camper Contact Log". The form has several sections: "Area" with a dropdown menu set to "Camper"; "Date" with a calendar icon and the date "Mar-19-2024"; "Time (optional)" with a clock icon and an empty field; "Method" with a dropdown menu set to "Phone Call"; "Category (optional)" with a dropdown menu; "Internal contact (optional)" with a dropdown menu set to "Emily Boyes"; "Subject" with a text input field; a "Sensitive?" checkbox which is checked and highlighted in red; "This contact is relevant to:" with two checkboxes, "Laura Hood" (checked) and "Cookie Hood" (unchecked); "Notes" with a text input field; and "Save" and "Cancel" buttons at the bottom.

7B. Abuse that occurred by an OBC Personnel

In circumstances when the abuse occurred by an OBC Personnel, all communications with the family will be handled by the National Safety Officer or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. When communicating the NSO or Senior Leadership Team member will:

Provide Information: Offer clear and factual information about why the call was made to the Child Protection Agency. Explain that such calls are made to ensure the safety and welfare of children and youth and are part of legal and ethical obligations.

Provide Support: Apologize and express empathy for the family's situation. Assure them that OBC's primary concern is the well-being and safety of the child or youth and reassure the family that OBC is there to support them through their healing process. Provide information about resources available to them, such as counseling services, support groups, or legal assistance if necessary.

Follow-Up: After the initial interaction, follow up with the family to check on their well-being and to offer ongoing support. This demonstrates genuine

concern and a commitment to helping the family navigate through a difficult time.

7C. Abuse that occurred by a non-OBC Personnel (i.e. family member, trusted adult, etc):

Limit Contact with the Family: Refrain from offering an explanation or disclosing information about why OBC suspected child abuse to the family. Notifying the family that a child abuse report was made can interfere with the Child Protection Agency's investigation.

By following these steps, OBC can interact with families in a compassionate and supportive manner while also fulfilling their obligations to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth.

8. Training and Support for OBC Personnel

The Regional Safety Officers will ensure that Instructors, Course Directors, Program Managers and Admissions staff who interact with students and families familiarize themselves with the Child and Youth Protection Policy during National Instructor Training to ensure comprehension, familiarity and confidence on navigating and reporting incidents of child abuse.

Further training on navigating child abuse disclosures and reporting procedures with professionalism, empathy, and cultural sensitivity will be at the discretion of the National Safety Officer.

OBC Personnel involved in the management of child abuse incidents will be encouraged to take a wellness day post incident. Regional Safety Officers and HR will work with OBC Personnel to ensure they feel supported in their return to work and have ongoing access to information and resources, such as counseling services and support groups.

9. Definitions

Child: A child is defined as 'anyone below the legal age of majority'.

Youth: Refers to someone who may or may not be over the age of majority but because of their age, a disability or other circumstances, is in a position of dependency on others or is at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of trust or authority towards them.

Child Protection Agency: Refers to all agencies committed to child welfare and

protection issues. A list of the agencies in Canada can be found on the Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal - <https://cwrp.ca/provincial-and-territorial-assistance>

OBC Personnel: All OBC staff, students, volunteers, and third-party contracted personnel.

Parent/Guardian: The adult or adults who are legally responsible for the child or youth, regardless of who the primary caregiver is (e.g. parents, other adults who hold guardianship of the child or youth, including step-parent, designated Substitute Decision Maker, or Child Protection Workers).

Caregiver: A person who is responsible for the wellbeing or supervision of children. A person who, as a result of their role, has direct contact and unsupervised access to children and significant power and influence over those in their care. Examples include parents, guardians, coaches, teachers or other persons in positions of authority.

Reason to Believe/Reasonable Grounds: Refers to information that an average person, using normal and honest judgment, would need to make a decision to report the physical, sexual, or emotional harm, and/or neglect of a child.

Complainant: Person who makes the complaint and report of child abuse.

Respondent: Person who responds to the child abuse allegation.

10. Policy Review Process

Outward Bound Canada is committed to reviewing policies and procedures every two years with the aim of:

- Promoting and implementing appropriate procedures to safeguard the well-being of children and youth and protecting them from harm while participating in Outward Bound Canada activities and programs.
- Recruiting, training, supporting, and supervising staff and volunteers to adopt best practices to safeguard and protect children and youth from abuse and to reduce risk to themselves.
- Requiring OBC Personnel to adopt and abide by this Child Safety and Protection Policy and the outlined procedures.
- Establishing procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers.

- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this policy, the procedures and adapting them whenever there are notable organizational or legal changes; and
- Conducting semi-annual self-assessments with verifications/evidence reflective of risk mitigation.

The National Safety Officer is responsible for child protection issues, including the monitoring and revision of this policy, as designated by the Executive Director of OBC.

11. References

Provincial and territorial child protection legislation and policy - 2018

Child, Family and Community Service Act, RSBC 1996, c 46

CHILDREN EXPOSED TO FAMILY VIOLENCE