

Canada Learning Code Policies & Procedures



**CANADA
LEARNING
CODE**

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Policies and Procedures

Purpose

This document outlines the processes, guidelines and procedures, which must be followed by all Youth Mentors who participate in the care of learners and the implementation of programs offered through our Youth Programs.

By signing the Mentor Code of Conduct Agreement, you are agreeing to work within the guidelines, philosophies, principles, and practices outlined within this document and your training.

The contents of this document are consistent with standards set out by Ladies Learning code, and appropriate government regulatory bodies. These standards have been applied to the ongoing operation at all camps and programs to ensure the best possible care of the learners and to offer the best possible protection to all leaders and volunteers.

For the purposes of this document the term “Mentor” refers to all members of the team whether paid or volunteer.

Our programs occur both on-site at our HQ and at external locations, and include:

- Camps
- Workshops
- Clubs
- Evening programs
- After school and lunchtime programs
- Field Trips

General Responsibilities

Whether you're an employee or volunteer, we have some details that apply to everyone who provides leadership and supervises the learners entrusted to our care.

Police Records Check

Permanent Youth Mentors, aged 18 or older, are asked to have a cleared a Police Records Check (PRC) completed once every five years. Your point of contact will tell you if this is required. If you need to obtain a PRC then we'll send you details via email. Ladies Learning Code will absorb all related expenses for a PRC. PRC's are held on file for five years.

Confidentiality

Youth Mentors are expected to treat all personal information as confidential and not discuss or divulge information except on a "need to know basis."

Mentor Protection

No Mentor shall, or be expected to, put themselves in a position that may lead to accusation of abuse or improper treatment. The following guidelines are set out:

Never be one-on-one with a camper in a private, sheltered space. Ensure that another Mentor can see you at all times. This person does not have to be present at the conversation but should be able to see the conversation-taking place.

Allow campers privacy at all times when washing and changing. If asked to help, as you will be with the younger campers, ensure that other campers or Mentors are within hearing distance, at the very least, of the assistance you're providing. Try to verbally guide the camper in the action that you want them to do before you do it for them.

If you must offer a correction to a child or youth in accordance with appropriate procedures as herein outlined, then document the incident especially the consequence set out and provide the documentation to the Executive Director or Program Lead.

Avoid intimate contact with a camper. If a child needs a hug then certainly provide such but do it within sight of other Mentors.

Harassment and Violence in the Workplace

All Mentors are required to follow the Harassment and Abuse and Violence in The Workplace Policies (Appendix A & B in this document).

Discipline

The number one priority of all Mentors is the care of campers. A Mentor's focus of attention is to provide campers with a fun, safe and healthy environment. Any complaint or issue identified by a camper is to be treated seriously and with respect (examples of complaints: complaint about a Mentor, complaint about another camper, complaint about the program, or activities). The complaint or issue must be documented, addressed and a resolution agreed and acted upon. The Executive Director is to be notified of the situation as it occurs.

There are times when behaviour corrections or discipline are necessary however the following actions will NOT be tolerated:

Physical punishment including spanking, hitting, pushing, grabbing. If it is necessary to physically remove an individual due to safety of self or others, this must be done in a careful, non-violent manner. Verbally and calmly explain what steps you are taking.

Verbal punishment which includes yelling, sarcasm, screaming, "put downs" or humiliation.

Ostracizing through actions, which result in embarrassment and/or ridicule.

Elimination of meals, drinks or other snacks.

Appropriate Methods for Behaviour Correction

One-on-one conversation. Without removing yourself from the group, ask the child to step to the side and speak with you. Ask the child if there is anything that they would like to discuss that might be affecting their behaviour that day. If they are comfortable discussing the situation with you, listen and allow the child to vocalize their issue. If the situation can be easily resolved (i.e. can't see the board, hungry for a snack, frustrated with workshop content), try to find a way to quickly resolve the situation, or ask your Program Lead for help. If the behaviour is a result of a social problem between them and another participant, proceed to a mediated conversation.

Mediated conversation. Away from the general activities of the group, organize a private conversation between the Program Lead, the two (or more) learners in conflict and yourself. The Program Lead will mediate the conversation, creating a safe space for each learner to vocalize their problems and work to create a resolution that will allow the learners to cohabitate in the same space for the remainder of the workshop.

Other examples include: gently reminding the learners (en mass) about the Girls and Kids Learning Code Way, provide good rewards as incentives for good behaviour.

Youth Protection: Child Abuse, Harassment, Self-Harm, and Bullying

All Mentors are required to be knowledgeable and compliant with the information contained in the Abuse and Harassment Prevention Policy document.

Equipment Damage or Neglect

While Mentors will not be charged for accidental lost or damaged equipment, it is the expectation that all Mentors will use and care for our equipment in a respectful and appropriate manner. Mentors may be required to assist in payment of equipment that is wilfully damaged or purposefully neglected.

Mentors are expected to participate in and ensure campers are involved in cleaning, tidying and putting equipment, supplies and belongings away properly in both their accommodation and program facilities as part of the routine of camps and workshops. These actions will ensure that our equipment damage and/or neglect is kept to a minimum.

Off-Site Programs

All activities sanctioned and run under our Youth Programs but which are not on the physical camp property (e.g. field trips) are still under the jurisdiction of the camp and workshop rules and regulations.

Food & Nutrition

Camp snacks and/or meals that may be provided will be at no additional cost for all Mentors and are established in accordance with the Canada Food Guide. Individuals with life-threatening or severe food allergies are accommodated only if notification is provided prior to start date of employment. You may be asked to leave camp or provide your own food at your own expense on your own time if we don't know about your restrictions ahead of time.

Mentors requiring vegetarian meals or significant dietary modifications MUST indicate this to us in writing (email) prior to their arrival at camp.

Individuals with special dietary needs beyond vegetarianism and/or outside of the camp meals may have to supplement the camp food with their own specialty food.

Grievance Procedures

If at any time any Mentor feels that they are being treated unfairly the following procedures are to be followed:

Speak directly to the person involved and try to work the situation out together. Document the conversation and the outcome of such. If you feel it is necessary, you may have a third, unbiased, individual present. If this does not result in satisfactory changes then:

Report your concerns to the Program Lead and outline your concerns and provide the documentation from the initial conversation. The Program Lead is then responsible for mediating between both individuals and attempting to arrive at a satisfactory arrangement that is agreeable to both sides. Documentation of the mediation process is necessary.

In the event that the conflict resides with your Program Lead OR agreement cannot be reached OR after attempts at the agreement such agreement breaks down, THEN the concerns should be brought to the attention of the Executive Director. The Executive Director will then act as mediator to reach an agreement that is best suited to both parties. If the conflict is with the Executive Director, speak directly with the Executive Director to arrive at a satisfactory agreement.

Role Modeling Behaviours

Smoking & Tobacco Use

No adult Mentor shall use tobacco in the presence of learners at an event. Smoking is not something we want to role model to our campers. Campers and Mentors are not allowed to smoke at camp. Opportunities to smoke are EXTREMELY LIMITED and smoking and tobacco use can only occur in designated areas. If you are a heavy smoker, you have to understand that you may need to go for a period of time without smoking and realize that you may feel uncomfortable.

At no time will a Mentor smoke in the vicinity of campers, nor will they smoke in an area that will result in campers being exposed to smoke.

Smoking can only occur out of doors in a designated spot, far away from campers.

Smokers are responsible for maintaining the designated spot in a clean manner (disposing of debris in a safe and out of sight way (e.g., no butts on the ground).

Mentors who are smokers must recognize that others may be sensitive to the smell of smoke that may linger on breath or clothing and therefore, are encouraged to make an extra effort to undertake good hygiene practices.

Mentors will not leave smoking paraphernalia out in the view of campers.

Alcohol and Illegal Substances

Alcohol and illegal substances are not permitted at events. Partaking in the consumption of alcoholic beverage or using illegal substances while on camp property during programming, off site while on camp business (town runs, field trips, excursions, etc), on periods of time off when you're expected to return to camp to look after campers (e.g. time off in town) or arriving at camp under the influence of alcohol or an illegal substance may be cause for immediate dismissal.

Determination of being "under the influence" is at the discretion of the Program Lead or their designate. In the event of alcohol or illegal substances being brought into camp the handling of such situations will be decided upon by the Program Lead and Director, which may include involving local authorities and appropriate charges may be laid.

Training

All Mentors are to be trained in the procedures and operations to ensure the health, safety and well being of our campers. The majority of training will be done during your first Mentoring experience. Additionally, there are some training components that we will cover in a Mentor Orientation.

Additional Responsibilities

All Mentors will have responsibilities that are not specifically outlined in the job descriptions. These include but are not limited to:

- Maintaining living, working and eating facilities/accommodations and personal belongings in a safe, healthy and tidy manner;
- Supervising camper activity nights,
- Participating in all-camp activities,
- Meal/snack time preparation,
- Supervision of campers at meals, arrival and departure activities.

As all Mentors are role models for the campers, they must maintain their personal space in a manner that is consistent with what is expected of the campers.

Accommodation (for overnight camps)

Mentors will reside in accommodation near campers and need to come prepared to sleep in a tent or in an indoor-shared room. A list of what to bring will be sent to you via email.

Regardless of where you sleep at night, you are responsible to ensure that you are available for the supervision of campers, providing program activities during site time and contributing to the housekeeping duties including cleaning and cooking.

Regardless of position, you may be required to stay on a site or in a building with campers to assist in Mentoring ratios.

Curfew

All Mentors, regardless of age, must be on their site, in their own tent or in their building by midnight. Quiet hours are in existence in all buildings and on all sites from 11:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m.

Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth

Ladies Learning Code is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all participants in Youth Program (Girls Learning Code and Kids Learning Code) activities. It is the duty of all Program Leads, Mentors, partners, and other volunteers to safeguard to the best of their ability the welfare of and to prevent the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of children and young people with whom they come into contact.

Adopted by the Ladies Learning Code Board of Executive Directors, August 2012

This statement of conduct provides the basic principle for Youth Program volunteers and staff to follow when working with young people in any capacity. An abuse prevention program with specific plans and procedures will help to ensure that Mentors and other volunteers exemplify this conduct. In addition, such a proactive approach will further demonstrate Ladies Learning Code's commitment to youth, help to prevent specific incidents of abuse or mitigate their negative effects, protect the long-term viability of youth programs, and strengthen the trust of participants and their parents. Too many instances of abuse and harassment of young people are ignored because adults fail to recognize or admit that it is occurring. An effective youth protection policy depends on the adults involved being both aware of the possibility of abuse and vigilant in guarding against it.

Appendix A

Abuse and Harassment Prevention Policy

Role Definitions

Volunteer: Any adult involved with Girls Learning Code and Kids Learning Code activities that have direct interactions, either supervised or unsupervised, with students. Volunteers include, among others, field trip partners and hosting partners.

Mentor: An approved volunteer to help supervise youth programs. Mentors are never solely responsible for supervising girls.

Lead-Mentor: An approved volunteer to help supervise youth programs. Lead-Mentors are sometimes solely responsible for supervising girls.

Program Lead: Responsible for recruiting and training Lead Instructors and Mentors and for the overall supervision of youth. Program Leads are sometimes solely responsible for supervising girls.

Program Coordinator: Responsible for recruiting and training Mentors and for the overall supervision of youth. Program Leads are sometimes solely responsible for supervising girls.

Executive Director: Responsible for recruiting and training Program Leads and Mentors. The Executive Director is sometimes solely responsible for supervising learners.

NOTE: There must be a ration of 4:1 of learners to mentors and 10:1 of learners to each Lead Mentor/Program Lead/Director/Core team member.

Definitions of Abuse and Harassment

Points to Keep in Mind

Young people often fail to report sexual abuse because they fear that disclosure will bring consequences even worse than being victimized again.

Child abuse is generally underreported because offenders are able to convince their victims that it is their own fault.

In many cases, victims of child sexual abuse do not report the abuse until they are adults. Manual

Only about 1 percent to 4 percent of sexual abuse allegations prove to be false.*

Children tend to minimize and deny abuse, not exaggerate or over report such incidents.

Child sex offenders seek opportunities for access to children and teenagers through youth organizations that lack strong screening and protection practices.

National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, www.ncptsd.org

To heighten their awareness of the problem, all Mentors working with young people should fully understand what constitutes abuse and harassment.

Emotional or Verbal Abuse

Incidents in which an adult uses fear, humiliation, or verbal assaults to control the behavior of a young person in his or her care.

Examples include rejecting the young person, preventing him or her from developing normal social relationships, and making derogatory statements about the youth's race, religion, or personal appearance. Physical abuse. Mistreatment of a young person by use of physical contact intended to cause pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm.

Neglect

Failure to provide (for no apparent financial reason) adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care necessary for a youth's well-being.

Sexual Abuse

Engaging in implicit or explicit sexual acts with a young person or forcing or encouraging a young person to engage in implicit or explicit sexual acts alone or with another person of any age of the same or opposite sex. Among the examples of sexual abuse are non-touching offenses, such as indecent exposure or showing a young person sexual or pornographic material. This definition applies to any participant in youth programs.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is a technique used by sexual predators to desensitize or groom their victims. Some examples of sexual harassment include:

Sexual epithets, jokes, written or spoken references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life, and comments about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess

Verbal abuse of a sexual nature

Display of sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or drawings

Sexual leering or whistling, any inappropriate physical contact such as brushing against or touching, obscene language or gestures, and suggestive or insulting comments.

Workplace Harassment

Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against an employee in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. Vexatious is generally defined as causing irritation, embarrassment or distress.

If it occurs within the course of the employment relationship, workplace harassment may involve conduct that is verbal or non-verbal, a single incident or a series of incidents.

Workplace harassment can be directed at a co-worker, subordinate, manager or volunteer.

The comments or conduct typically happen more than once, although a single serious incidence of such behavior may constitute workplace harassment. They could occur over a relatively short period of time (for example, during the course of one day) or over a longer period of time (weeks, months or years).

Workplace harassment can involve unwelcome words or actions that are known or should be known to be offensive, embarrassing, humiliating or demeaning to an employee or group of employees. It can also include behaviour that intimidates isolates or even discriminates against the targeted individual(s).

This may include:

- Making remarks, jokes or innuendos that demean, ridicule, intimidate, or offend;
- Verbally abusive behaviours, such as yelling, insults, and name-calling
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Excluding or ignoring someone
- Sabotaging someone else's work
- Making false allegations about someone in memos or other work-related documents
- Displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials in print or electronically;
- Bullying
- Repeated offensive or intimidating phone calls or e-mails
- Even if no one is being directly targeted, harassing comments or conduct can poison the work environment, making it a hostile or uncomfortable place in which to work. This is also a form of workplace harassment.

What is Not Considered Harassment?

Reasonable action or conduct by an employer, manager or supervisor that is part of her normal work function would not be considered workplace harassment. This is the case even if there are sometimes unpleasant consequences for an employee. Examples could include changes in assignments, work location, scheduling, job assessment and evaluation, having work monitored or checked, workplace inspections, enforcement of a dress codes and disciplinary action.

Differences of opinion or minor disagreements between co-workers, with a volunteer or a parent would also not generally be considered workplace harassment. Staff are reminded to look at their own role in a minor disagreement and work towards solutions wherever possible. Volunteers and parents should feel free to express disagreement/displeasure with a policy or decision of Council or staff without it being considered harassment as long as it is not personal and does not escalate in an unreasonable manner. If an employee is uncomfortable with a disagreement they are having with a volunteer or parent, the employee should always feel free to look to the supervisor for assistance, even if the situation would not be considered harassment.

In addition, any behaviour that would meet the definition of workplace violence would not be considered to be workplace harassment.

Misconceptions About Abuse and Harassment

Sexual abuse is about sexuality. In fact, most sexual abuse and harassment is about power and control.

Only girls are at risk. Although the majority of victims are girls, boys are also at risk. Some studies have shown that as many as one in six boys under age 16 has experienced unwanted direct sexual contact with an older person.

Only men are abusers.

Girls are only at risk from men, and boys are only at risk from women.

Sexual abuse is always overt.

Most abusers are unknown to their victims. Most abusers are known and trusted by their victims.

Signs of Abuse and Harassment

Mentors and other volunteers should be aware of the following physical and behavioral changes that may be warning signs of abuse:

- Any physical signs of abuse, such as a repeated pattern of injury or an accident for which the explanation doesn't fit the injury
- Changes of behavior, extreme mood swings, withdrawal, fearfulness, or excessive crying
- Fear of certain places, people, or activities; reluctance to be left alone with a particular person
- High levels of anxiety
- Distorted body image, including or resulting in eating disorders, self mutilation, or other related behaviors
- Diminished self-esteem
- Overly aggressive behavior
- Unwillingness to participate in extracurricular activities; difficulties at school
- Repression
- Poor peer relationships; isolation
- Nightmares or night terrors
- Graphic or age-inappropriate knowledge of sex or sexual behavior
- Suicide attempts or gestures
- Obsessive behaviors
- Self-medicating through drug or alcohol abuse
- Problems with authority or rules

These behaviors should be seen as indicators that abuse or harassment may have taken place, and adult volunteers should spend time with the young person to find out what is really going on. Active involvement with youth in your care will enable you to observe changes in behavior, which can be a more accurate indicator of abuse than those on the list above, many of which could also be considered “typical teen behavior.”

A normally outgoing and confident young person who becomes withdrawn and quiet may have been abused, and the adults involved with the young person should find out why the behavior has changed. Consider arranging a conversation between the young person and a mental health professional who specializes in working with adolescents.

* Based on materials produced by Bollinger Inc., Short Hills, New Jersey, USA

Volunteer Selection and Screening

As we strive to select Mentors who demonstrate an interest in the program and an aptitude for working with young people, we also follow a process for screening candidates to ensure that they pose no danger to the youth participants. The level of screening may vary, based on the position that the volunteer is interested in and the assignment's amount of contact (from incidental/infrequent to frequent) and type of contact (group vs. individual) with the participants. For example, Program Leads who are responsible to the overall program delivery and Mentor management and Mentors who directly supervise youth should undergo a more comprehensive screening process than field trip partners and Lead Instructors, who will likely be supervised when working with children. Responsible youth program management requires a significant time commitment to identify, screen, and train adult volunteers and Program Leads must accept the additional administrative burden required to ensure that youth participants are adequately protected. Adult volunteers who are unwilling to undergo screening are excluded from participating in any youth programs.

Applications

All adult volunteers who will have unsupervised contact with youth or who share any responsibility for supervising youth, are required to complete an application that includes references. At a minimum, applications should include a statement that the applicant has no previous criminal convictions related to abuse or harassment of a young person. Applications may also include requests for specific expertise related to the assignment and experience working with young people.

Interviews

All volunteer applicants for positions involving unsupervised contact with youth, or who share any responsibility for supervising youth, are interviewed face to face. Interviewers are to be Executive Directors, Program Leads and Program Coordinators. For field trip partners, a site visit is conducted ahead of time.

Background Checks and Criminal Record

Checks

Background checks play a critical part in any youth protection policy because they deter potential offenders and deny known offenders access to the program. Although many offenders have no criminal record and diligently avoid being caught by law enforcement, background checks may dissuade them from volunteering in your program. Many youth-serving organizations require a criminal background check for all adult volunteers who work with youth, even for programs that don't involve unsupervised access to youth. All youth-related activities require a criminal background check for long-term adult volunteers. For example, Mentors who supervise Youth Programs repeatedly need a background check, but special guests and instructors who are not responsible for supervision may not. Criminal background checks should be conducted for all volunteer positions that allow unsupervised access to young people.

Program Leads are required to agree to undergo a criminal background check and reference check. Access to confidential information collected in the volunteer screening process should be restricted. Interviews and background checks may uncover sensitive information that would not disqualify a potential volunteer but should be kept confidential nonetheless. Develop guidelines stating who will collect and maintain this information and who will have need-to-know access to it.

Reference Checks

All volunteer applicants for positions involving unsupervised contact require references.

We contact each reference by phone or in person, and ask this standard set of questions:

1. How long have you known this individual? In what capacity?
2. Do you think this person is well qualified to work with youth?
3. What characteristics make this person qualified to work with youth?

The date is recorded of the interview and responses to each question, and keeps this information with the volunteer's application.

Maintenance of Records

Records are maintained, retaining records with confidentiality and limited access. We research local laws to determine how long records should be retained (in some cases, records may be kept in perpetuity).

Mentor Training

Mentor training is essential to an effective abuse and harassment prevention program. Role-specific training for each volunteer role is delivered, including abuse and harassment prevention information. Guidelines for tracking of which volunteers have completed specific training sessions is maintained. For example, training for Mentors focus not just on methods for helping children with their technical skills but also on guidelines for interacting with children, limitations on physical contact, and supervision requirements of the program as well as general culture training. Training for Program Leads is more extensive, including CPR certification, leadership training skills, and information on how to report an allegation of abuse or harassment. Abuse and harassment prevention training is required for all adult and junior Mentors, Program Leads and Coordinators.

Reporting an Allegation

Protecting the safety and well-being of young people participating in Youth Programs and activities requires that all allegations of abuse or harassment be taken seriously and handled within these guidelines.

To ensure that such allegations are handled properly, the reporting procedures outlined in the next pages should be followed.

Reporting Policy

Arrange for the safety of the student. The first adult to receive an allegation of criminal abuse and harassment must immediately report this complaint to the authorities.

Contact a Co-Executive Director when an allegation of abuse and harassment is made.

Report every allegation of criminal abuse and harassment to the proper authorities (child protection, social services, or local law enforcement agencies) for investigation. Notify the youth protection officer.

After an allegation has been made and law enforcement or a child protective agency is conducting an investigation, Mentors involved should take the following actions:

- Remove any adult against whom an allegation of sexual abuse or harassment has been made from any contact with youth until the matter is resolved.

- Cooperate fully with law enforcement and child protection agencies and not interfere with the investigation.

Most Program Leads and Mentors and other adults involved in youth programs are not trained professionals with expertise in determining the seriousness or legal implications of an allegation; therefore, they should not decide whether an allegation constitutes abuse or harassment until they have consulted with youth protection service agencies, law enforcement professionals, or a youth protection officer trained in handling allegations of abuse or harassment toward young people.

After law enforcement has completed its investigation, the Program Lead, chapter youth protection officer, or chapter review committee should review the situation to verify that all chapter policies were followed and recommend future actions that could correct any possible shortcomings.

Ladies Learning Code will terminate the participation of any participant who admits to, is convicted of, or is otherwise found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment.

If an investigation into a claim of sexual abuse or harassment is inconclusive, additional safeguards still must be put in place to protect both the person named in the allegation and any youth with whom that individual may have future contact. Subsequent claims of sexual abuse or harassment will prohibit the adult from working with youth. A person later cleared of charges may apply to be reinstated to participate in Youth Programs. Reinstatement is not a right, however, and no guarantee is made that he or she will be reinstated to his or her former position.

When Law Enforcement is Not Involved

At times, a youth may report being uncomfortable with conduct that does not constitute reportable harassment under local law. Keep in mind that any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature between a youth and a volunteer, even if the student is legally of age, is inappropriate. Program Leads must maintain specific procedures for addressing allegations that do not constitute reportable harassment under local laws. First, Mentors should put a stop to the inappropriate behavior and take steps to prevent it from occurring in the future. In addition, document all accusations, the steps taken to resolve them so that behavior patterns can be tracked, and the perspectives of all parties involved in the incident. Based on this information, develop policies for addressing patterns of problematic behavior that may emerge.

Historical Incidents

If a youth contacts to make an allegation of a past incident of abuse or harassment, contact Co-Executive Director for additional information and recommendations on how best to proceed. Such allegations must be reported within 12 hours of being made aware of the incident.

Positions of Responsibility

While youth protection is the responsibility of all adults involved in Youth Programs, compliance with abuse and harassment prevention policy depends on the vigilance of the Executive Director and Program Leads

Responsibilities

Ensure that all allegations are reported to the proper authorities.

Confirm that abuse reporting follows the policies and procedures.

Ensure that programs comply with policies.

Ensure that all youth program activities are conducted responsibly, even if some responsibilities have been delegated to Program Leads.

Intervene in the administration of Youth Program activities when necessary.

Establish risk management procedures, including policies and procedures for abuse prevention.

Youth Program Lead

The Program Lead raises awareness of risk management issues for Youth Programs and ensures that all program volunteers comply with abuse and harassment policies. They are the first point of contact in the program should any Mentor receive an allegation of abuse or harassment. They may train other Leads, Mentors and Coordinators on procedures and guidelines related to abuse and harassment and other risk management issues.

Responsibilities

Maintain records of all allegations made.

Ensure proper handling of allegations, according to local laws and chapter policy, and protection of the interests of all involved.

Review and maintain an archive of all screened volunteers, including applications and the results of criminal background checks and reference checks.

Ensure the conducting of background checks on program volunteers who will have unsupervised access to youth.

Ensure that appropriate training is made available to Mentors

Appendix B

Workplace Violence Policy

Ladies Learning Code believes in the prevention of violence and promotes a violence-free workplace in which all people respect one another and work together. Any act of violence committed by or against any member of our workplace, a volunteer, or member of the public, is unacceptable conduct that will not be tolerated.

Who Does the Policy Apply To?

Violent behaviour in the workplace is unacceptable from anyone. This policy applies to employees, volunteers, parents, independent contractors and anyone visiting our Lab or off-site programs. Everyone is expected to uphold this policy and to work together to prevent workplace violence.

Workplace Violence is:

The exercise of physical force by a person against an employee, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the employee,

An attempt to exercise physical force against an employee, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the employee,

A statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for an employee to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the employee, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the employee.

Domestic Violence

A person who has a personal relationship with an employee – such as a spouse or former spouse, current or former intimate partner or a family member – may physically harm, or attempt or threaten to physically harm, that employee at work. In these situations, domestic violence is considered workplace violence.

Examples of workplace violence include:

Verbally threatening to attack an employee;

Leaving threatening notes at or sending threatening e-mails to a workplace;

Physically aggressive or abusive behaviour, such as pushing, hitting, biting, finger pointing, shaking a fist in an employee's face or standing close to someone in an aggressive manner

Wielding a weapon at work;

Throwing an object at an employee;

Sexual violence against an employee;

Kicking an object the employee is standing on such as a ladder

Trying to run down a employee using a vehicle or equipment

What if an employee is accidentally pushed or hurt?

Accidental situations – such as an employee tripping over an object and pushing a co-worker as a result – do not constitute workplace violence within the meaning of this policy.

Penalty

No employee or any other individual affiliated with this organization shall subject any other person to workplace violence or allow or create conditions that support workplace violence. An employee that subjects another employee, volunteer, or other person to workplace violence may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Other persons may be removed from the workplace and/or from their affiliation with Ladies Learning Code.

Report Incidents Immediately

If you witness or are a victim of violence in the workplace, please contact 911 if there is any immediate danger. Whether the police are called or not, all employees are encouraged to raise any concerns about workplace violence and to report any violent incidents or threats to the supervisor, the Program Lead or Co-Executive Director. There will be no negative consequences for reports made in good faith.

Leadership pledges to investigate and deal with all incidents and complaints of workplace violence in a fair and timely manner, respecting the privacy of all concerned as much as possible.

The workplace harassment policy should be consulted whenever there are concerns about harassment in the workplace.

Appendix C

Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines

Ladies Learning Code is committed to protecting the safety and well being of all youth program participants and will not tolerate their abuse or harassment. All allegations of abuse or harassment will be taken seriously and must be handled within the following guidelines. The safety and well being of young people must always be the first priority.

Who Should Determine if it is Abuse or Harassment?

Upon hearing allegations, adults should not determine whether the alleged conduct constitutes sexual abuse or sexual harassment. Instead, after ensuring the safety of the student, the adult should immediately report all allegations to appropriate child protection or law enforcement authorities. This reporting is required by law.

Allegation Reporting Guidelines

Any adult to whom a participant reports an allegation of sexual abuse or harassment must follow these reporting guidelines:

Receive the report

Listen attentively and stay calm. Acknowledge that it takes a lot of courage to report abuse or harassment. Be encouraging; do not express shock, horror, or disbelief

Assure privacy but not confidentiality. Explain that you will have to tell someone about the abuse/harassment in order to make it stop and ensure that it doesn't happen to others.

Get the facts, but don't interrogate. Ask questions that establish facts: who, what, when, where, and how. Reassure the young person that he or she did the right thing in telling you. Avoid asking "why" questions, which may be interpreted as questioning the young person's motives. Remember that your responsibility is to present the story to the proper authorities. Be cautious of leading questions – be sure to ask open-ended questions so that you do not influence any answers.

Be non-judgmental and reassure. Avoid criticizing anything that has happened or anyone who may be involved. It's especially important not to blame or criticize the young person. Emphasize that the situation was not his or her fault and that it was brave and mature to come to you.

Document the allegation. Make a written record of the conversation, including the date and time, as soon after the report as you can. Try to use the young person's words and record only what he or she told you.

Protect the young person

Ensure the safety and well being of the youth program participant by removing him or her from the situation immediately and preventing all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser. Reassure the youth that this is being done for his or her safety and is not a punishment.

Report the allegations to appropriate authorities — child protection or law enforcement

Immediately report all cases of sexual abuse or harassment — first to the appropriate law enforcement authorities for investigation and then to Co-Executive Director for follow-through. In Toronto, the appropriate numbers to call can be found here: http://www.toronto.ca/socialservices/Policy/Child_abuse.htm. The contact is, Laura Plant (laura@ladieslearningcode.com and 416-579-9809), who is responsible for seeking the advice of appropriate agencies and interacting with them. All parties involved will cooperate with police or legal investigations.

Avoid gossip and blame

Don't tell anyone about the report other than those required by the guidelines. Ladies Learning Code is careful to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during the investigation. We maintain the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any accused person.

Do not challenge the offender

Don't contact the alleged offender. In cases of abuse, interrogation must be left entirely to law enforcement authorities. In cases of non criminal harassment, the district governor is responsible for follow-through and will contact the alleged offender after the young person has been moved to a safe environment.

Follow-Up Procedures

Either the district youth programs chair or district youth protection officer must ensure that the following steps are taken immediately after an abuse allegation is reported.

1. Confirm that the youth program participant has been removed from the situation immediately and has no contact with the alleged abuser or harasser.
2. If law enforcement agencies will not investigate, the review committee will coordinate an independent review of the allegations.
3. Ensure that the abused or harassed receives immediate support services.
4. Contact the student's parents or legal guardian.
5. Remove alleged abuser or harasser from all contact with any other young participants in programs and activities while investigations are conducted.
6. Cooperate with the police or legal investigation.
7. Inform Ladies Learning Code of the allegation within 12 hours and provide follow-up reports of steps taken and the status of investigations.
8. After the authorities have completed their investigation Ladies Learning Code must follow through to make sure the situation is being addressed. Specifically, Ladies Learning Code will conduct an independent and thorough review of any allegations of sexual abuse or harassment.

Addressing Allegations

When addressing an allegation of abuse or harassment, the most important concern is the safety of youth. Mentors should not speculate or offer personal opinions that could potentially hinder any police or criminal investigations. Mentors must not become involved in investigations. Making comments about alleged victims in support of alleged abusers violates both the Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth.