



Independent AB Authority	Footprints for Learning Society (Academy)
Policy Number	Number C 4.0
Policy Title	Harassment and Abuse Policy
Date of Review	August, 2023

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## OVERVIEW

It is important that FFLA maintain a Welcoming, Safe, Caring, and Respectful learning environment.

### Policy:

1. **Statement of Conduct for Working with Children:** Footprints is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all our students and staff. It is the duty of all staff, parents/guardians, students and any other volunteers to safeguard to the best of their ability the welfare of and to prevent the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of individuals with whom they come into contact.
2. **Definitions:**
  - **Volunteer:** Any adult involved with school activities that has direct interactions (which will be supervised by an employee of Footprints) with children. Volunteers may include, among others: students, guardians (including siblings and other guardian members) and community visitors.
  - **Sexual abuse:** Engaging in implicit or explicit sexual acts with a minor or forcing or encouraging a minor to engage in implicit or explicit sexual acts alone or with another person of any age, of the same or opposite sex. This includes non-touching offenses, such as indecent exposure or showing a other person sexual or pornographic material.
  - **Sexual harassment:** Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is 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, talking about one's sex life in the presence of a minor, 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 or touching, obscene language or gestures, and suggestive or insulting comments.
3. Volunteer Selection and Screening: Footprints will maintain in perpetuity all records of criminal background checks, waivers, and screening for adults working with minors. *All volunteers* interested in participating in the school must meet the following requirements:
- Undergo personal interviews.
  - Provide a criminal record check which is less than three months old.
  - Meet Footprints eligibility requirements for working with children. Footprints policy prohibits any volunteer who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise been found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment in any context. If an individual is accused of sexual abuse or harassment and the investigation into the claim is inconclusive, additional safeguards must be put in place to ensure the protection of any children with whom the individual may have future contact as well as for the protection of the accused.

#### Guidelines:

Sexual Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting: Footprints for Learning Society is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of all children and will not tolerate any 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 minors must always be the first priority.

#### Is It 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 child, the adult should immediately report all allegations to the principal or Board member of Footprints for Learning Society (if the allegations are about the principal) who will then report them to the appropriate child protection or law enforcement authorities.

Allegation Reporting Guidelines: Any adult to whom a child reports an allegation of sexual abuse or harassment must follow these reporting guidelines:

1. Receive the report.
  - Listen to the child.
  - Allow the child to tell what happened in his or her own words.
  - Do not ask leading questions.
  - Remain calm and neutral.
  - Do not overreact, show horror or anger, or any other reaction that would lead the child to believe the abuse or neglect was his or her fault.
  - Support and acknowledge the child's feelings.
  - Reassure the child.
  - Tell the child guardians believe what guardians have heard.
  - Comfort the child by saying that it was a good thing for he or she to tell guardians.
  - Assure the child that guardians will do something to help.
  - CALL THE CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE: 1-800-387-KIDS (5437) or contact the local Children and Family Services Authority, Delegated First Nations Agency or police.
  
2. Avoid gossip and blame.
  - Don't tell anyone about the report other than those required by the guidelines.
  - Be careful to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during the investigation.
  
3. Do not challenge the alleged offender.
  - Don't contact the alleged offender.
  - In cases of abuse, interrogation must be left entirely to law enforcement authorities.

Follow-Through and Review Guidelines:

Footprints for Learning Society takes all allegations of abuse or harassment seriously and will ensure that each allegation is investigated thoroughly. The school will cooperate with all law enforcement agencies, child protective services, and legal investigations and will not interfere with other investigations when conducting its own independent reviews.