GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT

The Activity Leaders Responsibility

WHEN	YOU MUST....
• a young person discloses abuse or neglect • you witness an abusive incident • a third-party discloses that a young person is being abused • you suspect abuse or neglect	1. Look for opportunities to engage the child in dialogue. 2. Remain calm. Do not react with shock or disbelief. 3. Be honest, up-front and don't make promises: "I can't promise to keep this a secret because we need to get you some help!" 4. Reassure the young person: "You've done the right thing by telling. It's not your fault!" 5. Determine the need for immediate safety. 6. Do not attempt to provide counseling but include the young person in the decision-making process. 7. Refer the young person to a parent/guardian (unless they are the alleged perpetrator) or an adult with whom they feel safe, like a relative, friend, or coach. 8. Report incidents or suspicions to child protection authorities or police. 9. Never confront the perpetrator. 10. Fully complete the ***Incident Report***. Documents are very important if there is a criminal investigation.

You must remember, the person who hears the disclosure or suspects the abuse or neglect ***must*** report it!

Your Responsibility to the Organization

WHEN	YOU MUST....
• a young person has disclosed abuse or neglect, or you suspect abuse or neglect	1. Complete any organizational procedures required of you, for example, filing a formal report to designated individuals in the organization.

The Organization's Responsibility

WHEN	THE ORGANIZATION MUST...
• a young person has disclosed abuse or neglect, or you suspect abuse or neglect	1. Assist police in internal investigations. 2. Prevent the young person from having contact with the perpetrator. 3. Never attempt to conduct their own investigation without first consulting Child Protection Authorities or police.

Finally, remember that hearing a disclosure may be emotionally difficult. Maintain confidentiality, but seek support for yourself from trusted friends, family or the organization

Source: Fairholm, J., (2003) Hearing the Hurt, Changing the Future, 2nd Edition – Preventing Child/Youth Maltreatment, Canadian Red Cross