VULNERABLE PERSONS POLICY

[Organization Name] has established guidelines for prohibited and permitted practices when working with clients in vulnerable sector groups. The vulnerable sector refers to individuals who are dependent on others due to their age, disability, or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent or who are otherwise at a greater risk of being harmed than the general population by those in positions of authority or trust relative to them. The following policy outlines the organization’s established appropriate processes when working with vulnerable persons.

POLICY  
  
This policy seeks to assure the safety and protection of clients, as well as any other vulnerable group associated with [Organization Name], as well as ensuring their treatment with decency and dignity.

All staff and volunteers must review, sign, and witness the policy prior to beginning their work with [Organization Name], and it will be reviewed, signed, and witnessed annually by all workers and volunteers.

Failure to adhere to these principles may result in disciplinary action, up to, and including dismissal.

**Appropriate Communication with Vulnerable Sector Clients**

To ensure [Organization Name] clients who are part of the vulnerable sector are treated with dignity and respect, [Organization Name] will ensure compliance with the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, along with any other applicable legislation.

As an organization operating in Ontario, the company has a legal duty to take steps to prevent and respond to breaches of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. The company must ensure that they maintain an accessible, inclusive, discrimination-free, and harassment-free environment that respects human rights.

**Appropriate Methods of Behaviour Correction**

Unique and individual interventions are more important than any prescribed behaviour program. Some examples of useful interventions include building relationships, adapting the environment, managing sensory stimulation, changing communication strategies, providing prompts and cues, using a teach, review, and reteach process, and developing social skills.

If a situation arises that may cause harm to a distressed person or people around them, employees and volunteers should reach out for assistance to avoid any further escalation. Safety comes first in any circumstance, this includes the safety of all clients, volunteers, and employees of [Organization Name]. [INDICATE PERSON/DEPARTMENT] is available for support if employees/volunteers are confronted with a stressful or dangerous situation that is escalating.

**Prohibited Actions and Communications with Vulnerable Sector Clients**

* The *Criminal Code of Canada* prohibits any form of corporal/physical punishment against a member of a vulnerable sector, such as a child. [Organization Name] will not tolerate any form of abuse, assault, physical punishment or bodily harm that is caused against any vulnerable individuals associated with the organization;
* Prohibited actions may include but are not limited to, forceful handling, shaking, securing a person in a chair, rapidly and suddenly sitting a person down, restraining a person by their arms/legs forcefully, and dragging a person by the arm to a certain spot;
* Reasonable, safe and corrective force may be used in specific circumstances to secure the safety of the individual and those around them, however, any use of force on a member of a vulnerable sector cannot be degrading, inhumane, or result in harm or the prospect of harm;
* Under no circumstances is it permissible to utilise an object (e.g. ruler) to physically harm or punish an individual;
* Intentionally employing harsh or degrading measures that are designed to humiliate or weaken a person's self-esteem are prohibited. Yelling, sarcasm, and humiliating a person in front of their peers are all thought to be detrimental to a person's self-esteem;
* Isolating an individual as a form of punishment is not permissible; “time-outs” may be effective if employed with compassion and understanding but distressed individuals should not be left alone for extended periods of time, locked or closed in a room or a space alone for extended periods of time, or neglected as punishment;
* Depriving an individual of their fundamental needs and/or rights (Eg. food, water, light, space);
* Demonstrating any aggressive or violent behaviour toward an individual or toward other people/property as a reaction to misbehaviour (e.g. slamming doors after an individual misbehaves);
* Any discriminatory or hateful behaviour or words must not be used against any person associated with [Organization Name];
* This list is not exhaustive, any behaviour that may be characterised as abusive, physically, mentally or verbally is prohibited at [Organization Name].
* When a client who is a child demonstrates signs of witnessing domestic violence, being abused or neglected, all [Organization Name] personnel are bound by [the Child, Youth and Family Services Act](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17c14): Every person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a Children’s Aid Society. This is a legal obligation and [Organization Name] will abide by all legal requirements to protect and conserve the safety of our clients.

**Who to Call:**

[Insert Vulnerable Sector Aid Contact Details e.g. for children *Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAS) at 416-924-4646. Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CCAS) at 416-395-1500. Native Child and Family Services at 416-969-8510. Jewish Child & Family Services (JF&CS) at 416-638-7800. Toronto Police Services at 416-808-2222.]*

If a member of a vulnerable sector is in immediate danger, call 911 for the police.

**Non-Compliance**

Any employees or volunteers who are non-compliant with this policy will be subject to corrective action including and up to dismissal. Any incidents witnessed, whether by an employee, child, parent, volunteer, member of the public, etc., must be immediately reported to the [INDICATE PERSON/DEPARTMENT].

**Dangerous Behaviour**

If [Organization Name] has not been able to support a client in a way where the safety of others can be ensured, after appropriate effort has been made, [Organization Name] will recommend that the individual be withdrawn from the services. Although this is rare, it may still occur in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of others.

**Employee Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge that I have received, read and understood the Abuse and Vulnerable Sector policy as provided by [Organization Name]. I understand this policy and its content may be legally enforced and any non-compliance may result in disciplinary action, up to, and including dismissal.

Print Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_