

STAFF ABUSE And PROTECTION POLICY

Freedom Thinkers Education PBL Society

POLICY STATEMENT

Freedom Thinkers Education PBL Society expects all staff, volunteers, and other members of the Society to be treated with respect and courtesy, in accordance with the *Code of Conduct*.

The Society is committed to protection of its school's learners and staff from physical, emotional, and verbal neglect and/or abuse, and sexual abuse. It is equally committed to protection of staff from victimization through false and/or unsubstantiated allegations or charges of child abuse.

POLICY RATIONALE

At Freedom Thinkers Education PBL Society we value respect for each other and have a zero tolerance policy on abuse. This allows staff, volunteers, and society members to feel safe, to develop a sense of belonging, and to maintain respectful relationships. With this sense of community, the opportunity for teaching and learning is optimized.

The safety and well-being of all staff members and volunteers is paramount. Abuse Policies are reviewed with staff every year with a signed acknowledgement of the review.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Purpose

Our policy models a respectful environment that is intended to prevent possible staff abuse from occurring and, in the event that it occurs, promotes healing and justice for the victim, and healing and accountability for the abuser.

I. Awareness

There are many underlying causes of abuse.

Abuse can be overt or subtle, and may continue undetected by anyone other than the victim.

II. Prevention

Our staff are leaders who nurture and model a school climate that fosters community, is intended to prevent abuse, and supports healing in cases where such abuse occurs.

Staff shall be aware that they can safely communicate complaints about abuse and any other related matter to the principal or directly to the board.

III. Intervention

Reporting

In the case that a staff member feels that they have been abused or harassed by another individual, the first thing the staff member should do is address the issue with the perpetrator. If the problem is not cleared up at this initial level, in addition to making a verbal report, staff must document the allegation in a written report to ensure complete and accurate information is shared with the principal and/or the board.

The written report shall be submitted to the principal and/or Board of Directors in a sealed envelope and the information will not be available for others to read.

If a decision made by the Society as a result of a staff abuse allegation involves any disciplinary measures against a teacher or principal, those disciplinary measures shall be reported to the Commissioner of the Teacher Regulation Branch.

All actions taken regarding these adults shall be documented, including names, times and methods of communication, and a copy retained in the administrative files.

Confidentiality

The records of all informal and written complaints, and all information and documentation gathered or produced during, or as a result of, complaints of abuse shall be considered confidential by the parties and the Society, except as required by law

Dismissal of Staff

If it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Board that a staff member has been abusive and/or inappropriate, the Board may consider such conduct a fundamental breach of the staff member's duties and obligations and may dismiss the staff member.

IV. Appeals

Parties involved may consult the *Complaints and Appeals Policy*.

Appointed School Official (ASO) – Sandra Cushway (principal)

Alternate Appointed School Official (AASO) – Erica McNaughton (teacher)

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are intended to enhance understanding of this policy. They are descriptive only and not intended to be used for any legal actions.

Staff

Any individual who is employed by the Freedom Thinkers Education Society, including an independent contractor who has entered into an agreement with the Society.

Physical Abuse

Defined as, but not limited to, the use of intentional force that can result in physical harm or injury to an individual. It can take the form of slapping, hitting, punching, shaking, pulling, throwing, kicking, biting, choking, strangling or the abusive use of restraints.

Sexual Abuse

Defined as, but not limited to, any unwanted touching, fondling, observations for sexual gratification, any penetration or attempted penetration with a penis, digit or object of the vagina or anus, verbal or written propositions or innuendoes, exhibitionism or exploitation for profit including pornography.

Emotional Abuse

Defined as, but not limited to, a chronic attack on an individual's self-esteem. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, berating, intimidating, isolating, hazing, habitually scapegoating, or blaming.

Verbal Abuse

Defined as, but not limited to, humiliating remarks, name calling, swearing at, taunting, teasing, and/or continual put downs.

Psychological Abuse

Defined as, but not limited to, communication of an abusive nature, sarcasm, exploitive behaviour, intimidation, manipulation, and insensitivity to race, sexual preference, or family dynamics.

Neglect

Defined as, but not limited to, any behaviour that leads to a failure to provide services which are necessary, such as withdrawing basic necessities as forms of punishment, failing to assess and respond to changes in health status, and refusing or withdrawing physical or emotional support.

Harassment

Defined as, but not limited to, any unwanted physical or verbal conduct that offends or humiliates, including gender-based harassment. It can be a single incident or several incidents over time. It includes threats, intimidation, displays of racism, sexism, unnecessary physical contact, suggestive remarks or gestures, offensive pictures, or jokes. Harassment will be considered to have taken place if a reasonable person ought to have known that the behaviour was unwelcome.

Reference: Policies & Procedures: Creating Abuse Policies in British Columbia

Updated: June 2026