

## THE ART CENTER COOPERATIVE INC.

### The Good Shepherd Program

#### IT CAN HAPPEN HERE!

*“We’ve never had a serious problem in our children’s programs.”*

*“All our volunteers are decent people.”*

*“I can’t imagine abuse happening in this group.”*

Child abuse and negligent accidents can and do happen. Chances of these calamities occurring can be dramatically reduced. The Art Center Cooperative Inc., leaders and teachers can make a conscious decision to build a safe environment.

Convicted child molesters report that volunteer organizations are known as easy places to gain access to children. Youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts and Big Brothers/Sisters have experienced problems and started successful prevention programs.

#### Defining Child Maltreatment:

- 1) Child Maltreatment is any type of harm to a child by a caretaker whether physical, emotional or sexual abuse. This abuse includes acts of *commission* (assault) as well as acts of *omission* (failure to protect).
- 2) Four key conditions must be met before anyone can abuse or mistreat a child. Effective prevention means consistently combating these four conditions!
  - a) An individual with a tendency to abuse or neglect has access to youth.
  - b) The individuals must overcome their own inhibitions.
  - c) The individual must overcome external barriers in place to protect children.
  - d) The individual must overcome the child’s resistance to being abused.
- 3) Recognizing child maltreatment: Everyone working with children and youth should know the warning signs of child maltreatment. Even if maltreatment is occurring outside our programs, recognition and reporting are critical to victimized children.
- 4) When you suspect maltreatment: Be aware that even children who are not in any way being mistreated may exhibit some of these symptoms. If several indicators shown on the following pages are exhibited, child and youth teachers or workers should report findings.

### Summary of potential mistreatment:

Abused or neglected children exhibit behaviors that can alert a watchful caregiver.

Recognizing and reporting these behaviors can rescue victimized children before irreparable harm is done.

Trusted adults can manipulate children who would otherwise resist and report abuse.

Very young or special-needs children are especially vulnerable due to speech or mental limitations and require extra protection.

Failure to protect youth from hazards through careless planning can have as harmful and long-lasting results as active physical or sexual abuse.

Reviewing possible scenarios for maltreatment can help open the eyes and sharpen the senses of workers regarding abuse or neglect.

### Situational versus Preferential Child Molesters

- 1) Two types of molesters - Experts identify two types of molester: situational and preferential. Child sexual abuse by either must be prevented, but the nature of the offense and the means of prevention are different.

Situational molesters do not actively plan or fantasize about sex with young people. They may prefer and experience sexual relationships with other adults. However, when an opportunity to molest is presented, this molester gives in to temptation and acts on impulse. Often the molestation would never occur without exceptional circumstances. They are harder to identify but they are easier to deter by minimizing situations that are ripe for abuse.

Preferential molesters are more easily aroused by children than adults. They typically abuse children repeatedly and will assail hundreds of children throughout their lifetimes. They may expend a lot of energy fantasizing about sex with children and work to gain access to vulnerable children. They are difficult to identify unless they have a criminal record. Preferential molesters can be deterred when they perceive awareness and safeguards.

- 2) Grooming behavior – Grooming is a pattern of behavior by a child molester that makes a child more vulnerable to molestation or prevents a child from reporting molestation. After considerable contact with a child, a molester can evaluate and systematically break down the resistance of the victim:

Common forms of GROOMING include the following:

- Providing excessive gifts or money
- Encouragement to take part in any form of prohibited behavior
- Excessive attention provided to selected children (beware of the worker who seems overly focused on charming certain youth)
- Fostering excessive emotional attachment or reliance
- Lack of clear boundaries on the part of the adult
- Secret activities that may be disguised as initiation to an inner circle of the program without parents consent.

### IMPLEMENTING CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

The aftermath of a crisis is no time to start improvising. Emotions and stress can cloud judgment. Prevent poor decisions by preparing step-by-step procedures to respond to an accident or incident of child maltreatment.

- 1) **Mandatory Reporting Laws:** It is a law that you must report suspected child maltreatments to child protective services or law enforcement. These laws are intended to protect children from further harm.
  
- 2) **Reporting Maltreatment:**
  - a) Report suspected maltreatment immediately when –
    - \*you see evidence of child abuse or neglect
    - \*observe violations of church guidelines
    - \*suspect inappropriate activity is occurring
  - b) Decide if a report should be made.
  - c) Leaders and teachers are responsible for making the initial report when one is warranted. That person has firsthand knowledge that will probably be needed to help law enforcement officers.
  - d) A written description of observations will be needed for Art Center records as well.

### Annual Review of Safety Program

Each Art Center member or staff who works with youth will review compliance with safety policies and potential risks annually. A brief written report will be given to The Art Center Cooperative Inc.'s President:

- 1) Listing any new programs or program changes and additional risks these changes may incur.
- 2) Giving a brief summary of policy violations and the Board's response to these violations. Any patterns of violations that suggest policy changes are needed should be identified.

### Waiver of Policies

Policies may be waived occasionally for exceptional circumstances. The goal of The Art Center Cooperative Inc., is to promote safety while maintaining practical flexibility in children's and youth programs. Waiving policies will only be authorized by the Board.

### Modification of Policies

The Board must approve changes in these policies. These policies may be modified or withdrawn by The Art Center Cooperative Inc., at any time. These policies are not intended to create an implied or express contract with any person. They are not intended to create a legally enforceable or binding promise or representation.

### Activities Covered by these Policies

All activities of The Art Center Cooperative Inc. that require paid or volunteer workers to have contact with persons less than 18 years of age shall follow these policies.

Statement of Purpose. Our Good Shepherd policy is intended to ensure that activities involving children are consistent with the Arts Center's mission of teaching and nurturing.

The primary purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and well being of children and youth by providing clear instructions about the operation of children's and youth programs at The Art Center.

Child and Youth Safety Priority. The greatest priority of The Art Center Cooperative Inc., children's and youth programs is to help young people. Sexual exploitation, abuse, or endangerment directly contradicts this priority and the values of The Art Center, Inc.

Workers and supervisors who oversee youth must keep this priority in mind. Adults do not have a *right* to serve as workers, merely an *opportunity* to serve when selected by the Art Center. This means that workers should err on the side of caution as they make subjective decisions involving the well being of children and youth.

### Supervision of Children's Programs

Staff and volunteers who supervise youth are charged with the diligent enforcement of these policies. Violation of these policies is grounds for reassignment from youth work, at the discretion of the Board. Supervisors and all youth workers who suspect any unhealthy or abusive activities must discuss their suspicions promptly with the President.

### Touching Policy

The Art Center Cooperative Inc., has implemented a touching policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone working with children and youth.

- 1) Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child/youth.
- 2) The child or youth should initiate touching. It should be a response to the child's

need for comforting, encouragement or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional needs.

- 3) Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As youth workers, our behavior must foster trust at all times. It should be above reproach.
- 4) A child's preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant child.
- 5) Youth workers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.

### Worker Selection and Supervision

The following guidelines will be used as The Art Center Cooperative Inc. reviews applicants for positions in children's programs.

### Minimum Age

All workers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but they may not take the place of adult workers.

### Six-Month Rule

It is desired that applicants be members of The Art Center for a period of at least six months. This time of interaction between leaders and the applicant allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of an applicant for youth work.

### Application Forms

Applicants must give permission to check references and background information.

### Criminal Background Check

Required for all worker positions.

### Signatures on Guidelines

All applicants must agree by signature that they understand the guidelines pertaining to their position and that they agree to abide by them.

### ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

- 1) Children will never be in the primary care of only one adult. Teams of adults will supervise all activities with at least 1 parent present when possible.
- 2) Informal Contact – informal contact refers to phone calls, letters or face-to-face contact between an adult worker and a youth. Workers should limit all contact to parents only.
- 3) Transportation to and from Meetings – Transportation to and from meetings is not part of youth activities. Parents are responsible for providing or arranging for this transportation.
- 4) Open Door Policy – All youth events shall be open door. This means workers, parents and Art Center members have a right to observe any youth activity.
- 5) Workers must report suspected or observed misconduct to the President immediately.
- 6) Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct – this is necessary

in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

- 7) Workers who disobey these guidelines will be relieved from their children's program at the discretion of the President.

### Red Flags

Red flags alone do not mean that an individual is a potential danger to youth. However, they are possible indicators that an individual may participate in unhealthy relationships with children. Red flags are signals for the board to consider the applicant more carefully, to look a bit deeper into their background, and to be especially careful in making decisions to approve or disapprove the applicant:

- 1) A specific interest in a certain age group or gender. Child molesters sometimes fixate on children of the same age they were when first molested.
- 2) Over-involvement with children and youth. Excessive activity with youth may indicate a person is fixated on youth, lacks adult outlets for recreation, or is seeking access to youth in a variety of programs.
- 3) Lack of adult relationships. Healthy workers have adult relationships for friendships and when appropriate, for romantic reasons. They do not need to turn to youth to meet their basic need for relationships.
- 4) Lack of adult interests. Interest in adult hobbies and in adult group shows that youth workers have balanced lives that are not overly concentrated on children.
- 5) Instability in work and lifestyle. Look out for people who move or change jobs frequently and do not have a plausible explanation for it. Child molesters often move from place to place as people become suspicious. Instability in work may mean that an applicant has a drug or an alcohol problem.
- 6) Gaps in a person's life history. An unexplained gap in a resume or history may mean that the applicant served a prison term or is covering up a difficult time in their life.
- 7) A history of abuse or family instability. A person who experienced abuse or family problems while growing up may have unresolved emotional issues. These issues can interfere in their ability to work with children.
- 8) A stressful event in the applicant's recent past. Events such as the death of a close family member, divorce, marital problems, unemployment, etc., can often lead applicants to react in unhealthy ways.
- 9) Evasive or misleading answers. Dishonesty is an indicator that a person is not trustworthy enough for working with children and may be hiding vital information.
- 10) Rigidity in belief or doctrines. Applicants may have strong beliefs, but they should demonstrate flexibility in dealing with different points of view and accepting people as they are.

### Positive traits to look for ("Green Flags"):

- 1) Applicants with a clear explanation of why they want to work with children.
- 2) Applicants with well-balanced lifestyles involving work, family, friends, recreation and spiritual growth.
- 3) Applicants who are open to differences in people, flexible in dealing with people and have a sense of humor.
- 4) Applicants who have demonstrated maturity and people skills over the long term

in their life experiences.

- 5) Applicants who demonstrate appropriate reactions to stress.
- 6) Applicants who understand the need for screening and supervision and who react to it positively rather than defensively.

*Pre-Employment Background Check Disqualifying Criteria*

- 1) Felony Conviction for any use of force crime
- 2) Any conviction for child molestation

*Background Check Processing*

- 1) President submits information to reputable background check agency
- 2) CONFIDENTIAL Report of results returned to only the President or assigned board member
- 3) If any of the above disqualifying criteria are in the report, a panel of three members of the board shall review and determine suitability
- 4) All results are filed in the CONFIDENTIAL Personnel File for that person

NOTE: There is no judgment of the individual involved. They either meet the criteria to work with children or they do not. No access is permitted to Personnel Files unless on a need-to-know-basis and no information gleaned from these files is to be released or discussed except with designated persons and for the express purpose of determining position eligibility.