

Abuse Policy – WODS

“Organization” refers to: The Waterloo Organization of Disc Sports (WODS)

Definitions

1. The following terms have these meanings in this Policy:
 - a) “Abuse” – Regular **violence** against or **harassment** of an individual
 - b) “Discipline Chair(s)” – An individual or individuals appointed to be the first point-of-contact for all discipline and complaint matters reported to the Organization, per the organization’s *Discipline and Complaints Policy*
 - c) “Individuals” – All categories of membership defined in the Organization’s Bylaws, as well as all individuals employed by, contracted by, or engaged in activities with the Organization including, but not limited to, athletes, coaches, instructors, managers, convenors, volunteers, administrators, staff, committee members, and directors and officers of the Organization, spectators at events, and parents/guardians of participants.
 - d) “Vulnerable Individuals” – A person under the age of 18 years old and/or a person who, because of age, disability or other circumstance, is in a position of dependence on others or is otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by people in positions of trust or authority
 - e) “Harassment” – comment or conduct directed towards an individual or group, which is offensive, abusive, racist, sexist, degrading, or malicious. Types of behaviour that constitute harassment include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Written or verbal abuse, threats, or outbursts
 - ii. Persistent unwelcome remarks, jokes, comments, innuendo, or taunts
 - iii. Leering or other suggestive or obscene gestures
 - iv. Condescending or patronizing behaviour which is intended to undermine self-esteem, diminish performance or adversely affect working conditions
 - v. Practical jokes which endanger a person’s safety, or negatively affect performance
 - vi. Any form of hazing
 - vii. Physical or sexual assault
 - viii. Behaviours such as those described above that are not directed towards a specific individual or group but have the same effect of creating a negative or hostile environment
 - ix. Retaliation or threats of retaliation against an individual who reports harassment to the Organization
 - f) “Sexual harassment” – unwelcome sexual comments and sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or conduct of a sexual nature. Types of behaviour that constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Sexist jokes
 - ii. Display of sexually offensive material
 - iii. Sexually degrading words used to describe a person
 - iv. Inquiries or comments about a person’s sex life
 - v. Unwanted physical contact including, but not limited to, touching, petting, pinching, or kissing
 - vi. Unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances, requests, or propositions
 - vii. Persistent unwanted contact or sexual assault
 - g) “Violence” – the exercise of physical force by a person that causes or could cause physical injury; an attempt to exercise physical force against an Individual that could cause physical injury to the Individual; or a statement or behaviour that an Individual may reasonably interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the Individual. Types of behaviour that constitute violence include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Verbal threats to attack
 - ii. Sending or leaving threatening notes or emails
 - iii. Making threatening physical gestures
 - iv. Wielding a weapon
 - v. Hitting, pinching or unwanted touching which is not accidental
 - vi. Intentionally throwing an object at someone

- vii. Blocking normal movement or physical interference, with or without the use of equipment
- viii. Sexual violence
- ix. Any attempt to engage in the type of conduct outlined above

Purpose

2. The Organization is committed to a sport environment free from abuse, harassment, and violence. The purpose of this Policy is to stress the importance of that commitment by educating Individuals about abuse, outlining how the Organization will work to prevent abuse, and how abuse or suspected abuse can be reported to and addressed by the Organization.

Zero Tolerance Statement

3. The Organization has zero tolerance for any type of abuse. Individuals are required to report instances of abuse or suspected abuse to the Organization to be immediately addressed under the terms of the applicable policy.

Education – What Is Abuse

4. Children under the age of 18 and adults, who are in a position of dependence due to age, disability, or other circumstance, can be abused in different forms.
5. The following descriptions of Child / Youth Abuse and Vulnerable Adult Abuse have been modified and adapted from Ecclesiastical's *Guidelines for Developing a Safety & Protection Policy for Children / Youth / Vulnerable Adults* [1]:

Child / Youth Abuse

6. "Child abuse" refers to the violence, mistreatment or neglect that a child or adolescent may experience while in the care of someone they depend on or trust. There are many different forms of abuse and a child may be subjected to more than one form:
 - a) **Physical abuse** involves single or repeated instances of deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at risk of being injured. Physical abuse includes beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking or assaulting a child with a weapon. It also includes holding a child under water, or any other dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint.
 - b) **Sexual abuse** and exploitation involves using a child for sexual purposes. Examples of child sexual abuse include fondling, inviting a child to touch or be touched sexually, intercourse, rape, incest, sodomy, exhibitionism, or involving a child in prostitution or pornography.
 - c) **Neglect** is often chronic, and it usually involves repeated incidents. It involves failing to provide what a child needs for his or her physical, psychological or emotional development and well being. For example, neglect includes failing to provide a dependent child with food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care, or protection from harm.
 - d) **Emotional abuse** involves harming a child's sense of self-worth. It includes acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk of, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental health problems. For example, emotional abuse may include aggressive verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation, exploitation, or routinely making unreasonable demands. It also includes exposing the child to violence.
7. An abuser may use a number of different tactics to gain access to children, exert power and control over them, and prevent them from telling anyone about the abuse or seeking support. The abuse may happen once or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over a period of months or years. The abuse may change form over time.

Vulnerable Adult Abuse

8. Although individuals may be abused at virtually any life stage – childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, or old age – the nature and consequences of abuse may differ depending on an individual's situation, disability, or circumstance.

9. Abuse of vulnerable adults is often described as a misuse of power and a violation of trust. Abusers may use a number of different tactics to exert power and control over their victims. Abuse may happen once or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over months or years. The abuse may take many different forms, which may change over time:
 - a) **Psychological abuse** includes attempts to dehumanize or intimidate vulnerable adults. Any verbal or non-verbal act that reduces their sense of self-worth or dignity and threatens their psychological and emotional integrity is abuse. This type of abuse may include, for example
 - i. Threatening to use violence
 - ii. Threatening to abandon them
 - iii. Intentionally frightening them
 - iv. Making them fear that they will not receive the food or care they need
 - v. Lying to them
 - vi. Failing to check allegations of abuse against them
 - b) **Financial abuse** encompasses financial manipulation or exploitation, including theft, fraud, forgery, or extortion. It includes using a vulnerable adult's money or property in a dishonest manner, or failing to use a vulnerable adult's assets for their welfare. Abuse occurs any time someone acts without consent in a way that financially or personally benefits one person at the expense of another. This type of abuse against a vulnerable adult may include, for example:
 - i. Stealing their money, disability cheques, or other possessions
 - ii. Wrongfully using a Power of Attorney
 - iii. Failing to pay back borrowed money when asked
 - c) **Physical abuse** includes any act of violence – whether or not it results in physical injury. Intentionally inflicting pain or injury that results in either bodily harm or mental distress is abuse. Physical abuse may include, for example:
 - i. Beating
 - ii. Burning or scalding
 - iii. Pushing or shoving
 - iv. Hitting or slapping
 - v. Rough handling
 - vi. Tripping
 - vii. Spitting
 - d) All forms of sexual abuse are also applicable to Vulnerable Adults
10. Potential warning signs of abuse of vulnerable adults can include:
 - a) Depression, fear, anxiety, passivity
 - b) Unexplained physical injuries
 - c) Dehydration, malnutrition, or lack of food
 - d) Poor hygiene, rashes, pressure sores
 - e) Over-sedation

Preventing Abuse

11. The Organization will enact measures aimed at preventing abuse. These measures include screening, orientation, training, practice, and monitoring.

Screening

12. Individuals who coach, volunteer, or otherwise engage with Vulnerable Individuals involved with the Organization will be screened according to the organization's *Screening Policy*.

13. The Organization will use the *Screening Policy* to determine the level of trust, authority, and access that each Individual has with Vulnerable Individuals. Each level of risk will be accompanied by increased screening procedures which may include the following, singularly or in combination:
 - a) Completing an Application Form for the position sought (which includes alerting Individuals that they must agree to adhere with the organization's policies and procedures (including this *Abuse Policy*))
 - b) Completing a Screening Declaration Form
 - c) Providing letters of reference
 - d) Providing a Criminal Record Check ("CRC") and/or Vulnerable Sector Check ("VSC")
 - e) Providing a driver's abstract (for Individuals who transport Vulnerable Individuals)
 - f) Other screening procedures, as required
14. An Individual's failure to participate in the screening process, or pass the screening requirements as determined by a Screening Committee, will result in the Individual's ineligibility for the position sought.

Orientation and Training

15. The Organization will deliver orientation and training to those Individuals who have access to, or interact with, Vulnerable Individuals. The orientation and training will be based on the level of risk, as described in the *Screening Policy*.
16. Orientation may include, but is not limited to: introductory presentations, facility tours, equipment demonstrations, parent/athlete meetings, meetings with colleagues and supervisors, orientation manuals, orientation sessions, and increased supervision during initial tasks or period of engagement.
17. Training may include, but is not limited to: certification courses, online learning, mentoring, workshop sessions, webinars, on-site demonstrations, and peer feedback.

Practice

18. When Individuals interact with Vulnerable Individuals, they are required to enact certain practical approaches to these interactions. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a) Limiting physical interactions to non-threatening or non-sexual touching (i.e., high-fives, pats on the back or shoulder, handshakes, specific skill instruction, etc.)
 - b) Ensuring that Vulnerable Individuals are always supervised by more than one adult
 - c) Ensuring that more than one person is responsible for team selection (thereby limiting the consolidation of power onto one Individual)
 - d) Including parents/guardians in all communication (e.g., electronic, telephonic) with Vulnerable Individuals
 - e) Ensuring that parents/guardians are aware that some non-personal communication between Individuals and Vulnerable Individuals (e.g., coaches and athletes) may take place electronically (e.g., by texting) and that this type of communication is now considered to be commonplace, especially with older Vulnerable Individuals (e.g., teenagers). Individuals are aware that such communication is subject to the Organization's *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and any applicable *Social Media Policy*.
 - f) When traveling with Vulnerable Individuals, the Individual will not transport Vulnerable Individuals without another adult present and will not stay in the same overnight accommodation location without additional adult supervision.

Monitoring

19. The Organization will regularly monitor those Individuals who have access to, or interact with, Vulnerable Individuals. The monitoring will be based on the level of risk, as described in the *Screening Policy*.

20. Monitoring may include, but is not limited to: regular status reports, logs, supervisor meetings, supervisor on-site check-ins, feedback provided directly to the organization (from peers and parents/athletes), and regular evaluations.

Reporting Abuse

21. Reports of abuse that are shared confidentiality with an Individual by a Vulnerable Individual may require the Individual to report the incident to parents/guardians, the Organization, or police. Individuals must respond to such reports in a non-judgemental, supportive and comforting manner but must also explain that the report may need to be escalated to the proper authority or to the Vulnerable Individual's parent/guardian.
22. Complaints or reports that describe an element of **abuse, harassment, sexual harassment, or violence** will be addressed by the process(es) described in the organization's *Discipline and Complaints Policy*. The Organization may also appoint an Investigator to investigate the allegations.
23. If appointed, the Investigator may be a representative or Director of the Organization, or may be an independent third-party skilled in investigating claims of harassment. The Investigator must not be in a conflict of interest situation and should have no connection to either party.
24. The Investigator will investigate the complaint (by interviewing parties and witnesses, and collecting statements) and will prepare and submit a Report about the claim of abuse, harassment, sexual harassment, or violence. The Report will be considered by the Discipline Panel, as applicable, prior to a decision on the complaint being made.
25. Should the Investigator find that there are possible instances of offence under the Criminal Code, particularly related to Criminal Harassment (or Stalking), Uttering Threats, Assault, Sexual Interference, or Sexual Exploitation, the Investigator should advise the Complainant to refer the matter to police.

Confidentiality

26. The Investigator will make every effort to preserve the confidentiality of the Complainant, respondent, and any other party. However, the Organization recognizes that maintaining anonymity of any party may be difficult for the Investigator during the course of the investigation.

[1] Retrieved from:

https://www.ecclesiastical.ca/guidelines_developsafetyprotectionpolicy_children-youths-vulnerableadults_faith/