

# Crisis Intervention

## E.1 MANAGING RISKS



A crisis in the St. John Ambulance Youth Program is any occasion when immediate attention is required to protect the physical and/or psychological safety of a member or others. The crisis could be related to violence, harassment, outside influence (e.g. theft, fire, and natural disaster) or other incident causing undo stress or physical harm. Our youth members are an invaluable resource and while a crisis can not always be prevented, the strategy is to minimize the impact by being prepared.

### This section will enable you to:

- plan effective risk management;
- plan effective crisis intervention and child abuse prevention;
- understand your role in a crisis situation;
- understand how to use positive methods and approaches to discipline;
- determine the difference between discipline and abuse;
- develop codes of conduct appropriate to the youth in your Brigade unit.

### E.1.1 A CHECKLIST: POLICIES AND PRACTICES

#### GOOD DIVISIONAL PRACTICES INCLUDE:

- establishing meeting schedules
- knowing the location of activities and the members assigned to activities
- knowing which children and youth are involved in activities (who went swimming, on a field trip, or to a different class)
- knowing when children or youth should be picked up and by whom (includes having written authority for everyone who can pick up children)
- keeping copies of custody /access orders when appropriate
- ensuring that Youth Leaders keep program logs

#### GOOD DIVISIONAL POLICIES COVER:

- appropriate behaviour, including touching, toileting, hygiene, or being alone with children or youth
- appropriate language
- safety standards
- dress requirements
- appropriate discipline of children and youth
- procedures for reporting abuse both inside and outside the Division

- responding to a disclosure of abuse from a child or youth
- responding to a disclosure of abuse about a St. John Ambulance member
- responding to a disclosure of abuse about a parent.



**DID YOU KNOW?**,  
*Risk Management*,  
Vol. 6, No. 12  
December 1999



See **StJCI 2-9-2**  
on *Screening*

## E.1.2 DEVELOPING A PLAN

A plan should be in place for managing a crisis. Lack of planning can result in confusion, escalation of the crisis, and potential harm to the member or others.

When planning an activity, consider the risks involved for that activity.

### Example

*You are planning an outing with a group of 20 youth members to go swimming at a swimming hole that is approximately 20 minutes out of town.*

### 1. IDENTIFY RISKS AND POSSIBLE LOSSES

- ⇒ What dangers are present in this activity?
- ⇒ What risks are predictable in this activity?
- ⇒ What could go wrong? What kind of harm? What kind of damage could be done?
- ⇒ How likely is it that injury could be done by someone performing this activity to themselves or to someone else?

*TIP:* Analyze the activity and identify the risks by considering the following:

#### A. The youth member

- ⇒ Identify vulnerability
  - Age
  - Judgement
  - Level of independence
  - Skill
  - Experience
- ⇒ What are the implications of vulnerability with respect to this particular activity?
- ⇒ Does the youth understand what the activity is?
- ⇒ Does everyone understand the swimming rules? (eg. no pushing, no dunking, etc.)
- ⇒ Do all the youth swim? At what level?
- ⇒ Life jackets? / Food? / Food allergies? / Medications being taken?
- ⇒ Other?

**B. The nature of the activity**

- ⇒ What is the purpose of the activities or tasks to be done?
- ⇒ What behaviours are incidental, but are likely to arise in the course of fulfilling this activity?
- ⇒ What are the regular, predictable behaviours involved in this activity?
- ⇒ Is the goal of the activity to cultivate close relationships between youth and adults?
- ⇒ Is creating a relationship of dependency, reliance, and trust one of the goals?
- ⇒ Does the insurance coverage extend to cover this activity?
- ⇒ Are parents covered if they come to help?
- ⇒ Transportation? Hire a professional bus service? Take everyone in personal vehicles? Insurance coverage for transportation?
- ⇒ Expenses?
- ⇒ Other?

**C. The Setting**

- ⇒ Where will the activity take place? On-site, off-site, in a variety of places? In someone's home? Does it involve someone's vehicle?
- ⇒ Who else may be present / has access to the youth during the activity?
- ⇒ Do the adults have limited or virtually unlimited access to the youth or to their property?
- ⇒ Are there professional staff (lifeguards) on site?
- ⇒ Is there a safe place to store valuables?
- ⇒ How far is it to the nearest emergency facility?
- ⇒ Are there telephones on site?
- ⇒ Safe area from the sun? Sun block? Sun block allergies?
- ⇒ Availability of refreshments / water?
- ⇒ Does the lake have a shallow area for non-swimmers?
- ⇒ Does the lake have leeches? Other hazards? Water temperature?
- ⇒ Other?

**D. Supervision**

- ⇒ When, where, and how often is the Youth Leader in contact with the youth members?
- ⇒ What kind of reporting is expected of the adult leader?
- ⇒ Will one leader be alone with the youth members? Always? Sometimes? Incidentally?
- ⇒ What is the ratio of youth to adults (appropriate adult/youth ratio depends on age, capability and activity)?
- ⇒ Other?

## 2. ASSESS RISKS AND LOSSES / CONSEQUENCES OF ACTION OR LACK OF ACTION

Taking all these risks into consideration, how likely is it that harm will be done and what would the consequences be?

### For the person harmed

- ⇒ Bodily Harm (e.g., physical injury, physical assault, death)
- ⇒ Personal Injury (e.g. emotional harm, defamation of character)
- ⇒ Abuse - physical, sexual, emotional, psychological
- ⇒ property loss (e.g., damage to property, theft, extortion of money)
- ⇒ Other?

### For St. John Ambulance

- ⇒ Loss of reputation, loss of goodwill toward SJA
- ⇒ Financial loss (e.g., cost of settling lawsuits, loss of funding, donations)
- ⇒ Loss of youth members, staff, volunteers
- ⇒ Directors and officers could face personal financial loss
- ⇒ Other?

## 3. ACT TO CONTROL AND REDUCE POTENTIAL LOSS TO MEMBERS

Decide how to control, avoid, eliminate, or minimize the risk.



Adapted from  
**Screening  
Handbook,**  
CAVBC 1996

1. **Eliminate Risk** (*What things are we doing that are too dangerous and should be removed from the program?*)
2. **Reduce Risk** (*Modify the activity. Is there a safer way to do this?*)
3. **Transfer Liability** (*Is there someone else that can do this better/safer?*)
4. **Assume Risk**

## 4. MINIMIZE ASSUMED RISKS

(E.g.: Go to community pool instead of the swimming hole)

**Processes** schedules for review of activities, clearly defined reporting procedures and lines of accountability

**Equipment** secure room, first aid equipment

**Resources** information, materials, furniture

**Documentation** position descriptions, application forms, orientation manuals, policy and procedure manuals, promotional materials, consistent and complete record keeping

After identifying and assessing the risks in a particular activity, make decisions about controlling them. Implement the strategies (processes, procedures) to minimize or eliminate risk.

Reduce the possibility that harm will occur and minimize the possible consequences for the youth members, leaders, other volunteers, the community and St. John Ambulance by controlling as many risks as possible. Assume those risks that can't be eliminated, then look to minimize them.

## 5. REVIEW

Periodically review and revise the strategies, processes and procedures. By taking the time to review, assess and control the risks, the chance of something going wrong is reduced, and St. John Ambulance should be in a better position, ethically, morally, and legally if something does go wrong.

Repeat this exercise using an activity that you currently do or are planning to do with the youth in your division.



See [Exercise 11](#)  
*Managing Risks*

## E.1.3 SAFETY FIRST

Before and after every meeting check:

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Premises</b>          | Take a good look around the meeting area and record any hazards you find. Has any damage occurred during the meeting? Be sure that the person responsible for repairs is notified and takes immediate action. |
| <b>First Aid Kit</b>     | Ensure that there is always a first aid kit available, that it contains all the necessary supplies and that its supplies are maintained.  |
| <b>Telephone Numbers</b> | For display on your premises, indicate what to do in case of an emergency (where available 911, or Police Station, Ambulance, Fire Station telephone numbers).  |



## E.1.4 26 WAYS TO INCREASE SAFETY



Adapted from the  
**Ministry of  
Attorney General's**  
*"Help Stop Child  
Abuse: A Handbook  
for Employers and  
Volunteer  
Coordinators"*

The physical location and layout of your Division should be safe. Also plan for protecting children and youth when you take them outside their normal meeting space.

The following suggestions will help establish greater security for all St. John Ambulance members, regardless of their age.

### GENERAL TIPS

1. Develop a spirit of watchfulness among St. John Ambulance members: be aware of surroundings, strangers and dangers.
2. Ensure that children and youth are supervised by St. John Ambulance members and are never placed in the care of an unknown person unless it is an extreme emergency.
3. Welcome parents to drop in and observe their children's activities. Develop an open, friendly relationship with parents to promote harmony and understanding. It may be helpful to define visiting times and guidelines for summer camps.
4. Ensure that Youth Leaders and members do not become overtired or stressed. Fatigue may lead to inappropriate forms of discipline. Include some fun or relaxing activities to balance the job.
5. Review your meeting site and eliminate isolated and dangerous spaces.
6. Choose rooms with windows to allow direct or casual observation by parents, other supervisors and other children.
7. Install telephones or intercoms in rooms, if possible.
8. Make frequent and random supervisory checks.
9. Post your major guidelines to prevent child abuse.
10. Check the area outside your meeting place to ensure that children are fully visible when approaching or leaving your building.

### AWAY FROM THE MEETING SITE OR PROGRAM

11. Use the adult : child ratios identified in StJCI 2-3-4 paragraph 31.
12. Teach children not to wander from the group. Institute a buddy program.
13. Set up behaviour and safety guidelines for wilderness programs or camping trips.

14. Develop guidelines for overnight sleeping arrangements.
15. Ensure that your Youth Leaders and members know what to do if a child or youth is injured or ill during a trip.
16. Develop procedures in advance to deal with unexpected problems and how to handle them, whether large or small. This includes who is in charge, levels of confidentiality, informing parents, and consequences to individuals involved, leaders and the program.
17. Have children wear identifying coloured tags, ribbons or badges.

#### IDENTIFYING ST. JOHN AMBULANCE YOUTH LEADERS OR MEMBERS

18. Teach children how to identify Youth Leaders and members by their St. John Ambulance uniform, other distinctive clothing or a badge. This is especially important if you have many volunteers that the children do not know by sight. It also helps to identify strangers.

#### RELEASING CHILDREN

19. Ask the parent or guardian to specify who may pick up the child. The parent should also provide information about persons who are not to have contact with the child (i.e. restraining orders and no access orders).
20. Develop a simple form on which parents list those people allowed to take children from your premises. Be sure you have written authority for everyone who can pick up children.
21. Obtain copies of custody/access orders when appropriate. Request a copy of the court order or separation agreement. This provides the authority to refuse access or seek assistance to enforce the court order.
22. Never release a child to anyone who is not authorized.
23. Keep children safe if they are not picked up on time. When a parent or guardian is late call the parents or emergency numbers. Be sure you have work, home and emergency telephone numbers so you can reach parents or an alternate in case a child is not picked up. If you are unsuccessful, you may be obliged to call a child protection social worker to arrange for care. The following procedures will help to effectively handle situations when a child or youth is picked up late. Ensure that:
  - parents know at what time to pick up their children;
  - the leader has a contact number for parents to leave a message if they will be late;
  - the leader has identification of alternate contact people
24. It is strongly recommend that Youth Leaders do not remove the child or youth from the facility and do not take the child or youth to their home. Such actions leave Youth Leaders vulnerable to allegations and accusations. It is

also recommended that Youth Leaders be in the company of other volunteers or parents when waiting for the child's parents.

25. When the child or youth has not been picked up, and the parent has not contacted anyone at the St. John Ambulance Division, Youth Leaders have the option of calling an alternate contact previously identified by the parent or calling the local Ministry for Children and Families office for recommendations and advice.
26. When a parent arrives in an impaired state and wishes to take their child, it is not a member's responsibility to stop the parent. However, if the impaired parent is driving a vehicle, the police should be called immediately. Ensure that parents are aware of this procedure.

## E.2 THE ROLE OF THE YOUTH LEADER IN A CRISIS SITUATION

A crisis situation or event can cause people to experience unusually strong emotional, overwhelming reactions that can interfere with their ability to function or do the job, either at the scene or later.

Youth Leaders are expected to respond sensitively to victims in a crisis situation, treating them with dignity and concern for their emotional and physical needs. How can we do this? Just like responding in a first aid situation, we can use a type of emergency scene management.



Familiarize yourself with **StJCI 2-1-6** on *Harassment*



**DID YOU KNOW?**, on *Harassment*, Vol. 6, No. 1 January 1999

### E.2.1 SCENE SURVEY

Every crisis is different, so the order of the steps of the scene survey will change depending on the crisis.

1. *Take charge of the situation.* If you are first on the scene, take charge. If someone is already in charge, ask if you can help. Look and listen.
2. *Identify yourself.* Tell people who you are and give as much assurance as you can.
3. *Determine and deal with the hazards and ensure the youth's safety.* Keep youth members safe and in a supportive environment. Intervene if you see someone abusing a child or youth. However, be sure that your actions do not endanger the victim or yourself.

4. *Seek help.* If you believe a criminal offence has occurred, or if the youth member is in immediate danger, call 911 or a police emergency number. Be sure to notify the young person's parents or guardian.

To report suspected child abuse, contact:

- local social services,
- any RCMP detachment or local police service,
- Kids Help Line/Jeunesse, J'écoute 1-800-668-6868.
- Notify your Divisional Superintendent.

5. *Give ongoing support.* Ensure the youth member that you are doing your best to get the right kind of help for them. Reassure them by staying close by and let them know exactly what to expect from you and what should happen next. Do not make promises you cannot keep. If help is coming, stay with the young person until they arrive.

6. *Find out the history of the incident.* Document all statements, conversations and observations as soon as you are able in your log. Provide details including who was involved, witnesses, time frame, etc. Keep these documents strictly confidential in a locked file.

See  
**Section E.2.2**  
on *Keeping a Log*

Be aware that many people experience trauma after a crisis. Bring your group together and encourage them to discuss the issues and to support each other. Divisional, Area or Provincial Nursing Officers may be able to direct you to services in your community that offer critical incident stress management.

## E.2.2 KEEPING A LOG

Similar to Patient Care Records, logs document the date, time and location of activities, and who was involved. Logs are an important communication tool and serve as a record for future review, investigation or demonstration of good practice. They can also provide valuable information for future volunteers.

Logs do not need to be complicated. You may wish to consider a bound notebook from which pages cannot be removed. Most people hand-write their reports and record situations that were encountered and solved during the day.

Develop policies about log keeping and list them at the front of the log. They should specify:

- format, type and amount of detail
- who keeps the log
- who stores the log
- who has access to the log
- who receives the completed log
- confidentiality and privacy considerations.



See **StJCI 2-7-4**  
on *Patient Care Records*



See **Sample 22**  
*Program Log*

## E.3 GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

The purpose of guidance and discipline is to provide a safe and healthy environment in which children or youth can learn and feel secure. The goal of all theories and approaches related to discipline is to help children develop self-confidence, self-discipline and sensitivity in their relationships with others.

### E.3.1 DISCIPLINE VERSUS ABUSE

Most parents and caregivers want their children to behave in a socially accepted manner. This behaviour ensures the safety of children, promotes harmony in relationships and enables children to feel good about themselves. Involve parents in finding solutions when discipline, conduct, or other problems relating to children and youth arise.

St. John Ambulance's policy does not tolerate the use of physical, emotional or psychological punishment for any child or youth in the Youth Program and encourages Youth Leaders and volunteers to use positive methods and approaches to discipline.

No young member shall be:

- subjected to shoving, hitting, shaking, spanking or any other form of corporal punishment;
- subjected to harsh, belittling or degrading treatment, whether verbal, emotional or physical, that would humiliate or undermine their self respect;
- confined, physically restrained or kept, without adult supervision, apart from other children;
- deprived of meals, snacks, rest or necessary use of a toilet as a form of punishment.

There is a difference between discipline and abuse.



DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE	ABUSE
• thoughtful and deliberate	• impulsive
• uses positive action	• uses force
• consequences are logically related to the misbehaviour	• consequences often have no connection to the misbehavior
• deals only with the present problem	• often deals with several past problems
• no risk or threat to the child's well-being	• child may be at risk — physical and emotional injury is a possibility
• treatment is fair	• treatment is unfair and often more serious than warranted
• no submission or humiliation	• requires submission and humiliation
• deals with the misbehaviour, does not condemn the child	• judges the child as well as the behaviour (i.e., "you're bad")
• based on equality and respect between child and adult	• based on power imbalances between adult and child
• demonstrates love and affection	• demonstrates anger and hostility

*Adapted from "Child Abuse Prevention Handbook, Vancouver Police Union and The Canadian Red Cross*

### E.3.2 DEALING WITH DISCIPLINE

Discipline can be a difficult issue. Look for the reasons why there are disciplinary problems to help determine how to attack them. You may wish to involve parents in this process. Choose your form of discipline based on the reasons.

⇒ *resupervise:*

a firm reminder about what the rules are – for those who do not know or have forgotten

⇒ *retrain:*

some misperformance may be through ignorance, so offer a refresher course or more extensive training

⇒ *remotivate:*

if the volunteer is suffering from boredom or a loss of enthusiasm, then give them a new challenge or give them a break from what they are doing, to help them refresh their outlook

⇒ *reassign:*

if disciplinary problems are caused by mismatched personalities, consider rematching with a different person or to a new position that is more suitable

⇒ *refer:*

suggest the individual move to a different area of St. John Ambulance or to a different volunteer agency

⇒ *release with honour:*

the volunteer may have reached a point at which they can no longer contribute, so arrange an informal celebration honouring the contribution which they have given; this form of separation allows the volunteer to leave without guilt, with dignity and often without anger.

The last two points deal more with leaders or older youth members.

### E.3.3 SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

#### PURPOSE:

To provide guidance, encouragement, support, discipline and occasional on-the-job training.



See **StJCI 2-9-3**  
*Discipline and  
Grievance Procedures*



**DID YOU KNOW?**,  
on *Discipline and  
Dismissal*, Vol. 3,  
No. 11, November  
1996

#### TIPS:

- Give clear direction/instruction about what is expected; identify what the goal is, how to do the task well, spell out responsibilities and how they will be evaluated.*
- Reinforce positively; catch them doing something right, and give credit where credit is due.*
- Offer specific reprimand; correct errors by helping them do a better job.*
- Encourage creative problem-solving.*
- Involve youth members in planning and decision making, as appropriate.*
- Discipline in private.*

Generally speaking, supervision is closer at the beginning of the relationship, then gradually changes as trust develops. Decisions about the necessary level of supervision are made on an on-going basis given the nature of the assignment and the youth's initial performance.



#### Type of supervision:

- observation
- pre-meeting chats
- post-meeting debriefings
- on-site
- regular phone calls
- at the request of the youth member.

Ideally, youth members should have ample opportunities to ask questions, share experiences, discuss problems and successes and develop professional contacts. Make it obvious that you value their opinions and want to know their concerns. Let them know you are available.

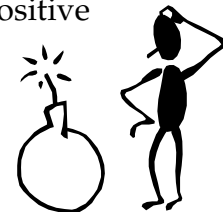


**DID YOU KNOW?**, on *Supervisory Practices*, Vol. 5, No. 4, April 1998

To allow youth volunteers to see the results of their efforts, it is important to establish realistic goals against which achievement can be measured. Interaction with peers can be very important to young people - to share volunteer experiences (both successes and difficulties), to call on each other for support and advice and to increase a sense of belonging to a greater effort. Also provide opportunities for social interaction where volunteers get together informally with their supervisors.

Experience has shown that youth volunteers work better where the limits of their roles are carefully defined but a fair amount of flexibility is allowed. As a general rule, supervision should not restrict the creativity and initiative of youth volunteers.

Although consequences of negative behaviour must be addressed (e.g. send the offender home early, levy a time out period, talk to the parents, remove privileges, etc), be sure to spend time focusing on planning for positive behaviours.



### E.3.4 GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINE

People strive for attention. If they don't get it with positive behaviour, they will frequently seek it through negative behaviour – most times successfully.

*Use Positive approaches:*

- Catch members being good (reinforce positive actions and others will recognize this success).
- When negative behaviour is starting to cause disruptions, try ignoring it and focusing on the positive behaviour of others, without making comparisons.
- Keep your cool and address problems quickly. Set a good example by staying in control of yourself. Do not let problems escalate before you act.
- Ensure consistency among all leaders. Members of your leadership team should take a similar approach so youth members hear the same message from everyone.

*Avoid Negative Messages:*

- Avoid comparisons. “Why can’t you be more like...” is a put-down and is not appropriate.
- Avoid idle threats. Members may begin to misbehave just to see if you will do what you said you would.
- Avoid sarcasm. It is hurtful.
- Avoid humiliation. Don’t make fun of or use a member as a negative example.
- Avoid overstating a situation. Do not get angry or make statements you can’t or shouldn’t follow through on.

St. John Ambulance does not tolerate corporal punishment (e.g. spanking, hitting, slapping) in Youth Divisions. If you are angry, cool down by leaving some time before taking appropriate action. Disciplining in anger can lead to unprofessional and unlawful actions.

Youth members who engage in serious misconduct are subject to disciplinary action by the Divisional Superintendent. Appropriate disciplinary measures will be imposed, taking into consideration the severity of the violation and the member’s previous record.

## **E.4 CHILD ABUSE**

### **E.4.1 CHILD ABUSE AND THE LAW**

See **Resources**  
Appendix 7  
*Physical and Psychological Indicators of Child Abuse*

See **Resources**  
Appendix 8  
*Abuse and Neglect Child Protection Acts (by Province and Territory)*

Within Canada's criminal justice system, child abuse is dealt with as a serious problem. Victims of child abuse receive careful attention and care by those professionals working within the criminal justice system. In keeping with society's sensitivity to the issue of child abuse, the law has significantly progressed in its response to and handling of child abuse situations.

For more information regarding the law, contact your local police service.

### **E.4.2 REPORTING ABUSE**

**IT IS YOUR DUTY TO REPORT  
SUSPECTED ABUSE**

All young people have a right to grow in a safe and nurturing environment. When abuse is suspected, a person has a moral and often legal responsibility to report it to the social services or the local police force.

Reports of abuse are always confidential and, if necessary, the individual who reports the abuse may remain anonymous. If you are uncertain whether to report, DO SO! It is better to be safe than sorry. No actions may be taken against persons for reporting their suspicions, unless the reporting is done maliciously.

A failure to report a suspected incident of abuse is an offence, which may result in punishment through the criminal justice system and/or by a person's professional organization.



See *Stopping Child Abuse, Protecting our Future* by the RCMP Headquarters Community, Contract and Aboriginal Policing Directorate

### ABUSE PREVENTION IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

The duty to report applies to everyone even if:

- you believe someone else is reporting the matter
- a child protection social worker is already involved with the young person
- confidentiality may be at stake, except in a solicitor-client relationship.

### **E.4.3 WHAT TO DO WHEN A YOUNG PERSON COMES FORWARD TO TALK ABOUT ABUSE**

Even if you have read widely about abuse or attended various kinds of training seminars, you will probably be shocked when a young person comes forward to talk about abuse.

When a young person comes forward to talk about abuse, you should:

- 1) **Talk to the young person in private.**
- 2) **Always believe them.**
- 3) **Listen to them calmly.**
- 4) **Reassure them that they are not to blame.**
- 5) **Contact the social services or the local police.**



Adapted from the **Ministry of Attorney General's** "*Help Stop Child Abuse: A handbook for Employers and Volunteer Coordinators*"

- 1) **Talk to the young person in private.** Step away from the group but remain visible.
  - the youth member has confided in you and may not feel comfortable telling others.
  - choose a comfortable setting, where no other individuals may intrude.
  - ensure that others do not overhear the child's message, move away from onlookers. If you are inside, try to find another room where you will have privacy, but leave the door slightly ajar.
- 2) **Always believe them.**
  - it is very difficult for a young person to disclose abuse because most struggle with the desire to protect their abuser.
  - in cases of sexual abuse, the young person is often bound by secrecy, which is imposed by the abuser.

There are those who say that youth have terrific imaginations and that stories about sexual abuse are just part of their fantasy worlds.

For most young people, sexual abuse is not a fantasy. Youth who disclose sexual abuse often do not attach the same moral values of right and wrong to the sexual event that an adult would. They may be describing something that is confusing to them, such as the promise they had to make to the adult "never to tell."

Young children may be preoccupied with the concern that they were made to do something that is hard to understand. Often children are more upset by a threat or the psychological manipulations that have accompanied the sexual abuse than the physical nature of the violation itself.

Children and youth who speak about physical, sexual or emotional abuse, struggle with the desire to protect the offender. They sense that by telling they will be responsible for bringing even more discomfort to the offender, themselves and the family. Victims of all ages often mistakenly believe that they are responsible for the abuse and they hope the violence will just go away. They may delay disclosure and endure the abuse for a long time.

As a Youth Leader, understand that your relationship has allowed the youth member to open up to you. Trust that the child is speaking from powerful, hurting feelings and open your heart to believe what you hear.

- 3) **Listen to them calmly.**
  - set your own feelings aside.
  - do not demonstrate feelings of shock or strong reactions.
  - do not rush the conversation.

As soon as you are aware that a youth member wants to trust you with

information about any form of abuse, try to support them. Tell them there are other people who need to know and try to get the child to agree to tell you and a social worker at the same time so they do not have to repeat the story. However, if you sense that the youth really wants to tell you now, do not ask leading questions.

Keep your questions neutral. For example, simply say "Yes?" or "And then?" rather than the more leading, "And that's when the person touched you, isn't it?" Your job is to be supportive of the child's or youth's emotions, not to lead the conversation. Leading questions can jeopardize the outcome of an investigation.

Give your full attention to the young person and nod understandingly as the story comes out. Do not make judgements about them or the offender.

As they speak, you may be overwhelmed by your own feelings of anger, pain and, perhaps, fear. At the time of disclosure, put your own feelings aside. You will have time to explore them later. Be emotionally available to the child or youth, and listen.

**4) Reassure them that they are not to blame.**

- Let the child or youth know that you believe what you have heard.
- Let the youth member know that they are right to tell about the abuse -- reassure them that you will do everything you can to help them and, in order to do so, you must contact someone else.
- Be honest by saying that you cannot keep this a secret, that there are other people who need to know.

Tell the child or youth that you know where to go for more information and how to bring the best helpers into the situation. You may also be able to promise that they can count on your friendship or support, whatever happens.

Explain that you are going to do your best to help; however, you cannot promise that the alleged abuser will be punished or sent away, nor can you promise that the young person won't have to see the offender again.

All you can promise is that you will do your best to get the right kind of help.

Avoid asking leading questions. It is important to support them, to listen, but not to pry. Do not suggest interpretations or solutions. They might cause problems in a court case or cause more confusion for the victim.

You should also establish whether the child or youth is in danger. You must not allow the child or youth to return to a situation where there is immediate danger. Remain close by to provide comfort.

**5) Contact the social services or the local police.**

- the social services will provide protection to the child as well as counselling and financial support to both the victim and family.

**E.4.4 WHAT IF THE CHILD OR YOUTH ASKS YOU NOT TO TELL ANYONE ELSE?**



See *Stopping Child Abuse, Protecting our Future* by the RCMP Headquarters Community, Contract and Aboriginal Policing Directorate

Being a good listener does not mean that you can abandon your responsibilities.

Victims who tell you about abuse sometimes ask that you keep the information secret. You need to let them know that you understand why you are being asked not to tell, but you must be honest with them about your responsibilities by saying that you cannot keep this a secret, that there are other people who need to know.

You can reassure the child or youth by offering to stay nearby, or by telling them that the people who will investigate know about young people and want to help.

You must, however, let them know exactly what to expect from you and what should happen next. Don't make promises you can't keep.

Remember, as an empathetic listener you lend yourself for a while to another, to try to see the world as they see it, but you must always return to your own frame of reference. It is only when you return to your own perspective that you are able to turn the new understanding you have gained into helpful action. You have the knowledge and strength to ensure that an abused child or youth gets needed help.

**E.4.5 CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

Canadian culture is comprised of many different ethnic and cultural populations. Each is accompanied by its own cultural beliefs and values relating to discipline, the use of force and role expectations. All initiatives to prevent child abuse must be undertaken with a sensitivity to these cultural differences while securing the child's right to protection under Canadian Law.

## E.4.6 WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU REPORT ABUSE

The child protection social worker and the police investigate alleged abuse and share the responsibility for ensuring the safety of children and youth. It is important to turn over the investigation and treatment to people who specialize in these areas.

Generally, there are *five* steps that take place after abuse is reported.

1. The social worker or police officer determines the urgency of the complaint, based on what you report. If it is not an emergency, the child protection social worker will contact police for them to respond to reports of alleged criminal offences related to abuse or neglect.
2. The social worker and police officer work together to guide you through the investigation. If children or youth are in immediate danger, they will be removed from the situation.
3. The child protection social worker will coordinate with other investigators as applicable. These may include aboriginal agencies, mental health professionals and other health professionals.
4. A medical examination may be necessary. Medical exams require the consent of the parent; a competent child may also give consent.
5. The child protection social worker contacts the parents unless they are the alleged abusers. The police usually contact the alleged abuser. If a parent is abusing the child or youth, they may be placed in a safe environment.

Reporting and investigating child abuse can be complicated and difficult. As part of your training program to prevent child abuse, it may be useful to bring in speakers from social services or the police to describe how the process works.

## E.5 DUTY OF CARE

Many St. John youth will look to you as a significant adult in their lives because of the positive experience you can provide them. St. John Ambulance Youth Leaders have a legal, ethical and moral responsibility to provide a safe, well-managed youth program.

In particular, Youth Leaders have an obligation to take reasonable measures to care for and to protect young, vulnerable and impressionable people. Youth Leaders hold positions of *trust*. It is your obligation, as a Youth Leader and representative of St. John Ambulance, to act honestly, with prudence and in good faith. If you are negligent or careless, you and St. John Ambulance could, under certain circumstances, be held liable and sued for damages.

Under the law, you have a duty to act as a reasonable or prudent person would act. This is known in legal jargon as ‘the Duty of Care’. As a Youth Leader, you should ensure that:



See **Resources**  
*Glossary*



See Sample 6  
Sample 17 on  
*Consent Forms* and  
Sample 19  
*Medical Information*  
*Form*

- the youth will be reasonably safe using the premises in which you meet and the equipment you use (*occupiers’ liability* - programs; premises; people);
- youth members do not injure themselves or others through foolish or inappropriate actions;
- programs offered to youth in your care do not put them in danger;
- parental consent is received before admission as a member and for any activity outside the normal program;
- you take reasonable care of any personal property youth leave in your care;
- situations that may arise are handled in a professional manner, keeping in mind the best interests of the young person involved;
- you are prepared to handle potential adverse situations and respond appropriately in crisis; and
- appropriate measures are taken to minimize the risk inherent in any situation.

It is important to strike a good balance.

Ask yourself the following questions *before* something happens:

1. What should I do?
2. What must I do?
3. What can I do?



**DID YOU KNOW?**,  
on *Risk Management*,  
Vol. 6, No. 12,  
December 1999

Good risk management begins with acknowledging that risks are involved in offering any program or service.

- Do you have a high leader-to-youth ratio?
- Are there both male and female leaders present?

Identifying possible risks, and determining how to minimize them is the basis for risk management. Do all you can to prevent problems from occurring in the first place.

The only guarantee that nothing bad will happen in your program is to shut down completely. For example, anytime someone drives a St. John Ambulance

vehicle, there is a risk that they will be involved in a collision. The only way to totally remove the risk is not to drive the vehicle.

Many risks are calculable. If a Youth Leader has unsupervised access to youth members, a calculable risk is that the leader might harm the youth while they are alone (or vice versa).

See **Section E.1** on *Managing Risks*

## E.6 INSURANCE

Unfortunately, things happen; sometimes objects are stolen or injuries occur. The national insurance policy includes both a Commercial General Liability and a Blanket Accident Insurance Policy. Contact your Provincial Council and ensure that their occupier's liability insurance and property insurance coverage is adequate for your group, its physical assets and the activities you organize.



See ***DID YOU KNOW?***, on ***Insurance***, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1994



See **StJCI 2-6-2** *Insurance*

If you plan any out-of-the-ordinary events such as water sports, rock climbing or tree planting, or are going on a field trip, contact your Provincial/Territorial Council to make sure the insurance covers it. Make a note of the name and telephone numbers of the person(s) to contact for policy numbers and details of the coverage.

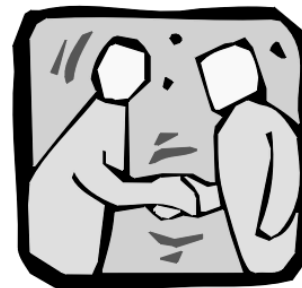
If you are using your personal vehicle to transport people on a regular basis for St. John Ambulance, contact your personal automobile insurance company and ensure you carry adequate coverage.

## E.7 CODE OF CONDUCT

A code of conduct provides clear guidelines for behaviours so that everyone understands the rules and the rules can be applied evenly. It can cover appropriate physical contact, discipline, aggression, language use, dress codes and other issues related to workplace or volunteer duties.



See **StJCI 2-1-1** on *Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities*



**StJCI 2-9-3**  
on *Member's*  
*Obligations*



See Sample 23  
*Good Conduct*  
and  
Sample 24  
*Code of Ethics*

### **E.7.1 GROUND RULES**

What are they? Ground rules are clear guidelines that members must use to function effectively and efficiently within the Youth Program.

They can cover such things as how decisions will be made in the group, how conflict will be handled in the group, how late participants will be handled, dress and deportment, etc.

### **E.7.2 WHY ESTABLISH “GROUND RULES”?**



See **Resources**  
Glossary

Most people who have been involved in participative groups typically express both satisfaction and frustration about how their group operates. Ground rules help set guidelines to increase group satisfaction and to deal with frustrations.

Every group is different. Ground rules should reflect the specific purpose and people in the group.

### **E.7.3 GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING “GROUND RULES”**

- Involve youth members in developing the list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Use brainstorming to develop a list of “Potential Ground rules”
- Keep the list simple and to the point. Go back over the list for clarification and group similar ideas together.
- Limit the number of “rules” so that the important issues are the ones being addressed. Give participants 5 to 10 votes and ask them to assign votes to the most important ground rules.
- State all the “rules” in a positive, measurable and age-appropriate manner.
- Develop general “rules” that are flexible, to cover different group situations.
- Develop specific “rules” for specific situations (e.g. St. John Ambulance-sponsored activities, social events, camps, or field trips).
- State consequences clearly.
- Be sure everyone understands and agrees on both the “rules” and the consequences.
- Always make the ground rules visible. Post and review these “rules” and consequences to remind members of behaviours you wish to see. Refer to the appropriate ground rule when intervening.

## E.7.4 YOUTH LEADER CODE OF CONDUCT

Use common sense and good judgement when you are with young people. Be sure there are always others present. For example, displays of affection are appropriate when based on the situation and developmental stage of the child or youth: holding the hand of a teenager is quite different from taking the hand of a six-year-old.

### PRACTICES TO BE ADOPTED INCLUDE:

- a. avoid one-on-one situations with a young person; where it is unavoidable, keep a door open or ensure another person is nearby;
- b. avoid managing a division with only one adult present;
- c. ensure an appropriate balance and number of male and female helpers;
- d. where circumstances dictate, do not allow males to enter female rooms/tents or vice versa;
- e. be aware of individual and personal sensitivities during first aid practical work: give prior notice so that young people wear suitable clothing; avoid touching the young person; demonstrate on a colleague with their pre-arranged permission or ask an experienced young person to demonstrate or practice with a peer;
- f. where physical contact is unavoidable, ensure another adult is present;
- g. when a young person is upset, seek ways to provide comfort and support without an unnecessary degree of physical contact;
- h. do not leave the premises until all youth are accounted for;
- i. do not drive or walk a young person home without prior parental permission;
- j. do not take an unaccompanied young person to your home;
- k. involve Cadets and Juniors in establishing their own list of rules, outlining what is and what is not acceptable in their Division;
- l. do not dismiss or trivialize bullying;
- m. avoid showing favouritism or singling out individuals on a regular basis;
- n. avoid inappropriate language and subject matter.

Taken from  
**StJCI 2-3-4**  
Paragraph 32



See ***DID YOU KNOW?***, on  
***Supervisory Practices***, Vol. 5,  
No. 4, April 1998

### In addition:

- a. always respect the dignity and spirit of children and youth;
- b. avoid social contacts with children or youth after work to prevent false allegations of inappropriate behaviour;
- c. do not take part in or permit behaviour that puts down, embarrasses or frightens children, or other volunteers or staff. Similarly, get involved if children or youth embarrass or threaten other children;

- d. treat aggressive actions seriously, especially in older children. Know how to deal with fights or assaults on other children or volunteers;
- e. do not borrow from or lend money to children or youth. It may be seen as giving them control over you or giving payment for suspicious reasons;
- f. exercise good judgement when sharing any personal information;



Taken from  
**StJCI 2-12-1**  
on *Image and  
Identity*

- g. maintain acceptable levels of dress and deportment, including:
  - i. clean, unwrinkled clothes,
  - ii. uniform sized to fit appropriately,
  - iii. personal cleanliness and hygiene,
  - iv. minimal amount of makeup and jewellery;
- h. refrain from smoking, chewing gum or consuming alcoholic beverages or illegal substances.

### **E.7.5 SMOKING AND USE OF ALCOHOL OR OTHER CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**

St. John Ambulance is committed to promoting the health and well-being of its members. In addition, St. John Ambulance Youth Programs and activities involving youth should be carried out in an atmosphere of civility. Behaviour which is abusive to oneself or to others is not tolerated. St. John Ambulance recognizes the unique social needs of the Youth Program and attempts to provide an environment where these needs can reasonably be met.

Every Youth Leader must recognize their influence as role models for the youth. In addition, it is essential for the health and safety of the youth that Youth Leaders are physically and mentally capable of carrying out their supervisory responsibilities effectively at all times.

Out of respect for the developmental and personal well being of all its members, St. John Ambulance supports the responsible use of alcohol in an effort to minimize the harm and inconvenience that may be experienced by the irresponsible use of alcohol. These values are presented in recognition of both the importance of the responsibility carried by Youth Leaders, and the growing liability individuals and organizations may face.

All St. John Ambulance members are accountable for their own decisions regarding alcohol use. They are also responsible for knowing, understanding, and complying with applicable St. John Ambulance policies, and provincial/territorial laws related to alcohol and controlled substances and the ground rules developed for their group.

St. John Ambulance wishes to provide responsible guidelines for those individuals or groups who wish to organize, or participate in events that may involve alcohol or smoking. It is essential that ground rules be developed around this area. They may differ according to the setting. For example, your ground rules for alcohol use and smoking may look like this:

### **DURING MEETINGS**

- Smoking is not permitted
- Consumption of alcohol or other controlled substances is not permitted
- Any member arriving at a meeting under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substance will be asked to leave the meeting
- Consequences for breaking ground rules



### **DURING SOCIAL EVENTS**

- Alcohol is not served to minors
- The alcohol permit will be posted (if applicable)
- Non-alcoholic beverages will be available to accommodate those who cannot or prefer not to consume alcohol
- The occupancy limits of the room being used will be respected
- The consumption of alcoholic beverages is confined to a designated area (or as covered by the permit)
- Intoxicated persons will not be served
- The alcohol policy will be posted
- Drink only in moderation
- Consequences for breaking ground rules



### **AT CAMPS OR FIELD TRIPS**

- Smoking is permitted, but only in designated areas and not as part of the whole group;
- Alcohol use (by either the leaders or the youth members) is strictly forbidden. The leaders are responsible for the young people at all times and must be alcohol-free to do so.
- Consequences for breaking ground rules

Failure to comply with these ground rules must result in consequences. For example, consequences may include counselling, disciplinary actions or suspension from training.

The use of illegal substances while on duty, representing St. John Ambulance, or attending a St. John Ambulance function is not tolerated and will result in disciplinary action.

### **E.7.6 YOUTH MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT**

While rapid societal changes have had an impact on the traditional St. John Ambulance youth program and its approach to instruction and discipline, one factor has remained constant: St. John Ambulance's goal of providing a pleasant, safe and challenging learning environment for youth members.

Every Division has the right and responsibility to establish standards for acceptable behaviour within their St. John Ambulance Youth Program. Every member's rights are clearly stated in **StJCI 2-1-1**. Every youth member has the potential for choosing appropriate behaviour. The rights of any member may not interfere with the rights of others. For example, the right of freedom of expression does not excuse abusive, physical or verbal expression infringing on the rights of others. The rights of members carry with them the task of responsibility.

All members are expected to honour their St. John Ambulance responsibilities and behave in ways that respect the rights of all. To assist young members and parents, it is recommended that each youth group develop a list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and their consequences and have youth members and their parents sign the ground rules. For example:

*For young members:*

#### **AT ALL TIMES**

- We listen to each other.
- We care about each other's feelings.
- Hands are for helping not hurting.
- We use positive language.
- We are responsible for what we say and do.

#### **Consequences:**

- 1st time: Leader will discuss actions with member and issue warning.
- 2nd time: Leader will send note to parent with copy to Divisional Superintendent.
- 3rd time: Youth member will be sent to Divisional Superintendent for counselling. Parent will be notified.
- 4th time: Parent will be called to pick up youth member.

*For older youth members:*

#### **DURING SPECIAL EVENTS**

1. Drinking or possessing alcoholic beverages, even if we are of legal drinking age is prohibited. Smoking is also prohibited.
2. Possession and/or the use of any illegal drugs or the supplying of drugs to any person at the event is strictly prohibited and punishable by the law.
3. No gambling is allowed.
4. Vandalism is prohibited and any damage must be paid for by the person who caused such damages.
5. No member shall leave early without the express permission of the Youth Leader in charge.
6. Unauthorized guests will be asked to leave.

Involve youth members in developing their own code of conduct and list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and consequences.

