



# Park Lawn Preschool Inc.

Park Lawn Preschool \* Humber Bay Child Care Centre \* PLP Early Learning Centre at St. Mark

## 2014 PLP HS 208 Child Abuse

PLP Inc. believes that everyone shares a responsibility to protect children from harm. The public, including professionals who work with children are required by the *Child and Family Services Act* to promptly report to a Children’s Aid Society any suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection.

Child care workers are professionals who work closely with children and have a special responsibility to report. Park Lawn Preschool Inc. supports all staff, students and volunteers in their duty to report suspected child abuse.

Park Lawn Preschool Inc. takes a proactive position to the prevention of child abuse by

- Ongoing observation of the children in our care
- Professional education with respect to early identification, effective response and adherence to legal obligations including reporting.
- Keeping abreast of legislative changes and relevant information
- Communication and support of the child and the family
- Working with other service providers

### Definitions

A **child in need of protection** defined as a child who is or appears to be suffering from abuse and/or neglect. It applies to any child who is or appears to be under the age of 16 years.

**Duty to Report:** Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect a child is or may be in need of protection must promptly report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a Children’s Aid Society. Everyone has a duty to report any suspicions of

Neglect	Risk of Harm	Emotional Abuse
Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	

**Reasonable grounds** refers to information that an average person, using normal and honest judgement, would need in order to decide to report.

### Requirements

#### **Reporting Requirements**

Any person in Ontario, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, is required under the *Child and Family Services Act* to report their suspicion that a child may have been abused or is at risk for abuse and is in need of protection. The suspicion and the information, upon which that suspicion is based, must be reported to a children’s aid society.

Individuals CANNOT rely on anyone else to report on their behalf.

If an individual is aware that a report has already been made about a child, they must make a further report to the children's aid society if there are additional reasonable grounds to suspect that the child is or may be in need of protection.

It is an offence under the Child and Family Services Act for a professional to contravene one's reporting responsibilities. The penalty imposed (a fine up to \$1,000.00) emphasizes that a child's safety must take precedence over all other concerns.

### **Professional Confidentiality**

According to the *Child and Family Services Act*, the duty to report suspicions of child abuse overrides the provisions of confidentiality in any other provincial statute, specifically those provisions that would otherwise prohibit disclosure by a professional or official. The only exception to this is solicitor/client privilege.

### **Protection from Liability**

All persons making a report of suspected child abuse are protected against civil action, unless that person is proven to have acted "maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief or suspicion."

### **Procedures**

1. Make a report to a Children's Aid Society
  - Individuals reporting an incident are to contact the appropriate Children's Aid Society directly and immediately and complete a **Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form** and a **Body Chart**.
  - If the child's religious or cultural affiliation is known, the report can be made directly to the appropriate children's aid society (Appendix A):
    - Children's Aid Society of Toronto
    - Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto
    - Jewish Family & Child – Children's Aid Society
    - Native Child & Family Services of Toronto
  - If a child's religious or cultural affiliation is not known, the report can be made to the Children's Aid Society of Toronto.
  - Phone numbers of the children's aid societies as well as the local police service are posted beside each phone in the centre.
  - A report may be made any day at any hour. After hours, leave your name and return contact number. Indicate whether your call is urgent. Wait for the return call from an afterhours child protection worker. If there is an immediate danger, call the police.
  - All child abuse suspicions and allegations are reportable as a Serious Occurrence. Procedures for reporting a Serious Occurrence must be followed.
  
2. Do not discuss the situation with parents or caregivers.

- Someone who suspects abuse must not tell a parent or child about the suspicion, the intention to report or that a report has been made until after consultation with the children's aid society in order not to contaminate the investigation or jeopardize the child's safety.
- Where the cause of the child's injuries, the nature of the child's disclosure or the behaviours observed are not clear, consult with a children's aid worker before speaking to a parent to discuss the appropriateness of clarifying a situation and to obtain direction.
- When it is appropriate to clarify any information, do so in a non-threatening, casual way.
  - Use an interested and concerned tone of voice
  - Avoid accusatory questions or statements
  - Ask what happened and how it happened rather than why
  - Ask open-ended questions

If someone other than the parent is the suspected abuser, consult with the children's aid society as to who should notify the parent.

If it is decided that it is appropriate for the childcare worker to tell the parent, emphasize to the parent both the concern for the child and the legal obligation to report all suspicions of abuse or neglect.

### 3. Document the incident thoroughly

- Complete a **Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form** (Staff Manual and from the Supervisor) in your own handwriting using pen.
- Circle bruises/ injuries on the attached **Body Chart**.
- Document only the facts, not how you feel about the incident or what you think might have happened.
- Include the names and phone number of the individual or individuals you spoke with at the children's aid society and/or police service, and any direction you were given.
- The original recording of your facts is your documentation. **DO NOT** rewrite. If you make a mistake, do not white-it out, just cross out and initial any errors and continue.
- Print and sign your full name along with the date on the form.
- Complete this form any time you have a suspicion of child abuse or neglect.
- All documentation is to be given to the Supervisor to be kept in a secure, fireproof cabinet, separate from the child's individual file.

### **Procedure to Address Allegations of Abuse or Mistreatment by Staff**

1. Any staff member observed or reported to be contravening the Child Abuse Policy will immediately be reported to the Supervisor, Operations Manager, Board of Directors and the appropriate Children's Aid Society (Appendix A).
2. After consultation with the appropriate Children's Aid Society (Appendix A), the employee will be informed of the accusation and will be relieved of duty, pending investigation.

3. Where a student discloses physical or sexual mistreatment or abuse by an employee and the police and/or children's aid society has begun an investigation, or where criminal charges have been laid, the employee will immediately begin a paid leave of absence.
4. In the event there is no Children's Aid Society or Police investigation, an **internal** investigation will be conducted by Park Lawn Preschool Inc.
5. During the investigation process, the staff member will be put on a paid leave of absence. ALL parties (including, child, parents, and other staff) involved will be interviewed to establish the following:
  - Identify and discuss the implications with respect to the child.
  - Determine type of neglect or abuse: sexual, emotional, verbal or physical.
  - If physical force was used, it will be determined whether such force was necessary to ensure the safety of students or other persons.
  - If deemed necessary, a review of the Guidelines for De-escalating Volatile Situations will be conducted to ensure steps were followed and such force was needed.
6. A written report will be made by the Supervisor or Operations Manager that will be signed by all parties.
7. Copies of the report will be forwarded to the Board of Directors and placed in the staff member's file.
8. The Board will determine the specified process and any probationary period for the employee during the investigation.
9. Upon completion of an internal or Children's Aid Society investigation, the employee and the investigators will meet to discuss the outcome of the investigation, within 24 hours, when possible.
10. Support will be provided to the victim and the employee.
11. A Serious Occurrence Report will be filed within 24 hours.
12. Upon completion any investigation, whether or not criminal charges were laid, the Board of Directors shall review the assignment and status of the employee and determine any further action up to and including termination.
13. Where the employee is a member of the College of Early Childhood Educators, the Board of Directors will make a report of any professional misconduct to that College.

**Park Lawn Preschool Inc. takes child abuse allegations very seriously and exercises due diligence and care with all parties involved during the investigation process.**

## **Appendix A: Children’s Aid Society Phone Contact Numbers**

**These numbers must be kept current at each centre and posted beside each telephone for easy reference.**

Children’s Aid Society of Toronto	416-924-4646
Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Toronto	416-924-4646
Jewish Family & Child – Children’s Aid Society	416-638-7800
Native Child & Family Services of Toronto	416-924-4646