



Ensuring Safe Environments

Overview of North Dakota Youth Protection Policy for Volunteers

Overview

Volunteers play an important role in fulfilling the mission of 4-H, which is to create supportive learning environments for youth and adults to reach their fullest potential as capable, competent and caring citizens.

The Youth Protection Policy represents a code of ethics which all volunteers and staff are expected to observe.

Whether we are staff members or volunteers, teens or adults, all of us who work closely with young people have the potential to profoundly affect the well-being of children. In addition to providing safe and appropriate environments, we must also be positive role models, focusing on how we communicate with youth, our methods of discipline and problem-solving, and how sensitive we are to the individual needs of all youth.

The primary purpose of the Youth Protection Policy is to ensure the safety and well-being of all youth participants, their families, volunteers and paid staff. Every new volunteer who applies to work with Extension youth programs and all paid Extension staff participate in a process that fulfills the requirements of this policy. A prospective volunteer's acceptance as an NDSU Extension Service volunteer is contingent on clearance through the North Dakota Child Abuse Information Index and the North Dakota Office of Attorney General Convicted Sex Offenders and Offenders Against Children – Public List, and satisfactory results from a reference and review process.

In North Dakota, volunteers with the NDSU Extension Service are considered 'unpaid staff' when they are functioning in an official capacity on behalf of the NDSU Extension Service.

Every six years, volunteers and staff are asked to reaffirm their commitment to promoting the safety and well-being of all youth program participants by resubmitting a Behavioral Expectation Code of Ethics and a Volunteer Information for Recertification.

The responsibility for the well-being of children lies with each and every one of us. The North Dakota State University Extension Youth Protection process is designed to help us carefully select volunteers who work with our youth development programs.

Ensuring a Safe Environment for All Participants in Youth Programs

The following guidelines help establish positive environments and program barriers that promote safety and well-being for all program participants.

- To protect ALL individuals, volunteers and staff need to work with young people in reasonably open places where others are welcome to enter (NOT behind closed doors).
- Be aware that while spending time alone with a single child can be positive and helpful, it can also be a reason for concern for everyone involved.
- Parents and guardians are always welcomed and encouraged to attend Extension youth program meetings and events.
- Respect privacy. Adults need to respect the privacy of youth. The privacy issue is especially relevant in situations where changing clothes or taking showers may be in facilities lacking privacy. In these situations staff (volunteer and paid) should intrude only to the extent that health and safety requires.
- There will be a minimum of one responsible adult (at least 18 years old) for every 8 to 10 youth, for any NDSU Extension Service youth-related activities involving an overnight stay, as consistent with national 4-H guidelines (12/1/93).
- Paid staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional well-being of youth under their supervision. Signs of injury or suspected child abuse or neglect should be reported.
- Extension paid staff and volunteers are reminded that adult behavior can have an impact on youth in many situations and environments, during extension programming and outside of those responsibilities.
- Extension staff and volunteers will not, under any circumstances, discipline youth by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care, such as food and shelter.
- An adult should not share a room with one minor child who is not his/her child. Youth should room with other youth. If the situation dictates that an adult and a youth must share a room, there should be several youth present with a single adult.

4-H Anti-bullying Policy

The North Dakota Extension Service exists to help youth and adults enhance their lives and communities. To achieve this goal, a safe and positive environment needs to be maintained; thus, bullying behaviors by youth, volunteers and/or staff are prohibited.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying behavior is defined as unwanted deliberately negative action by another individual or group of individuals with intent to harm. Bullying may inflict harm or distress, including physical, social, sexual, psychological or educational harm, on the targeted individual or group. Bullying often includes an imbalance of power between individuals/groups.

Cyberbullying is bullying that happens through email, chat rooms, instant messaging, a website, text messages or social media. Bullying may include, but is not limited to, verbal aggression, emotional attacks, sexual harassment, racial discrimination, physical aggression, isolating others or electronic harassment.

Alcoholic Beverages and Illegal Drug Use

It is expected that adults working in Extension youth programs be positive role models for participating youth. Adults must obey the laws of the state and the rules of the organization.

The influence of alcohol or illegal drugs can inhibit reasonable judgment and reduce one's ability to provide a safe environment for youth. The liability coverage carried by NDSU would not provide protection to an employee or volunteer who violates state or local laws or ordinances concerning alcohol or illegal drugs.

Since consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs is not acceptable for young people in Extension youth programs, adults should not consume these substances while working with youth. Any Extension volunteer or paid staff can be liable both criminally and/or civilly if underage drinking associated with an Extension youth activity is condoned, ignored or accepted. It is important that adults recognize and continue to help communicate the powerful and negative health and safety consequences of drug and alcohol use.

Insurance

Personal Liability Insurance

Volunteers receive special protection under North Dakota law as do state employees. The attorney for NDSU has stated that it appears that volunteers acting on behalf of a state agency would be covered in most liability cases. All volunteers and youth taking part in Extension youth program activities should be properly registered by their local Extension office. Having enrollment forms and program plans on file is valuable documentation in case of a claim. University coverage and laws may change.

It is also critical that the roles and responsibilities of those who work with youth programs be documented in written form before an accident happens. Extension volunteer and paid staff must try to record activities and related plans through written programs, meeting minutes, personal notes or letters, memos, annual reports, job descriptions and rosters.

It is important that individuals act in a reasonable and prudent manner when working with youth programs. This means that a person is acting in a way others who have similar background and training would act in a similar circumstance. Negligence is conduct in which a reasonable and prudent person would not have engaged. A reasonable and prudent person will use this document to understand personal obligations and responsibilities related to promoting the well-being of youth in Extension programs.

Automobile Insurance

Volunteers must rely on their own auto policy for protection when working in an Extension youth program. It is recommended that all Extension volunteers and paid staff review their personal property liability coverage and consider a personal and family umbrella liability policy. Volunteers must also have liability insurance coverage to at least meet North Dakota state law. Refer to the N.D. Department of Insurance website for the coverage and minimum limits mandated by law at:

www.nd.gov/ndins/consumer/auto-insurance-information/auto-insurance-faqs/

Accident and Illness Insurance

Specialized insurance plans are obtained by some county Extension offices to provide accident and illness coverage for many 4-H activities. This insurance covers youth program participants and volunteer leaders. Counties obtain the insurance annually based on Extension rosters.

Any incidence of accident or violation of established rules should be reported to the Extension staff (the youth program contact) in the county. The youth program contact should report accidents to their district director and/or the state 4-H program leader.

Code of Conduct and Health Statements

Code of conduct agreements and health forms are available from your county Extension office. These forms should be completed for each participant in an event where the child is away from home overnight or activities might cause concern about the safety of the child. Adult volunteer or paid staff should have these forms available in the event that youth need emergency medical treatment.

Safe Operation of Motor Vehicles, Machinery and Equipment

Anyone who transports youth to participate in Extension youth program activities and events must possess a valid motor vehicle operator's license.

NDSU Extension prohibits use of 15 passenger vans for transportation of youth participating in NDSU Extension programs. This decision is based on the potential risk to occupants during certain driving conditions. Effective Jan 1, 2003.

Volunteer and paid staff must operate vehicles in safe ways, using common sense and good judgment, following accepted operating procedures, and obeying traffic laws including use of seat belts. Overloading vehicles or using vehicles not designed to transport multiple passengers is unacceptable.

Adults are role models. They are responsible for the safety of youth they work with and influence the development of lifelong safety habits in youth program participants. Adults should use safe practices and common sense when operating machinery and equipment such as power tools, hand tools, agricultural equipment, lawn and garden equipment, chemicals, pesticides, shooting equipment. Protective clothing (helmets, ear and eye protection, etc.) should be used when needed.

Non-Discrimination Policies

Using the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent legislation as a guide, Extension volunteers and paid staff must not show discrimination in designing or delivering programs on the basis of age, color, disability, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a U.S. veteran. Those representing Extension must make sure programs are equally accessible to anyone desiring to participate. They should use all reasonable efforts to make individuals who have not participated feel welcome.

The intention of Affirmative Action is to strengthen and expand Extension youth program opportunities to all youth, particularly those who have not had full access to the program. In addition, it ensures that programs are being delivered fairly to the people who have funded them. Inclusion of diverse participation brings new perspectives and experiences which enrich learning and develop life skills necessary to live in a multi-cultural society.

Equine Helmet Policy

All young people who participate in any mounted horse activity in North Dakota 4-H are required to wear a properly fitted American Society of Testing Materials/Safety Equipment Institute (ASTM-SEI) approved harness helmet. This certification will be noted by a label permanently attached to the inside shell of the helmet. Such headgear will be secured with the harness engaged and be properly fastened when mounted on a horse. Effective January 1, 1999.

The requirement that a helmet be worn while riding a horse in a 4-H activity is for two principle reasons:

1. Protection of our young people is of paramount importance and their safety must always come as first priority in the 4-H program;
2. Risk management practices that reduce the potential of injury and resulting liability to the university and the volunteers and staff responsible for the event or activity always need to be followed.

A publication from Oregon 4-H cites information that lists head injuries as the most common cause of death or injury in horse related accidents, with young riders being the highest percentage of those hurt. The North Dakota 4-H policy falls in line with conclusions drawn from medical studies reported by the American Medical Equestrian Association and the Horsemanship Safety Association.

Handling and Care of Animals

Adults and youth in leadership positions with Extension youth programs may be involved in situations where animals are present and/or part of the learning environment. Extension volunteers and paid staff are expected to handle animals in a responsible manner and refrain from physical mistreatment. In addition, Extension paid staff and volunteer should teach youth appropriate animal care practices. Some specific animal care practices include:

- Providing animals with clean, fresh water and sufficient food.
- Disposing of manure and waste frequently.
- Supplying adequate shelter and bedding.
- Using approved handling procedures.

Helping a Youth Resist Abuse

Prepared by the Boy Scouts of America

When a young person feels threatened with the possibility of being sexually abused, they need to know that any resistance on their part will be sufficient to discourage most child molesters. This is part of the message the Boy Scouts of America include in their Youth Protection Education program for members and their families.

The Three 'Rs' of Youth Protection from Abuse

Youth need to RECOGNIZE situations that place them at risk of being molested, how child molesters operate and that anyone can be a molester. Youth need to know that if they RESIST, most child molesters will leave them alone. And, if youth REPORT attempted or actual molestations, they will help protect themselves as well as other youth from further abuse and will not be blamed for what occurred.

The Youth's Bill of Rights

Specific resistance methods are emphasized in the Youth's Bill of Rights. This teaches that when young people are confronted with a situation that they think is dangerous, they have the right to:

- Trust their own instincts or feelings.
- Expect privacy.
- Withhold information that could place them in danger.

- Refuse gifts.
- Say no to unwanted touching or affection.
- Say no to inappropriate demands and requests from adults. Be rude or unhelpful if the situation warrants.
- Run, scream, and make a scene.
- Physically fight off unwanted advances.
- Ask for help.

Why Disclosure is Difficult

An almost universal reaction that adults have when discussing the subject of youth sexual abuse is questioning how the youth can allow the adult to perpetrate molestation and then not disclose the abuse. Dr. Roland Summit, noted psychiatrist and authority on the impact of youth sexual abuse on the victim, has identified five reasons they don't tell:

Secrecy. Secrecy is a necessary condition for a person to be sexually abused. It is through secrecy that the youth is both intimidated and comforted. The abuser will often state to the young person, this will be our secret, or even, if you tell anyone, I'll kill you. A clear message is given that if another person finds out, something bad will happen. On the other hand, the youth is led to believe that if no one finds out everything will be all right.

The average young person, according to Dr. Summit, never asks and never tells. Based on surveys of adult survivors of child sexual abuse, the majority never told anyone during their childhood. They feared blame and retaliation.

In teaching the Three R's of Youth Protection from Abuse, we need to be sure the youth hears that if he is unsuccessful at avoiding abuse he should still report abuse and he will not be blamed. Too much emphasis on resisting may result in the youth erroneously shouldering the responsibility for what occurred.

Helplessness. Adults are given inherent power over youth in our society. We are comfortable with the idea that the child molester is a stranger hanging out around playgrounds and that we have given children the power to resist strangers. We are less comfortable, in fact very uncomfortable, with the fact that a youth is three times more likely to be molested by a trusted adult, often with a degree of authority over the youth, than by a stranger. In such relationships, the young person has no power to consent, particularly if the offender is one to whom the youth must look for food, clothing, and shelter.

Adjustment. For the youth in a dependent relationship, sexual molestation is typically not a one-time occurrence. In such a case, the youth will learn to adjust to the abuse. Part of the adjustment will be to levy self-blame and accept misplaced responsibility for the molestation. The youthful victim is likely to turn his rage at his helplessness outward in aggressive and antisocial behavior.

Delayed, conflicting and unconvincing disclosure.

As previously mentioned, the majority of child sexual abuse is never disclosed. Disclosure is usually the outgrowth of overwhelming conflict with the abuser, incidental discovery by a third party, or sensitive outreach and community education by youth serving agencies. In the case of conflict between the youth and the molester, often the complaint is disregarded because of the circumstances in which it was made. A youth of any age is faced with skepticism when complaining of sexual molestation. An adolescent may be faced not only with skepticism but humiliation and punishment as well.

Retraction. When faced with disbelief from the adult to whom they have turned for help, the normal thing for the victim to do is to withdraw the allegation and restore the lie that the abuse did not take place. By understanding these factors, we can be guided in how to respond when a youth discloses abuse.

Adults: Be Prepared to Listen . . . and Report

Considering the prevalence of abuse and the educational programs that increase young people's awareness about sexual molestation, you may someday have a member of your group tell you that someone has molested him or her. If this happens you must be prepared to help the youth. Follow the guidelines below if a young person indicates that he or she may have been the victim of abuse or exploitation:

DON'T panic or overreact to the information disclosed by the youth.

DON'T criticize the youth.

DO respect the youth's privacy. Take the youth to a private place away from other children (but within the sight of others). Reassure them that you are concerned about what happened to them and that you would like to get them some help. Do not promise to keep their secret, as it will be necessary to make a report. Report to social services or the county 4-H contact. You may want to ask

the youth if they have talked with their parents about the abuse – if a parent was not the alleged abuser.

DO encourage the youth to tell the appropriate authorities. You may do this by making sure the youth feels that he or she is not to blame for what happened. Tell them that no one should ask him or her to keep a special secret and that it is OK to talk about what happened with appropriate adults – that they will not be blamed.

DO keep it strictly confidential. Discussing allegations of child abuse with others may result in a lawsuit for defamation of character. Only share information and comments with supervisors as stated in this information and/or, with child protection authorities to whom you report.

Identifying the Signs of Possible Child Abuse and Neglect

The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act provides this definition of child abuse: Child abuse and neglect means the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of eighteen.

Some incidences of child abuse and neglect are easily recognized: an infant left alone in a hot car, a three-year-old with multiple facial bruises, a child who is repeatedly locked out of the house for long periods of time.

What about the more subtle forms of abuse or neglect such as verbal abuse, poor supervision, overly strict discipline? And what about the physical abuse that occurs behind closed doors, is obscured by clothing, is attributed to “accidents,” is denied or concealed by the victim? The key to early identification is education.

Child abuse is usually not an isolated event but a pattern of behavior that an adult uses in interacting with a child. This behavior generally increases in severity and frequency and may be exhibited on a regular or sporadic basis.

Maltreatment of children usually falls into one or more of four general areas:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse.

Three Basic Types of Maltreatment Indicators:

1. Physical indicators, such as the child’s appearance (including the presence of physical injury).
2. Behavioral indicators, such as behavior which the child exhibits as a result of maltreatment.
3. Environmental/circumstantial indicators, including social, cultural or familial factors which are known to correlate with various kinds of abuse or neglect.

In being alert to the signs of abuse and neglect, it is important to keep in mind that the indicators presented here are not all-inclusive. These indicators are clues. They may help you be tuned in to a child’s possible need.

Physical and behavioral indicators are often specific to the types of maltreatment. However, some environmental/circumstantial indicators of all types of maltreatment are:

- Family crises of unemployment, death, desertion, ill health.
- Severe personal problems, such as drug addiction, alcoholism, mental illness.
- Geographic and/or social isolation of a family.
- Child viewed as different or difficult to manage.
- Parent unaware of appropriate behavior for child at given age.
- Parental characteristics stemming from own childhood abuse.

Most persons are capable of abuse under conditions of excessive stress. Most abusers have been abuse victims.

Abusers’ personal characteristics may include:

- Poor self-concept.
- Passive marital relationship or marital difficulty.
- Fear of authority.
- Lack skills to meet own emotional needs.
- Belief of necessity for harsh physical discipline.
- Undue fear of spoiling child.
- Rigidity or compulsiveness.
- Acceptance of violence as a means of communication.
- Poor emotional control, impulsive.
- Emotional dependency on (non-abusive) spouse to the point that he/she will not intervene and will protect abusive spouse.
- Unreasonable expectations for child.

Neglect

Neglect is the consistent failure by a parent or caretaker to provide a child under 18 with appropriate support, attention and affection. Most reported neglect cases involve lack of proper food, shelter, clothing, medical care, educational opportunities, protection and supervision. Some neglect is a result of ignorance. Other forms of neglect involve deliberate maltreatment of the minor.

General Physical Indicators of Neglect

- Inadequate supervision; abandonment.
- Inadequate clothing for weather; otherwise inappropriately dressed.
- Poor hygiene; frequently dirty; scaly skin.
- Lack of necessary medical or dental care; untreated illness or injury.
- Inadequate nutrition; hungry.
- Lack of safe, warm, sanitary shelter.
- Engages in dangerous situations due to lack of supervision.
- Abnormal height/weight.
- Chronically tired and listless.
- Appears to be overworked or exploited.

General Behavioral Indicators of Neglect

- Failure to thrive among infants.
- Poor attendance, chronic lateness, poor learning.
- Begs for, collects or steals food.
- Coming early and staying late.
- Lethargic behavior; squinting.
- Use of drugs or alcohol.
- Engages in sexual misconduct.
- Runs away from home; attempts suicide.
- Extremely dependent or detached.
- Delinquent behavior, such as prostitution, vandalism or stealing.
- States frequent absence of parent or guardian.
- Assumes adult responsibilities at home.

Possible Environmental Circumstances of Neglect

- A large family with marital disruption.
- Long term parental illness.
- Indifferent parental attitude.

- Situational stress, such as unemployment.
- Lack of material resources.

Neglectful parents frequently were victims of the same type of parenting that they now provide for their children.

Personal Characteristics or Behaviors of Neglectful Parents

- Apathetic; frequently unkempt.
- Craving for excitement, change.
- Desire to be rid of the demands of the child.
- Lack of interest in the child's activities.
- Low acceptance of child's dependency needs.
- Unskilled as parents.
- Little planning or organization.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any non-accidental injury to a child under 18 caused by a parent or caretaker. It is the most commonly identified form of abuse. It occurs when someone inflicts bodily harm that leaves a physical injury. As most children participate in normal activities, they accumulate their share of cuts, scrapes and bruises. The outward signs of physical abuse are not typical of the normal "wear and tear" of childhood.

Physical Indicators of Physical Abuse - Bruises, Welts or Lacerations

- On the face, buttocks, back or thighs.
- In unusual patterns or distinctive shapes.
- In clusters.
- On an infant, especially on the face.
- In various stages of healing.
- Of gum tissue, caused by forced feeding.
- On external genitals.
- Human bite marks, especially when recurrent and appear to be adult size.

Burns

- Immersion burns, such as "stocking burns" or "glove burns" or doughnut-shaped burns on the buttocks.
- Cigarette-type burns, especially on the palms of hands, soles of feet or genitals.
- Friction or tether burns on the wrist, ankles or neck; possible rope burns from confinement.
- Dry burns, such as those caused by an iron, radiator grates or stove burners.

Fractures, Dislocations, Injuries

- Spiral fractures.
- Stiff, swollen, enlarged joints.
- Multiple fractures.
- Unexplained fractures or dislocations.
- Fractures in various stages of healing.
- Absence of hair.
- Hemorrhaging beneath scalp caused by pulling hair.
- Nasal or jaw fractures.
- Abdominal injuries.

Behavioral Indicators of Physical Abuse

The behavioral indicators of physical abuse are varied and are influenced by the severity and frequency of the abuse, the age of the child at onset, the nature of the child's relationship to the abuser, the availability of supportive persons and the child's genetic endowment for coping.

A child who is abused at an early age, frequently and severely will likely exhibit these behavioral characteristics:

- Unusually neat in eating habits.
- Overly compliant to avoid confrontation.
- Lacks curiosity; rarely exhibits enjoyment.
- Fearful of physical contact; may appear autistic.
- Excessively self-controlled; cries little.
- Lacks in development due to efforts all being directed to self-protection.

A child who is abused less severely and less often and is a little older at onset will likely exhibit some of these behavioral characteristics:

- Timid, easily frightened.
- Psychosomatic complaints.
- Craves affection; indiscriminate attachment to strangers.
- Continues to affirm love for abusing adult; protective of that adult.
- Experiences language delay.
- Difficulty in school in spite of normal ability.
- Sporadic temper tantrum.
- Assumes role of parent or is extremely immature in parent/child interactions.

A child who is mildly, infrequently or inconsistently abused at an older age will likely exhibit these characteristics:

- Hurts other children.
- Manipulative.
- Shows extreme aggressiveness; demanding; temper tantrums.
- Hyperactive; short attention span.
- Shows lag of development.
- May seem accident prone or clumsy.

Other overall behavioral indicators of physical abuse:

- Requests punishment; punishes other children.
- Afraid to go home; afraid of parents or other adults.
- Behavioral extremes.
- Reports injuries that seem unbelievable.
- Extremely aggressive or withdrawn.
- Uncomfortable when other children cry.
- Exhibits drastic behavior changes.
- Poor self-concept.
- Self-mutilating.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is often hard to detect. Emotional abuse is any chronic and persistent act by an adult that endangers the mental health or emotional development of a child. It is a series of acts or lack of action that deprives the child of needed love, affection, support and encouragement to grow into a healthy adult. It may be a pattern of behaviors belittling, humiliating or ridiculing a child.

Physical Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Eating disorders.
- Nightmares or restlessness.
- Wets the bed.
- Speech disorders.
- Fails to thrive.
- Exhibits developmental lags physical, emotional and/or mental growth).
- Hyperactive.

Behavioral Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Frequently bangs head; rocking behavior.
- Frequent thumb sucking at older age; biting.
- Poor peer relationships; seeks adult contact.
- Overly eager to please; unrealistic goal setting.
- Views abuse as being warranted; feels responsible for abuse.
- Exhibits noticeable changes in behavior.
- Depressed; excessively anxious; impatient.
- Exhibits aggressive or bizarre behavior; fits of screaming.
- Apathetic; passive; withdrawn.
- Exhibits inconsistent behavior at home and school.
- Runs away from home; attempts suicide.
- Low self-esteem; self-deprecation; lacks self-confidence.
- Sabotages his/her chances of success.
- Unable or unwilling to express feelings, needs or problems.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is exploitation of a child or adolescent for the sexual gratification of another person. Incest is sexual abuse within a family. Sexual abuse is relatively difficult to detect outside the clinical setting. Physical evidence of sexual abuse, if present at all, tends to be temporary. The physical trauma is not exposed. The victim is usually reluctant to reveal the abuse. There is a general lack of awareness of the prevalence of child sexual abuse and lack of confidence in detecting it.

Physical Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Pain or irritation of genitals.
- Bruises, swelling or bleeding in genital or anal regions.
- Sexually transmitted disease.
- Difficulty walking or sitting.
- Torn, bloody and/or stained underclothing.
- Is pregnant.
- Unexplained infections (sore throat, yeast or urinary infections).
- Vaginal or penile discharge.
- Wets bed.

Behavioral Indicators of Sexual Abuse

These behavioral indicators are frequently the best or only signs you may have.

- Behavioral extremes.
- Avoids dressing or changing clothes in front of others.
- Wears lots of clothing, especially to bed.
- Withdrawn; isolated; fearful; anxious; self-mutilating.
- Reluctance to participate in recreational activity.
- Regression (may appear mentally retarded).
- Inappropriate understanding of sex for age.
- Reluctance to be alone with a particular person.
- Pre-occupation with sexual organs of self, parents or other children.
- Persistent and inappropriate sex play with peers or toys.
- Fear of touch; self-conscious.
- Sexual promiscuity; seductive behavior.
- Obsessively clean.
- Psychosomatic complaints (headaches, backache).
- Either avoids or seeks out adults; poor peer relationships.
- Pseudo-mature.
- Delinquent or aggressive behavior.
- Engages in fantasy or infantile behavior.
- Exhibits extreme compliance or defiance.

The presence of any of these indicators should cause consideration of the possibility that sexual abuse has occurred. They are not, in and of themselves, conclusive evidence that the child has been victimized. Usually when a child says he or she has been abused, it is true.

Environmental Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Prolonged absence of one parent.
- Overcrowding of living conditions.
- Alcoholism.
- Social and/or geographical isolation.
- Inter-generational pattern of incest.
- Parental characteristics such as extreme protection of child, jealousy of child, refusing to allow child social contact, distrusting child, accusing child of sexual promiscuity.

Adapted From: For Their Sake by Becca Cowan Johnson and For Kids Inc. It Shouldn't Hurt To Be A Child, North Dakota Department of Human Services Identifying Possible Signs of Child Abuse, Ohio Extension Service.

Reporting Child Maltreatment

How to Report

Reports of suspicion of child maltreatment are made to county social services offices. Report by phone or in writing. The phone number is listed in the telephone directory. If an emergency situation exists or social services cannot be reached, report to local law enforcement officials. If unsure whether to make a report, call a child protection social worker to discuss the matter.

When reporting, the following information is needed: name, age, gender of the child and other family members, address, phone number, directions to the child's home, description of the maltreatment and current condition of the child. Be as specific and detailed as possible.

Within 48 hours of an oral report, a written statement may be requested. The statement may be submitted by:

- a. Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect (Form J) or a form available from the county social services office or
- b. Letter.

Who Reports?

It is the ethical obligation of all adults to report suspected child neglect and abuse—or the suspicion that a child may be in danger of being abused or neglected.

Mandatory reporters (required to report according to North Dakota law) Reporters mandated by state law are all paid Extension staff as well as most medical staff, school professionals, teachers and administrators, counselors, social workers, child care workers, law enforcement officers and clergy.

Mandated reporters who suspect child abuse or neglect and fail to report that suspicion can be charged with a class B misdemeanor.

Permissive reporters (allowed to report) Permissive reporters include anyone not mandated to report who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused or neglected.

What Happens to a Report?

A report of suspected abuse or neglect is only a request for an assessment of suspected child abuse or neglect. The assessment and decision of whether or not services are required for the protection and treatment of an

abused or neglected child are the responsibility of the child protection service social workers.

The report helps child protection workers to decide if there are services required for the protection and treatment of an abused or neglected child and what further steps may be necessary. Whenever possible, North Dakota Child Protection Services tries to maintain the integrity of the family.

North Dakota Child Abuse Information Index

When the assessment of a report calls for a decision that services are required, the reports are filed in the North Dakota Child Abuse Information Index. Reports remain on the Index for ten (10) years and are available only to persons who have authorization to see the reports for the purposes of the well-being of children.

Information in the Index is confidential. Unauthorized release of any information from the Index can result in being charged with a class B misdemeanor. Persons who are authorized to access confidential information used with the NDSU Extension Service Youth Protection Policy are designated Extension Service paid staff or Extension Service volunteer personnel committee members who work directly with the policy. All persons who have access to this information within the Extension Service shall sign a confidentiality statement (Form H).

Liability

Any person making a report in good faith is immune from criminal and civil liability. However, if mandated persons fail to report, they can be charged with a class B misdemeanor (up to \$500 fine and 30 days imprisonment). Any person who willfully makes a false report or provides false information, which causes a report to be made, can be charged with a class B misdemeanor, unless the false report is made to a law enforcement official, in which case the person who causes the false report to be made can be charged with a class A misdemeanor (up to \$1000 fine and one year imprisonment). A person who willfully makes a false report or willfully provides false information that causes a report to be made is also liable in a civil action for all damages suffered by the person reported.

Unauthorized Disclosure

Any person who permits or encourages the unauthorized disclosure of reports made or confidential information obtained can be charged with a class B misdemeanor.

Suspension

If the reported incident involves a program volunteer or paid staff member, the responsible Extension administrator shall, without exception, suspend the person from all activities involving the supervision of children. Reinstatement of a volunteer or paid staff person will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the responsible Extension administrator and the investigating agency.

Reporting Child Maltreatment Within Extension Youth Programs or Involving Paid Extension Staff

1. Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect is a professional and mandatory legal obligation for paid staff. In North Dakota, paid staff failing to report suspected child abuse or neglect can be charged with a class B misdemeanor.
 - a. Volunteers shall immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect to the county department of social services or law enforcement authorities. If suspected abuse occurs within or as part of an NDSU Extension Service youth program, a paid Extension employee shall be notified first in order to address program issues needed to keep all children safe.
 - b. If paid staff are suspect, a member of the Extension Service administrative staff shall be notified.
2. Extension paid staff will be familiar with and follow the reporting procedure prescribed by the local and North Dakota law as outlined in this policy.
3. The designated Extension staff person receiving a report is responsible for documenting the facts as reported, but not responsible for any investigation. Appropriate Extension administrators shall also be informed as soon as the information is received.

4. If the reported incident involves a program volunteer or paid staff member, the responsible Extension administrator shall, without exception, suspend the person from all activities involving the supervision of children. Reinstatement of a volunteer or paid staff person will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the responsible Extension administrator and the investigating agency.
5. Regardless of where or under what circumstances the alleged incident takes place, if a paid staff person is involved, it will be considered job related and affecting job performance.
6. Paid and volunteer staff must be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in the handling of information on suspected child abuse or neglect. Involved paid and volunteer staff are to discuss matters pertaining to abuse and suspected abuse only with the appropriate Extension representatives.
7. Paid and volunteer staff may not contact the parent(s) or guardian(s) of children if they are involved in an alleged child abuse incident without the permission of appropriate Extension administrators.

Please direct your questions to:

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Center for 4-H Youth Development
219 FLC, NDSU Dept. 7280
PO Box 6050
Fargo ND 58108-6050
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Visit North Dakota 4-H on-line at www.ndsu.edu/4h

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