

This is one of six Adult Member Support Modules. The modules are:

- Module 1 – Principles and Policies
- Module 2 – Screening
- Module 3 – Performance and Conduct Management
- **Module 4 – Girl Protection and Self-Harm**
- Module 5 - Girl Misconduct and Bullying
- Module 6 – Awards and Recognition

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Girl Protection and Self-Harm

1. Introduction

Girl Guides of Canada - Guides du Canada is proud to offer a safe and supportive environment where girls and women can feel accepted, valued and respected. When a girl feels she can trust someone, such as a Guider, she may disclose information that gives rise to suspicion of abuse. The Girl Protection procedures are intended to help a member know what to do if she suspects child abuse.

Purpose of the document

This document supports the Girl Guides of Canada Girl Protection Policy 01-17-01. (See Governance Policies under Policies and Procedures on Member Zone). It outlines:

- The forms of child abuse
- What to do if a girl comes to you with information or if you suspect a girl is being abused
- How to report suspected abuse
- How to address self-harm
- How to handle abuse allegations against members and non-member volunteers
- How to behave in an acceptable manner and protect yourself against allegations of abuse

Guiders should familiarize themselves with this document, preferably before concerns arise, so that they can deal with any situation calmly and with confidence. Not only are the effects of abuse on a child extremely painful, they are also worse if the child feels unheard in the process. Therefore it is essential that you know how to respond.

Who uses these procedures?

This document is for:

- Members working with girls
- Commissioners who oversee the management of members in their jurisdiction
- Girl protection advisers

Each Member's responsibility

As a member of Girl Guides of Canada you are responsible for:

- Reporting to the appropriate child protection agency or police when there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a girl is in need of protective intervention. This is not just a GGC policy, it is the law.
- Keeping all information received from a girl member in strictest confidence.
- Informing the national office of the incident(s) using appropriate Girl Protection Report form (see section 5, Reporting child abuse).” These are kept in strict confidence.
- Handling yourself in a manner that is not open to interpretation of abuse.
- Providing programming that offers girls a safe and supportive environment.



Further resources

Two fact sheets are also available for quick reference. Anyone who works with girls, including Pathfinders and Rangers who work in units, at camps and other events should review these fact sheets (see Appendices or look on Member Zone under Membership). These fact sheets should be printed and added to your program binders. The fact sheets are:

- **What to do if you suspect a girl member is being abused**
- **Protecting yourself from allegations of abuse**

Girl protection adviser

The role of this adviser is to provide information, support and training around child abuse and protection. A member may go to her adviser if she has questions or concerns about how to proceed in the case of suspected child abuse. With the exception of Ontario, each province has a designated girl protection adviser. Contact your provincial office for information on how to reach your adviser. (In Ontario, the Provincial Commissioner and the Executive Director handle all queries.)



2. Child abuse and self-harm

It is essential that Guiders have a full understanding of how to deal with a situation in which a girl requires protection. There are a range of situations that include abuse and self-harm.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse can be defined in many forms such as physical, sexual or emotional ill-treatment and/or neglect, which result in harm to a child's health, development or dignity. Abuse of children and youth most commonly appears as a misuse of power and/or breach of trust.

What are the forms of child abuse?

In general, there are four major types of child abuse, outlined as follows.

Neglect:

Neglect is chronic inattention to the basic emotional and physical needs of a child, such as clothing, shelter, nutrition, education, hygiene, and/or medical care. Although this form appears to be less urgent than other forms of abuse, neglect should not be ignored as it can have long-term psychological effects.

Emotional

Emotional abuse is the chronic attack on a child's self-esteem, which can lead to the destruction of the child's self-image. Name calling, threatening, ridiculing, berating, intimidating, isolating or ignoring the child's needs are examples of emotional abuse. Setting an unreasonably high performance goal in athletics or academics, and belittling a girl when she does not achieve this level may also be considered emotional abuse.

Physical

Physical abuse is the use of physical force, resulting in non-accidental injury. This includes beating, slapping, hitting, pushing, shaking and burning. The result of physical abuse includes but is not limited to, bruises, burns, welts, fractures dislocations and black eyes. Physical abuse is a misuse of power and a loss of control by the adult.

Sexual

Sexual abuse is the misuse of power by someone over the child, for the purposes of exploiting the child for sexual gratification. It includes sexual touching, exposing a child to sexual materials, intercourse, incest and exploiting a child for pornography or prostitution. Sexual activity between children may constitute sexual abuse if the difference in ages between them allows the older and more powerful child to take sexual advantage of the younger.

What is self-harm?

From time to time, you may become aware of mental health issues affecting a girl you are working with. This could be evidenced in many ways, including self-harm behaviours such as cutting or talk of suicide, inappropriate sexualized behaviour, behaviours consistent with eating disorders, etc. It is only natural that you may be troubled and confused about how to deal with these situations.

It is important to remember two basic principles:



- First, the girl is a part of a family and her parents or guardians are to be considered as the most appropriate people to deal with these issues unless there is a risk that she is in need of protection.
- Second, it is important to realize that you are not an expert in dealing with mental health issues nor is it your role to deal with them. However, you still have a role to play in assisting and protecting girls in these situations.

We have a moral and ethical responsibility to talk to the parents or guardians of girls who are doing something out of the norm in terms of behaviour. If you are concerned that a girl may have a mental health issue, contact her parents or guardians and discuss the details of your concerns. It is to be assumed that the parents or guardians will take the correct and appropriate action.

If parents or guardians deny there is an issue or fail to ensure the girl receives help, then it may be necessary to involve a child protection agency.

Legal definition of a child

The age of majority in each province is in the chart below. The age at which a child is protected by the legal system varies from province to province. Contact your provincial child protection agencies for more information.

Province or territory	Age of majority
Newfoundland and Labrador	19
Prince Edward Island	18
Nova Scotia	19
New Brunswick	19
Quebec	18
Ontario	18
Manitoba	18
Saskatchewan	18
Alberta	18
British Columbia	19
Yukon	19
Northwest Territories	19
Nunavut	19



3. Duty to report child abuse

Adult members

Any adult member who suspects that a girl may be at risk of or may have suffered from neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse MUST report the matter to the local child protection agency or police service. This is a legal requirement and GGC requires that all members adhere to this law. As well, the member must complete a Girl Protection Report (GP.01 or GP.02) and submit it to the national office.

Girl members

Many of our girl members work in units and at camps and may become aware of children who may require intervention because of a suspicion of abuse. These cases must be reported. These young women are welcome to follow adult procedures and report the suspected abuse themselves. However, if they find the experience too daunting, they may ask a trusted Guider for help in reporting the situation. A Guider who is approached by a younger member who has concerns about the abuse of a girl member MUST help her to report the situation and keep the information in confidence.



4. Recognizing and responding to child abuse

Recognizing child abuse

- **A girl who is neglected** may be frequently dirty or not bathed; may not be wear clothing suitable for the weather; may be always hungry.
- **A girl who is emotionally abused** may show signs of serious anxiety, self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, or delays in emotional or mental development.
- **A girl who is physically abused** may have repeated burns, bruises or welts that cannot be explained and which a girl would not generally get from play or movement.
- **A girl who is sexually abused** may have inappropriate knowledge of sexual acts beyond her developmental age, may exhibit self-destructive behaviour, or may have bruises or other injuries not consistent with play.

How to respond to disclosure by a girl

If a girl comes to you with information or if you suspect a girl is being abused:

1. Listen openly and calmly.
2. Let her know you believe her – state ‘I believe you.’
3. Reassure the girl. Say ‘I’m glad you’re telling me this,’ and/or ‘It’s okay to share this with me.’
4. Do not question the girl – this is the job of skilled professionals and the proper authorities.
5. Let the girl know that you must share this information with someone who can help.
6. Write down the facts as the girl presents them as soon after the conversation as possible. These notes are for reference only in case you need to recall the girl’s statement. They must be kept secure and confidential and not shown to anyone.
7. Consult your provincial girl protection adviser if you are in any doubt about how to proceed or would like support through this.
8. **Report immediately** to the local child protection agency or police as outlined in the next section.
9. **Do not conduct an investigation.**
10. Keep the name of the girl and the accused confidential.

If an adult volunteer or girl member comes to an adult member with concerns or information about the possibility of child abuse the adult member must support her in her reports to authorities. The adult member must report to GGC as well, explaining how she was given this information.



5. Reporting child abuse

The potential for abuse exists where an adult is in a position of authority and trust with a child. At the same time, unfounded allegations can have a grievous negative effect on the adult involved. In any case, if you suspect abuse of a girl by an adult, you must report it to child protection authorities as well as to GGC.

Reporting to authorities

Adults to whom the allegation is reported, who suspect abuse or who observe an abusive situation must take the following steps to report to the authorities:

- Do not attempt to verify or investigate the situation.
- Write down facts as presented and/or observed.
- **Report immediately** to the local child protection agency or police.
- Keep the name of the girl and the accused in confidence as well as the nature and details of the allegation.
- Consult your provincial girl protection adviser if you are in any doubt about how to proceed.

Do not conduct any investigation to substantiate the allegations. Responsibility for conducting the investigation lies with the child protection authorities and the police. These agencies have the legal authority to act and the training to handle very sensitive and sometimes volatile situations.

Reporting to GGC

- a) If the suspected abuse **does not** involve an adult member or non-member volunteer:
 - follow the procedures above to report to authorities
 - submit a copy of the GP.01 form to the national office to notify them that a report has been made
- b) If the suspected abuse **does** involve an adult member or non-member volunteer:
 - follow the procedures outlined above to report to the authorities using the GP.01 form
 - submit a copy of the GP.02 form to the national office

Documentation

Reports to GGC are made using these two forms.

Form	Purpose
Girl Protection Report (GP.01)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To notify GGC that an allegation of child abuse has been reported to the authorities. <p>(Personal notes can also be made to assist at a later date. These are not sent to national but retained for later reference.)</p>
Girl Protection Report for Incidents Involving Adults Associated with GGC (GP.02)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To report to GGC an allegation of abuse towards a child by an adult member or adult associated with GGC. Completed in addition to the GP.01



6. Allegations of misconduct by adults associated with GGC

Occasionally, concerns about the actions of adult members or non-member volunteers towards girls will arise. While not illegal and requiring the intervention of the authorities, they are still harmful to girl members and need to be addressed and dealt with appropriately. Such situations might include: excessive use of inappropriate language where the adult involved resists all requests to cease; serious and ongoing outbursts of temper expressed vocally or physically; protracted age-inappropriate relationships and conversations between adult and girl member(s) pursued during or outside normal Guiding activities.

Reporting allegations of misconduct

These actions raise a warning flag in the minds of others; furthermore, they constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct. If you have reason to suspect that misconduct is occurring:

- Complete a GP.02 and submit to the national office.
- Contact your District Commissioner or ACL

The national office will forward copies of all such reports to the relevant Provincial Commissioner for investigation. The Provincial Commissioner will contact the reporting Guider to confirm receipt of the form, but to maintain confidentiality, will not tell her what action, if any, has been taken. Upon completion of her investigation, the Commissioner will submit a report to national office, where it will be added to the GP.02 form and placed in GGC's permanent records file.

As an organization, our obligations are to ensure that:

- GGC takes every appropriate step to protect the girls involved in Guiding from abuse by any member or adult associated with GGC.
- The process of responding to allegations of abuse made against any member or volunteer is fair to all parties concerned.
- Any adults involved with GGC against whom an allegation has been made is aware of the procedure which will be followed in dealing with the allegation.
- Confidentiality is maintained throughout the process.
- The national office will take the appropriate internal steps to respond to the situation.

Documentation

Report to GGC using this form. This form is for allegations of misconduct that may not require the intervention by the authorities.

Form	Purpose
Girl Protection Report for Incidents Involving Adults Associated with GGC (GP.02)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To report to GGC an allegation of misconduct towards a child by an adult member or adult associated with GGC.



7. Corrective action to deal with allegations of adult misconduct

Allegations of misconduct or child abuse are serious and warrant immediate action by Girl Guides of Canada. While an allegation does not presume guilt, the organization must take appropriate action and suspend an individual's GGC activities. While under suspension, an individual can have no contact with girl members of Girl Guides of Canada. Non-member volunteers cannot participate in any GGC sanctioned activities.

Investigative suspension of appointments or membership for allegations of misconduct or abuse

This chart outlines the corrective action during an investigation when allegations of misconduct are made.

	Allegation of misconduct that is against Code but not reportable to authorities	Allegation of abuse that must be reported to authorities
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appointments are suspended ▪ No contact with girl members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Membership is suspended ▪ No contact with girl members ▪ Cannot participate in Guiding events and activities ▪ Cannot wear uniform
Non-members and other adults associated with GGC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship suspended ▪ No contact with girl members ▪ Cannot participate in Guiding activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship suspended ▪ No contact with girl members ▪ Cannot participate in Guiding activities

See Module 3: Performance and Conduct Management for procedures for handling suspensions.

Responsibilities in dealing with allegations of misconduct or abuse

National office

- When the GP.02 is received, a copy of the GP.02 form is sent to the Provincial Commissioner for immediate action.
- The Provincial Commissioner will confirm with the national office that she has taken action.
- Staff will check with the Provincial Commissioner to ensure action has been taken.



Provincial Commissioner

- Starts the investigation process as soon as she is notified of an allegation of adult misconduct towards a child or child abuse (by the receipt of the GP.02 or from a direct report from within her province).
- Oversees the process to ensure appropriate follow-up with the adult in question.
- Consults with the girl protection adviser and they investigate the allegation together.
- Regularly updates the national office of the status of the situation.
- Follows the steps outlined in Module 3: Performance and Conduct Management. In addition:
 - When advising the individual of the allegation and her suspension pending investigation, explains that GGC will require written notification of the outcome of the investigation before the suspension can be removed.
 - Assures the individual that this does not presume guilt; however, the conditions of the suspension must be followed.
 - Notifies Area Commissioner/Administrative Community Leader of the suspension. Does not provide details. States only that the individual is temporarily suspended and the terms of the suspension. Reminds AC/ACL of the need for utmost confidentiality.
 - Contacts the Guider submitting the report to confirm its receipt, but does not discuss what action is anticipated.

Provincial girl protection adviser

- Provides confidential advice if requested by the adult reporting the situation.
- Assists the Provincial Commissioner in her investigation of the report.

Chief Commissioner, Girl Guides of Canada

- Makes final decision on termination of membership when requested by the Provincial Commissioner.
- Informs the member and Provincial Commissioner.



8. Resources and links

The following resource list is presented for information purposes only to assist Guiders who wish to look further into the various aspects of girl protection. Girl Guides of Canada has no relationship with any of the individuals, organizations or sites listed here, nor does it guarantee the accuracy of the information.

Child abuse

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/index-eng.php>

National Clearing House on Family Violence: Canada's resource centre for information on violence within relationships

<http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/J2-295-2002E.pdf>

Dept. of Justice Canada, Child Abuse fact sheet. For more resource material contact your local Children's Aid, Child Youth and Family Services, community policing, or your girl protection adviser

Mental health issues

http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content_page.asp?cid=3-1036&lang=1

Canadian Mental Health Association - Youth and Self Injury

www.kidsmentalhealth.ca

Kids Mental Health is an Ontario agency. However, their website also includes information on mental health disorders and contributing factors.

Girl Guides of Canada Child Protection Fact Sheets (See Appendix)

- Protecting yourself from allegations of abuse
- What to do if you suspect a girl member is being abuse



9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Protecting yourself from allegations of abuse

It is essential that your relationship with the girls and women you spend time with is based on mutual trust and respect. Your behaviour must demonstrate good personal judgment through both your actions and your words. You have a responsibility to help each girl you interact with feel good about her relationship with you and to express your feelings about her in positive ways.

Touching:

- 'Good touching' is extremely important to our girls and should be encouraged. Being touched in positive and appropriate ways means "I like you" and "You belong here".
- Comfort a girl by extending your arm around her shoulder and giving a 'side-ways hug'.
- Touching should be done only on areas of the body that are considered 'safe' or 'neutral'. These include shoulders, back and head (i.e. tousling of hair). Do not touch anywhere that is 'private'.
- Always respect the personal space of the girl. Some girls are uncomfortable with any touch. Do not touch a girl that does not want to be touched; or do not touch anywhere that she does not want to be touched. Be alert to her verbal and non-verbal cues.

Showing acceptance:

- Show acceptance of all your girls through verbal encouragement and praise.
- Comment on their human qualities, rather than their clothing, appearance or possessions.
- Allow all your girls full opportunities to participate in all activities to the best of their abilities.

Being alone with a girl:

- Avoid any situation (including driving or travelling) where you are alone with one girl.
- When an ill or injured girl needs to be examined, maintain her privacy but examine her with another Guider present.
- Do not remove clothing from an injured girl unless essential for her well-being. This should be done by a health professional if at all possible.
- When a girl wishes to speak to you privately move away from others but stay within view of another adult.

Online communication:

- Avoid online (texting, email etc.) one-on-one communication with any girl.
- Parents/guardians should be copied in any communication with girls Guide age and younger; and with their knowledge for girls Pathfinder age and older. Avoid communication using instant messaging, Facebook or other online social networks
- Do not post online photos, tag girls in photos or share girls' names or locations.

Role modeling:

- Remember that you are a role model for the girls you work with and your behaviour is seen as the acceptable standard for adult behaviour.
- It is more important to be respected as an adult than to try to appear 'cool'.
- Do not appear inappropriately clothed around the girls. If you are changing at camp or at activities such as swimming, use proper discretion in your behaviour.
- In general, be cautious in any conversation with the girls around the topic of sex. Although these conversations may be appropriate in the right situation (e.g. program activities), avoid joking/teasing discussions about sexual behaviour. It is never appropriate to discuss your own sexual history or experiences.
- Language must be appropriate and 'clean'. Swearing or using sexual terms is not acceptable.

Always behave in a manner that someone watching from a distance would view as appropriate. Listen to your inner voice.

For more information, please see the Adult Member Support Procedures, Module 4: Girl Protection and Self-Harm, or contact your Provincial Girl protection adviser or email membership@girlguides.ca



Appendix 2: What to do if you suspect a girl member is being abused

Legal responsibility:

You have a legal responsibility to notify your local child protection agency or the police when you suspect that a child is in need of protection.

Girl protection adviser:

Your provincial girl protection adviser can provide advice on how to proceed or to discuss your concerns. Her name and contact information is available from your provincial office. Contact information for the provincial offices is found on www.girlguides.ca and in the Appendices of Safe Guide.

If a girl comes to you with information:

- ***Believe the girl***

It is unusual for a child to imagine/make up stories of abuse.

Your relationship has allowed for this girl to open up to you – believe her.

- ***Listen openly and calmly***

Do not judge, voice opinions or show emotion other than trust and support.

Talk to the girl in an area that allows for private conversation but is within view of another Guider.

- ***Reassure the girl***

Let her know that you believe and trust her.

Do not promise that you will 'keep her secret'.

Assure her that you will try to get her the right kind of help.

Let her know that you must share the information with someone in order to get her help.

- ***Write down the facts***

Write your notes as soon as possible, using the girl's own words.

Make your notes as detailed as possible.

Do not ask questions or try to clarify the details.

- ***Report to your local child protection agency or the police***

Reporting is to be done within 24 hours.

Confidentiality is essential. Do not discuss the situation with anyone else. Provide your fellow Guiders with only the information they require to understand the situation and support the girl in the unit.

Complete and submit the GP.01 Form. (If it involves an adult member, complete the GP.02 as well).

- ***Support***

Reporting abuse is never easy, even when you know it is necessary.

Remember that your girl protection adviser is available to provide support for you and other Guiders as requested.

Assisting a girl member in reporting potential abuse

If a girl member becomes aware of a situation and suspects that a child may be in need of protection from potential abuse, it must be reported. She can report the suspected abuse herself. However, she may approach a Guider for assistance. The Guider **MUST** help her to report the situation and keep the information in confidence.

From the Adult Member Support Procedures, Module 4: Girl Protection and Self-Harm. Contact your provincial girl protection adviser or membership@girlguides.ca for more information.

