



## **Abuse/Molestation Risk Management Program**

The Melrose Recreation Department has adopted and implemented the following Abuse/Molestation Risk Management Program:

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures to prevent abuse and molestation of children and vulnerable adults by municipal employees or volunteers performing work for the Melrose Recreation Department. The Recreation Department recognizes that children and vulnerable adults are particularly vulnerable to abuse and molestation, and that it is our responsibility to ensure their safety and well-being while under our supervision. This policy is designed to help protect children and vulnerable adults from forms of abuse or molestation that may occur during their participation in Recreation Department programs and activities, whether it is perpetrated by employees, volunteers, contractors, or members of the public. By establishing clear guidelines for the prevention, identification, and reporting of abuse and molestation, we aim to create a safe and secure environment for all individuals who participate in our programs and activities.

### **Scope:**

This policy applies to all municipal employees working in the Recreation Department, including full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees, as well as volunteers, contractors, and any other individuals who work in our programs and activities. The policy applies to all Recreation Department programs and activities, whether they are held on municipal property or on private property. This policy also applies to all forms of abuse and molestation, including physical, emotional, sexual, and neglectful behavior. It is the responsibility of all Recreation Department employees, volunteers, and contractors to comply with this policy and to report any suspected abuse or molestation immediately to their supervisor or the designated departmental liaison officer. Failure to comply with this policy or to report suspected abuse or molestation may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. By adhering to this policy, we can create a safe and secure environment for all individuals who participate in Recreation Department programs and activities.

### **CORI/SORI Background Checks**

All employees (including volunteers) of the Recreation Department must have both a CORI (MA Criminal Offenders Record Information) and SORI (MA Sex Offender Registry Information) background check on file before they can work with children. The City of Melrose has a certified CORI/SORI administrator(s) to collect and verify the information on the CORI /SORI Acknowledgment Forms, conduct the checks, interpret the results, make a decision on the suitability of the staff member to work with youth, provide required notification to any applicant prior to an adverse decision, and disqualify any unfit staff members.

### **Code of Conduct**

All employees working in the Recreation Department will be expected to adhere to a code of conduct that prohibits abusive or inappropriate behavior towards children and vulnerable adults. This code of conduct will include guidelines for appropriate physical contact, appropriate communication, and appropriate behavior in one-on-one settings. By adhering to this code of conduct, employees can help ensure that all participants Recreation Department programs and activities are treated with respect and dignity, and that the risk of abuse or molestation is minimized.

### **Prohibition of One-on-One Contact:**

To minimize the risk of abuse or molestation, all employees are prohibited from being alone with a child or vulnerable adult whenever possible. When interacting with children or vulnerable adults, employees should aim to have at least 2 other employees with them. If this is not possible, employees should ensure that their interactions with children or vulnerable adults are conducted in a public area or within sight of other adults.

Exceptions to this rule may be made in limited circumstances, such as medical emergencies or when conducting confidential conversations with a child or vulnerable adult. In such cases, employees should notify the reason for the one-on-one interaction and inform their supervisor or the designated departmental liaison officer as soon as possible.

By avoiding one-on-one interactions with children and vulnerable adults, employees can help reduce the risk of abuse or molestation, as well as ensure that their interactions with these individuals are transparent and open to observation by others.

### **Employee Conduct:**

All municipal employees working in the Recreation Department are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and appropriate manner at all times. This includes refraining from behavior that may be considered abusive or molestation toward children, vulnerable adults, or any other individual participating in Recreation Department programs and activities. Examples of prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to:

- Engaging in any form of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or molestation;
- Making inappropriate comments or gestures toward children, vulnerable adults, or any other individual;
- Engaging in any behavior that could be perceived as grooming or attempting to establish a relationship with a child or vulnerable adult for the purpose of engaging in abusive or molestation behavior;
- Engaging in any behavior that creates a power differential between the employee and a child or vulnerable adult, such as requesting or accepting personal favors, gifts, or money from a child or vulnerable adult;
- Failing to report suspected abuse or molestation to a supervisor or the designated departmental liaison officer.
- Any employee who engages in behavior that violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The Recreation Department takes allegations of abuse or molestation very seriously and will not tolerate any behavior that puts individuals at risk of harm.

It is the responsibility of all employees to report suspected abuse or molestation immediately to their supervisor or the designated departmental liaison officer. Failure to report suspected abuse or molestation may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. By adhering to this policy and conducting themselves in a professional and appropriate manner, employees can help ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals who participate in Parks and Recreation Department programs and activities.

### **Reporting Procedures:**

Any employee who observes or suspects abuse or molestation of a child or vulnerable adult by a colleague, contractor, volunteer or member of the public must immediately report the incident to their immediate supervisor or to the designated departmental liaison officer.

- The report should include as much information as possible regarding the incident, including the date, time, location, and names of any witnesses or individuals involved.
- If the immediate supervisor is the alleged perpetrator, the employee should report the incident to the next level of supervision, or to the departmental liaison officer.
- Employees who receive a report of abuse or molestation from a member of the public should immediately report the incident to their immediate supervisor or the departmental liaison officer.
- All reports of abuse or molestation will be treated confidentially and will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The department will take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and well-being of the victim and any other individuals involved.
- If the abuse or molestation involves a criminal act, the department will immediately contact the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- Any employee who knowingly makes a false report of abuse or molestation may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees who report suspected abuse or molestation will be protected from retaliation. Any form of retaliation against an employee who reports suspected abuse or molestation will be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **Policies to Protect Against Misconduct**

- All forms of abuse including sexual, physical, emotional, harassment, bullying, and hazing are prohibited.
- Prohibited sexual abuse physical acts include genital contact whether or not either party is clothed; fondling of a participant's breast or buttocks; sexual penetration; sexual assault, exchange of a reward in sport for sexual favors; lingering or repeated embrace that goes beyond acceptable physical touch; tickling, wrestling, or massage; and continued physical contact that makes a participant uncomfortable.
- Prohibited sexual abuse verbal acts include making sexually oriented comments, jokes and innuendo; staff member discussing his or her sex life with participant; asking about a participant's sex life; requesting or sending a nude or partial dress photo; exposing participants to pornographic material; voyeurism; and sexting with a participant.

- Any type of grooming behavior is prohibited.
- Prohibited forms of physical abuse include punching, beating, biting, striking, choking, slapping, or intentionally hitting a participant with objects or sports equipment; providing alcohol to a participant under legal drinking age; providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any participant; encouraging or permitting a participant to return to play after injury or sickness prematurely without clearance of a medical professional; prescribing dieting or other weight control methods for humiliation purposes; isolating a participant in a confined space; forcing participant to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose; withholding, or denying adequate hydration, nutrition medical attention, or sleep.
- Prohibited emotional abuse includes a pattern of verbally attacking a participant personally such as calling them worthless, fat or disgusting; physically aggressive behaviors such as throwing or hitting objects; and ignoring a participant for extended periods of time or excluding them from practice.
- Bullying includes an intentional, persistent, or repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating (e.g., staff not preventing) physical, nonphysical, or cyber bullying behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation, physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish, or isolate another person emotionally, physically, or sexually. It is often not the staff, but instead, other participants who are the perpetrators of bullying. However, it is a violation if the staff member knows or should have known of the bullying behavior but takes no action to intervene on behalf of the targeted participants.
- Prohibited hazing includes any contact which is intimidating, humiliating, offensive, or physically harmful. Hazing typically is an activity that serves as a condition for joining a team of being socially accepted by team members.
- “Two deep leadership” is required where two adults (e.g. any combination of staff or parents) should be present at all times so that a minor participant can't be isolated with a single unrelated adult, except in the case of an emergency.
- In special situations involving an adult such as car travel, overnight travel, locker rooms/changing areas, individual coach meetings, and individual training sessions, minors should always have another child buddy with them or a second adult within an observable and interruptible distance.
- All electronic communications including email, texting, social media, etc. between the staff member and a minor participant should be limited strictly to the legitimate activities of the organization. A parent/guardian of minor or another staff member should be copied on all such communications.
- Staff and minor participants should not connect on social media outside of the organization's official social media accounts.
- Any overnight travel exposure should prohibit adults spending the night in the same room as an unrelated minor participant; require grouping of participants of the same sex and age group in rooms; and provide adequate oversight with a same-sex chaperone for each group.
- Drop off/pick up of athletes by staff should be strongly discouraged because of the difficulty in limiting one-one contact.

**Training:**

All employees working for the Recreation Department will receive training on recognizing and preventing abuse and molestation of children and vulnerable adults. The training will include information on signs of abuse, reporting procedures, and best practices for preventing abuse.

**Additional Resource**

If additional information is needed on administering a child abuse protection program including definitions, protective policies, screening, reporting, and after reporting to law enforcement, see:

[Safe Sport Child Abuse and Other Misconduct Risk Management Plan for Non-NGB Organizations](#)