



ABUSE POLICY (INDIVIDUALS)

Definitions

1. The following terms have these meanings in this Policy:
 - a) “*Abuse*” – abuse of Vulnerable Individuals as described in this Policy.
 - b) “*Individuals*” – all categories of participants within Equestrian Canada (EC) who are in good standing, including organizations, as well as all persons and organizations engaged in activities with or employed by EC, including but not limited to: athletes, coaches, officials, competition managers, parents/guardians of athletes, directors, officers, team managers, team members, medical and paramedical personnel, administrators and employees (including contract personnel).
 - c) “*Vulnerable Individuals*” – includes minors (people under the age of 18 years old) and Vulnerable Adults (people who, because of age, disability or other circumstance, are in a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by people in positions of trust or authority).

Purpose

2. EC is committed to a sport environment free from abuse. The purpose of this Policy is to stress the importance of that commitment by educating Individuals about abuse, outlining how EC will work to prevent abuse, and how abuse or suspected abuse can be reported to and addressed by EC.

Zero Tolerance Statement

3. EC has zero tolerance for any type of abuse of Individuals. Individuals are required to report instances of abuse or suspected abuse to EC to be immediately addressed under the terms of the applicable policy.

Education – What is Abuse

4. Vulnerable Individuals can be abused in different forms. The following descriptions have been modified and adapted from Ecclesiastical’s *Guidelines for Developing a Safety & Protection Policy for Children / Youth / Vulnerable Adults*¹:

Abuse of Minors

5. “Child abuse” refers to the violence, mistreatment, or neglect that a child or adolescent may experience while in the care of someone they depend on or trust. There are many different forms of abuse and a child may be subjected to more than one form:
 - a) **Physical abuse** involves single or repeated instances of deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at risk of being injured. Physical abuse includes beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking, or assaulting a child with a weapon. It also includes holding a child under water, or any other dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint.
 - b) **Sexual abuse** and exploitation involves using a child for sexual purposes. Examples of child sexual abuse include fondling, inviting a child to touch or be touched sexually, intercourse, rape, incest, sodomy, exhibitionism, or involving a child in prostitution or pornography.
 - c) **Neglect** is often chronic, and it usually involves repeated incidents. It involves failing to provide what a child needs for his or her physical, psychological, or emotional development

and wellbeing. For example, neglect includes failing to provide a dependent child with food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care, or protection from harm.

- d) **Emotional abuse** involves harming a child’s sense of self-worth. It includes acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk of, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental health problems. For example, emotional abuse may include aggressive verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation, exploitation, or routinely making unreasonable demands. It also includes exposing the child to violence.
6. An abuser may use a number of different tactics to gain access to children, exert power and control over them, and prevent them from telling anyone about the abuse or seeking support. The abuse may happen once or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over a period of months or years. The abuse may change form over time.
7. Abuse of children or youth in sport can include emotional maltreatment, neglect, and physical maltreatment.
- a) **Emotional Maltreatment** – a coach’s failure to provide a developmentally-appropriate and supportive environment. Emotional maltreatment is at the foundation of all other forms of maltreatment (sexual, physical, and neglect). In sports, this conduct has the potential to cause emotional or psychological harm to an athlete when it is persistent, pervasive or patterned acts (i.e. yelling at an athlete once does not constitute maltreatment). Examples of emotional maltreatment include:
- i. refusal to recognize an athlete’s worth or the legitimacy of an athlete’s needs (including complaints of injury/pain, thirst, or feeling unwell);
 - ii. creating a culture of fear, or threatening, bullying, or frightening an athlete;
 - iii. frequent name-calling or sarcasm that continually “beats down” an athlete’s self-esteem;
 - iv. embarrassing or humiliating an athlete in front of peers;
 - v. excluding or isolating an athlete from the group;
 - vi. intentionally withholding attention;
 - vii. encouraging an athlete to engage in destructive and antisocial behaviour, reinforcing deviance, or impairing an athlete’s ability to behave in socially appropriate ways;
 - viii. over-pressuring, whereby the coach imposes extreme pressure upon the athlete to behave and achieve in ways that are far beyond the athlete’s capabilities;
 - ix. verbally attacking an athlete personally (e.g. belittling them or calling them worthless, lazy, useless, fat, or disgusting);
 - x. routinely or arbitrarily excluding athletes from practice; and,
 - xi. throwing sports equipment at, or in the presence of, athletes.
- b) **Neglect** – acts of omission (i.e. the coach should act to protect health/wellbeing of an athlete but does not). Examples of neglect include:
- i. isolating an athlete with no supervision for an extended period of time;
 - ii. withholding, recommending against, or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep;
 - iii. ignoring an injury; and,
 - iv. knowing about the abuse of an athlete but failing to report it.

- c) **Physical Maltreatment** – involves contact or non-contact behaviour that can cause physical harm to an athlete. It also includes any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct (e.g. child abuse, child neglect, and assault). Almost all sport involves strenuous physical activity. Athletes regularly push themselves to the point of exhaustion. However, any activity that physically harms an athlete – such as extreme disciplinary actions or punishment – is unacceptable. Physical maltreatment can extend to seemingly unrelated areas including inadequate recovery times for injuries and restricted diet. Examples of physical maltreatment include:
- i. punching, beating, biting, striking, choking, or slapping an athlete;
 - ii. intentionally hitting an athlete with objects or sporting equipment;
 - iii. providing alcohol to an athlete under the legal drinking age;
 - iv. providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to any athlete;
 - v. encouraging or permitting an athlete to return to play prematurely or without the clearance of a medical professional following a serious injury (e.g. a concussion);
 - vi. prescribed dieting or other weight-control methods without regard for the nutritional wellbeing and health of an athlete;
 - vii. forcing an athlete to assume a painful stance or position for no athletic purpose, or excessive repetition of a skill to the point of injury; and,
 - viii. using excessive exercise as punishment.
- d) **Grooming** – a slow, gradual, and escalating process of building comfort and trust with an athlete and/or their parents/guardian that is often very difficult to recognize. The process allows for inappropriate conduct to become normalized. It is often preceded by building confidence and comfort that an individual can be trusted with the care of the athlete. Examples of grooming include:
- i. nudity or exposure of genitals in the presence of an athlete;
 - ii. sexually oriented conversation or discussions about personal sexual activities;
 - iii. excessive discussions about a coach’s personal life outside of coaching (i.e. family, work, medical challenges);
 - iv. spending time with an individual athlete and/or their family outside of team activities;
 - v. excessive gift-giving to an individual athlete;
 - vi. socially isolating an athlete;
 - vii. restricting an athlete’s privacy;
 - viii. providing drugs, cannabis, alcohol, or tobacco to an athlete;
 - ix. becoming overly-involved in an athlete’s personal life;
 - x. making sexual or discriminatory jokes or comments to an athlete;
 - xi. displaying material of a sexual nature in the presence of an athlete;
 - xii. mocking or threatening an athlete; and,
 - xiii. putting a coach’s needs above needs of an athlete and/or going to an athlete to have a coach’s needs met.
8. Importantly, emotional and physical maltreatment does not include professionally accepted coaching methods (per the National Coaching Certification Program) of skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, discipline, or improving athletic performance.
9. Potential warning signs of abuse of minors can include^{2, 3}:

- a) recurrent unexplained injuries;
- b) alert behaviour (i.e. the minor seems to always be expecting something bad to happen);
- c) often wears clothing that covers up their skin, even in warm weather;
- d) situations where the minor startles easily, shies away from touch, or shows other skittish behaviour;
- e) situations where the minor constantly seems fearful or anxious about doing something wrong;
- f) situations where the minor is withdrawn from peers and adults;
- g) behaviour which fluctuates between extremes (e.g. extremely cooperative or extremely demanding);
- h) minors acting either inappropriately beyond their age (like an adult; taking care of other children) or inappropriately younger than their age (like an infant; throwing tantrums);
- i) acting out in an inappropriate sexual way with toys or objects;
- j) using new adult words for body parts with no obvious source;
- k) self-harm (e.g. cutting, burning, or other harmful activities); and,
- l) not wanting to be alone with a particular child or young person.

Vulnerable Adult Abuse

10. Although individuals may be abused at virtually any life stage – childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, or old age – the nature and consequences of abuse may differ depending on an individual’s situation, disability, or circumstance.
11. The following description of Vulnerable Adult Abuse has been modified and adapted from Ecclesiastical’s *Guidelines for Developing a Safety & Protection Policy for Children / Youth / Vulnerable Adults*¹.
12. “Vulnerable Adult Abuse” is often described as a misuse of power and a violation of trust. Abusers may use a number of different tactics to exert power and control over their victims. Abuse may happen once or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over months or years. The abuse may take many different forms, which may change over time:

(a) Psychological abuse includes attempts to dehumanize or intimidate Vulnerable Adults. Any verbal or non-verbal act that reduces their sense of self-worth or dignity and threatens their psychological and emotional integrity is abuse. This type of abuse may include:

- i. threatening to use violence;
- ii. threatening to abandon them;
- iii. intentionally frightening them;
- iv. making them fear that they will not receive the food or care they need;
- v. lying to them; and,
- vi. failing to check allegations of abuse against them.

(b) Financial abuse encompasses financial manipulation or exploitation, including theft, fraud, forgery, or extortion. It includes using a vulnerable adult’s money or property in a dishonest manner, or failing to use a vulnerable adult’s assets for their welfare. Abuse occurs any time someone acts without consent in a way that financially or personally benefits one person at the expense of another. This type of abuse against a vulnerable adult may include:

- i. stealing their money or other possessions;
- ii. wrongfully using a Power of Attorney; and,



iii. failing to pay back borrowed money when asked.

(c) Physical abuse includes any act of violence – whether or not it results in physical injury. Intentionally inflicting pain or injury that results in either bodily harm or mental distress is abuse. Physical abuse may include, for example:

- i. beating;
- ii. burning or scalding;
- iii. pushing or shoving;
- iv. hitting or slapping;
- v. rough handling;
- vi. tripping; and,
- vii. spitting.

13. All forms of sexual abuse are also applicable to Vulnerable Adults.

14. Potential warning signs of abuse of Vulnerable Adults can include:

- a) depression, fear, anxiety, passivity;
- b) unexplained physical injuries;
- c) dehydration, malnutrition, or lack of food;
- d) poor hygiene, rashes, pressure sores; and,
- e) over-sedation.

Preventing Abuse

15. EC strives toward enacting measures aimed at preventing abuse. These measures include screening, orientation, training, practice, and monitoring.

Screening

16. Coaches and Individuals who participate in EC activities as members of the Board of Directors, Committees and/or as part of the named team personnel for competitions, training camps, clinics, and other like activities will be screened according to the *Screening Policy*.

17. An Individual's failure to participate in the screening process, or pass the screening requirements as determined by a Screening Committee, will result in the Individual's ineligibility.

Orientation and Training

18. EC may deliver orientation and training to those Individuals who have access to, or interact with, Vulnerable Individuals.

19. Orientation may include, but is not limited to: introductory presentations, facility tours, equipment demonstrations, parent/athlete meetings, meetings with colleagues and supervisors, orientation manuals, orientation sessions, and increased supervision during initial tasks.

20. Training may include, but is not limited to: certification courses, online learning, mentoring, workshop sessions, webinars, on-site demonstrations, and peer feedback.

Practice



21. When Individuals interact with Vulnerable Individuals, they should enact certain practical approaches to these interactions. These include, but are not limited to:
- limiting physical interactions to non-threatening or non-sexual touching (e.g. high-fives, pats on the back or shoulder, handshakes, specific skill instruction);
 - ensuring that Vulnerable Individuals are always supervised by more than one adult;
 - ensuring that more than one person is responsible for team selection (thereby limiting the consolidation of power onto one Individual);
 - including parents/guardians in all communication (e.g. electronic, telephonic) with Vulnerable Individuals;
 - ensuring that parents/guardians are aware that some non-personal communication between Individuals and Vulnerable Individuals (e.g. coaches and athletes) may take place electronically (e.g. by texting) and that this type of communication is now considered to be commonplace, especially with older Vulnerable Individuals (e.g. teenagers). Individuals are aware that such communication is subject to EC's *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and *Social Media Policy*; and,
 - when traveling with Vulnerable Individuals, the Individual will not transport Vulnerable Individuals without another adult present and will not stay in the same overnight accommodation location without additional adult supervision.

Monitoring

22. EC may regularly monitor those Individuals who have access to, or interact with, Vulnerable Individuals.
23. Monitoring may include, but is not limited to: regular status reports, logs, supervisor meetings, supervisor on-site check-ins, feedback provided directly to the organization (from peers and parents/athletes), and regular evaluations.

Reporting Abuse

24. Reports of abuse that are shared confidentially with an Individual by a Vulnerable Individual may require the Individual to report the incident to parents/guardians, EC or police. Individuals must respond to such reports in a non-judgemental, supportive and comforting manner but must also explain that the report may need to be escalated to the proper authority or to the Vulnerable Individual's parent/guardian.
25. Complaints or reports that describe an element of abuse will be addressed by the process(es) described in EC's *Discipline, Complaints, and Appeal Policy*.

¹Retrieved from: https://www.ecclesiastical.ca/guidelines_developsafetyprotectionpolicy_children-youths-vulnerableadults_faith/

²Adapted from: <https://www.all4kids.org/2014/03/04/warning-signs-child-abuse-neglect/>

³ Adapted from: https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/warning_signs.htm