

Creative Discoveries Preschool Abuse Policy

Statement of Purpose

Each preschool member has numerous daily contacts with children. It is, therefore, important that all cooperative members, but especially teachers and participating parents who are responsible for the care of children, protect the rights and dignity of children and be alert to incidents of child abuse. Cooperative members who know of or suspect any incident of child abuse must comply with all applicable reporting or other requirements of state and local laws.

The children are to be cared for, nurtured, and kept safe at all times.

We are committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior. To ensure the health and safety of young children in our care, we are very dogmatic in our commitment to consistently enforce Zero Tolerance for Child Abuse, which includes corporal punishment or hurtful behaviors towards any child.

Children in our care should expect to be treated with kindness, concern and respect at all times. Any evidence of physical abuse or sexual misconduct will be grounds for immediate dismissal.

In addition, an employee who exhibits unprofessional behavior that could be misconstrued as abusive under regulations may be terminated without access to any accrued benefits.

The Preschool takes immediate and decisive action on all accusations of child abuse or sexual misconduct in accordance with the applicable provisions of law.

Creative Discoveries has Zero Tolerance of Abuse.

Definitions:

(for the purpose of this policy only)

- Child abuse means any form of intentional or negligent infliction of injury to the detriment of a child's physical or mental well being.
- Sexual misconduct/abuse means any form of sexual conduct that is unlawful.
- Cooperative members mean any member as defined in the bylaws or standing rules or agent of any member.
- Teacher means any person employed by the cooperative.
- Preschool or Cooperative means PCPO member cooperative preschool.

Policy

Disciplinary actions used to correct a child's behavior, guidance techniques and any activities in which the children participate or observe at Creative Discoveries shall be positive.

Teachers and Cooperative members shall not:

1. Physically or sexually abuse a child, or engage in or permit others to engage in sexually overt conduct in the presence of any child;
2. Inflict corporal/physical punishment upon a child;
3. Shake, jerk, pinch or handle roughly a child;
4. Verbally abuse or humiliate a child which includes, but is not limited to, the use of threats, profanity, or belittling remarks about a child or his family;
5. Isolate a child in a dark room, closet, or unsupervised area;
6. Use mechanical or physical restraints or devices to discipline children;
7. Give medication to discipline or control children's behavior without written medical authorization issued by a licensed professional and given with the parent's written consent;
8. Restrict unreasonably a child from going to the bathroom;
9. Punish toileting accidents;
10. Force feed a child or withhold feeding a child regularly scheduled meals and/or snacks;
11. Force or withhold naps;
12. Allow children to discipline or humiliate other children;
13. Confine a child for disciplinary purposes to a swing, highchair, infant carrier, walker or jump-seat or by any other means.

Affectionate touch and the warm feelings it brings are important factors in helping a child grow into a loving and peaceful adult. However, staff and volunteers need to be sensitive to each person's need for personal space (i.e., not everyone wants to be hugged). The Preschool encourages appropriate touch; however, at the same time it prohibits inappropriate touch or other means of sexually exploiting children.

Neglect and Abuse Reporting

If you suspect child neglect or abuse, you are required by law to report it to the local Department of Family and Children's Services. You may make arrangements for the President to make the call, but all teachers and classroom helpers have a responsibility to report your suspicions.

Oregon Law (ORS 418.740-418) addresses mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect. Certain persons or groups of persons having frequent contact with children are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the local Services for Children and Families or law enforcement agency. (i.e., school personnel and child care providers).

We must report cases of abuse or neglect as defined by the booklet "What you can do about child abuse?" This booklet is available for parents/guardians to review upon request.

Failure to report abuse is a violation and carries a maximum penalty of \$1000.

Anyone who makes a good faith report based on reasonable grounds is immune from liability.

Causes for Immediate Dismissal or Termination

Misconduct is defined as a serious violation of PCPO or Creative Discoveries roles or policies.

Misconduct may be cause for immediate disciplinary suspension and/or termination by the President with approval of the Board without probation or warning. Actions that are considered to be misconduct include, but are not limited to:

- Physical, sexual or verbal abuse of children, parents, or teachers.

Procedures

In cases involving allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct by cooperative members or teachers, it is the policy of the cooperative to respond promptly to all allegations of abuse where there is reason to believe such abuse has occurred.

If such allegations are supported by sufficient evidence, relieve the alleged offender promptly of any duties.

Comply with the requirements of law as regards reporting of the incident and cooperating with the investigation.

Child abuse under the law includes the following:

- Failure to provide a child with necessary food, shelter, or medical care so as to cause physical or mental condition to be seriously impaired.
- Causing physical injury.
- Sexual abuse of a child.

- Allowing a child to endanger her or his own health or the health of another.

This reporting law applies to all persons without exception.

Even if there is no evidence legally admissible in court, one must nevertheless make a report if there is reason to believe that abuse has occurred. "Reason to believe," means evidence that, if presented to individuals of similar background and training, would cause those individuals to believe that the child was abused or neglected.

One is not bound to report unreliable rumors or alleged abuse with "no reason to believe." In case of doubt, one should dialogue with the President, Teacher or the local protection service using a hypothetical situation. If one is advised to report, it should be done.

Any individual who has reason to believe that abuse has occurred shall immediately notify one of the teachers or the President of the Cooperative.

Any individual who has reason to believe that a child has been subject to child abuse by any teacher must immediately make a report, by telephone or other means, to the President of the Cooperative.

Upon notification, the teacher and/or President is then bound to report the incident or suspicion of an incident, to the proper authorities. However, multiple reports are not necessary.

The parents or legal guardian of the child(ren) involved in the alleged incident will be promptly notified in accordance with the directions of the relevant state or local agency.

The report to the teacher and/or President does not relieve the individual from reporting child abuse as required by Oregon Law.

Reinstatement of the program volunteer or employed staff person will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the President and the Board.

All staff and volunteers must be sensitive to the need for confidentiality with the handling of this information, and therefore, should only discuss the incident with the President, Teacher and/or Parents as applicable. All reports must be kept in a locked file.

Teachers and the President must familiarize themselves with the telephone numbers and procedures of the local child protection service. These should be obtained and kept on file.

Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect

The Preschool will take any allegation or suspicion of child abuse seriously and will respond accordingly.

The following preventive strategies are designed to protect the children, staff, and volunteers from being wrongly accused of incidences of child abuse. The Preschool has in place a comprehensive pre-employment screening procedure to screen out staff not suited for working with children.

- Staff understands their legal obligation to report suspected abuse.
- Policies, procedures and training are available relating to discipline, supervision, staff/participant interaction, staff and volunteer Code of Conduct, etc.
- Staff understands what practices may be considered abusive and the difference between what may be considered appropriate and inappropriate touch.
- Defensive strategies have been identified for avoiding unfounded allegations in our abuse prevention training for staff.
- Staff communicates frequently with parents regarding day-to-day activities and encourages parents to report or question any behavior or event their child may share that appears out of the ordinary.
- Parents know that they can visit any program their child participates in, unannounced, and are encouraged to do so.
- Staff tries to identify stressed parents and offer support and referrals for help.
- Staff has learned how to discuss sensitive issues with children such as toileting, sleeping and questions about sex.
- Staff protects themselves and the Preschool by agreeing not to be alone with Preschool youth or program participants outside of Preschool programs or facilities (i.e. baby-sit, take children on trips, have them in their homes when others are not present, etc.).
- All employees and program volunteers must read and sign a copy of this policy.

Please keep your copy of this policy for your reference.

Sign and return the next page, stating that you have read, understand, and agree to comply with this policy.

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intentionally left blank for
administrative purposes

I have received a copy of Creative Discoveries Preschool's Abuse Policy. I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the policy at all times:

Date

Volunteer Signature

Printed Name

Home Address