

CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM & ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

**As Approved by
the Lethbridge
Little League
In Conjunction with Member Organizations**

**Last Amended on Oct 2024
Version 2.1**



Lethbridge Little League - Child Protection Program & Abuse Prevention Policy

This Child Protection Program & Abuse Prevention Policy applies to Members Organizations Coaches, Technical Directors, Board Members (“Volunteers”) of the Lethbridge Little League.

OVERVIEW

The safety and well-being of all participants in the Lethbridge Little League program is paramount. Lethbridge Little League member organizations promote a player-centric program where young people grow up happy, healthy and above all safe. They do not tolerate any type of abuse against a minor, including, but not limited to sexual, physical, mental, and emotional (as well as any type of bullying, hazing or harassment). The severity of these types of incidents is life-altering for the child and all who are involved. The goal of the Lethbridge Little League’s Child Protection Program & Abuse Prevention Policy is to prevent child abuse from occurring through an application screening process for all required volunteers and/or hired workers, ongoing training for its staff and volunteers, increased awareness, and mandatory reporting of any abuse. Lethbridge Little Leagues committed to enforcing its policy as highlighted below under “Enforcement.”

Local member organization’s programs should establish a zero-tolerance culture that does not allow any type of activity that promotes or allows any form of misconduct or abuse (mental, physical, emotional or sexual) between players, coaches, parents/guardians/caretakers, spectators, volunteers and/or any other individual. League officials must remove anyone exhibiting any mental, physical, emotional, or sexual misconduct and report them to the authorities immediately.

The Child Protection Program and Abuse Prevention Policy provides the resources necessary for a local league Board of Directors to successfully fulfill its requirements.

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act (updated July 2024)

The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act provides authority for Child and Youth Services to provide services supporting children who are abused, neglected or otherwise need intervention. As a last resort, the Act allows for children to be apprehended if they are not safe in their own homes.

[Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act - Open Government \(alberta.ca\)](https://open.alberta.ca/child-youth-and-family-enhancement-act)

Child protection program definitions

Defining child abuse is the first step in battling it. Child abuse can take several different forms, and it is important to understand what child abuse is considered and other terms that are mentioned throughout the Child Protection Program & Abuse Prevention Policy.

Definition of Child Abuse in this policy – Any act or threat involving molestation, harassment, bullying, hazing, corporal punishment or any form of physical, sexual or mental harm to a child.

Definition of a Child/Minor for the purpose of this policy: Any individual who is younger than age 18 or who is not an emancipated minor.

Programs & Activities: Any games, practices, tournaments, approved activities, and approved special games are considered programs and activities for the purpose of this policy.

There are 6 types of child abuse:

1) Neglect, 2) emotional abuse, 3) physical abuse, 4) sexual abuse, 5) Bullying, 6) Grooming

Know who it affects

Child abuse and neglect can happen to any child or youth: up to 18 years of age, living full-time or part-time, with or apart, from their parents or guardians, of all abilities, gender identities and cultural and spiritual backgrounds

Know the behaviors

Neglect - is when a parent or guardian does not provide their child or youth with basic age- appropriate care such as: food, clothing, shelter, love and affection, protection from harm

Emotional abuse - can happen along with neglect or other types of abuse. This may include:

- humiliating the child by blaming or belittling them,
- refusing to comfort the child when the child is upset or frightened
- criticizing the child by calling them names like stupid, bad, useless or a troublemaker
- setting unrealistic expectations, threatening or accusing the child
- exposing the child to violence or chronic drug or alcohol use
- cruel or unusual treatment or punishment

Physical abuse - Physical abuse is when a parent or guardian causes an injury or trauma to any part of their child's body. It might leave bruises and marks that can be seen but can also include internal injuries that are hard to spot. Physical abuse can happen once or many times. It may include:

- hitting, choking and kicking
- biting, scratching and pulling hair
- throwing or hitting the child with objects

Sexual abuse - Sexual abuse happens when a child or youth is exposed to inappropriate sexual contact, activity or behavior. This may include:

- non-touching activities such as:
 - having inappropriately sexual phone calls or conversations
 - making the child watch someone expose themselves
 - showing them pornographic material
 - sexual touching activities such as:
 - fondling
 - making them touch an adult's or other child's genital area
 - sexual intercourse with the child or youth
 - sexual exploitation activities such as:
 - engaging a child or youth for prostitution
 - using them in pornography
 - luring them via the Internet for sexual purposes

Bullying – is the intentional, repetitive harmful act, words, and behavior that makes the victim feel hurt, scared, and/or ashamed. Bullying can also be an imbalance of real or perceived power between the bully and the victim. Different types of bullying include, but are not limited to physical bullying, verbal bullying, emotional bullying, harassment, and hazing.

Grooming – is the process where an individual creates a relationship with a minor or the minor's family to gain trust so he or she can take advantage of a minor for a sexual purpose.

Recognize Child Abuse

24-hour help - Call 911 if you or the person you are reporting is in **immediate danger**.

Child Intervention: 1-800-638-0715 to get help if you, or children you know, are being neglected, abused or sexually exploited. If you believe a child is at risk, you **MUST** report it. Help is available in multiple languages 24/7.

Child abuse is defined by the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*.

Anyone can contact Child Intervention when they are worried about the safety or well-being of a child or youth.

Know the warning signs

Child abuse, neglect and sexual exploitation have many different warning signs. This policy deals with sexual abuse only

Sexual abuse - A sexually abused child or youth may:

- know more about sex than others their age
 - behave in an improper or aggressively sexual way with peers, teachers or other adults
 - use sexual language or make drawings with sexual images
 - start wetting or soiling their pants, wetting the bed or thumb-sucking
 - be afraid to go to sleep, have nightmares or sleep long hours
 - become withdrawn, anxious, fearful or depressed
 - have physical trauma or irritations in the anal and genital area
- Recognize child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is defined in the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act*. Children or youth involved in sexual exploitation are victims of sexual abuse who need help and protection

Sexual exploitation includes:

- luring a young person via the Internet and/or social media for sexual purposes
- involving a child in sexual activity in exchange for money, food, shelter, clothes, electronics or other items of value to the child or youth
- making, selling or distributing child pornography

Know who it affects

Sexual exploitation can occur anywhere and to any young person under the age of 18 regardless of their gender, family situation or social, cultural or economic background. It can happen:

- through social media, apps and chat sites
- on the internet

- at parties
- at the mall or other public spaces
- within a family

Know the warning signs - A sexually exploited child may:

- withdraw from regular friends and family
- be secretive about who they see and where they have been
- be unusually protective about a new relationship or friendship and unwilling to talk about it
- hang around with older people
- wear clothing or jewelry or have a phone or device they could not afford to buy
- carry a lot of condoms or sexual aids
- be very secretive or reactive about their browser history, websites they visit or contacts on their phone

Recognize a sexual exploiter - Anyone who seeks out a child or youth and uses them for sexual purposes is a sexual exploiter. They can:

- be male or female, young or old, rich or poor, married or single, known or a stranger
- pose as a boyfriend or girlfriend or friend
- be manipulative, charming, helpful, threatening or violent
- offer the child drugs, alcohol, money, items of value or emotional support for participating in sexual activities
- act like a manager by placing ads, arranging hotels and driving a child to meet-ups for sex

Help is available. If you suspect that your child or someone you know may be sexually exploited, get help immediately.

Contact - Connect with the Child Abuse Hotline: Hours: 24/7 all year,
Toll free: [1-800-638-0715](tel:1-800-638-0715) To get assistance in your area during business hours:
[Children's Services offices](#)

Report Child Abuse

Call 911 if you or the person you are reporting is in **immediate danger**.

Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-638-0715 to get help if you, or children you know, are being neglected, abused or sexually exploited. If you believe a child is at risk, you must report it. Help is available in multiple languages 24/7.

Child abuse, neglect and exploitation have many different warning signs. Learn to recognize them.

Protect a child

We all have a role to play in keeping children and youth safe and supported. While parents are primarily responsible for their children's well-being, the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* requires you to report a concern if you believe any child is at risk.

Know how to recognize child sexual exploitation, abuse and neglect.
Report your concerns if you think a child or youth is at risk.

When a child or youth tells - What you say and do will help the child or youth feel safe and supported. If they tell you they are being neglected, abused or sexually exploited, make sure you:

- stay calm and react without shock, disbelief, anger, judgement or fear
- let the child or youth tell you what happened in their own words without interruption
- listen carefully without asking questions
- reassure them that it is right to tell, and it is not their fault
- acknowledge how they are feeling (scared, angry, embarrassed, hurt, sad)
- help them feel comforted and supported by saying things like:

- I believe you and I will support you

It is okay to feel scared, angry and hurt

- I will try to help you figure out what happens next

You are brave for talking about this and it is right to tell someone

Soon after the child or youth tells you what is happening, find a private place. Write down what you heard and saw. Be sure to:

- use the same words the child used
- describe the way the child looked, how they behaved and other things you noticed
- keep your notes private and secure

Report a concern

Call the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-638-0715 to report a concern to a Child Intervention caseworker. We are available in multiple languages, 24 hours a day.

You can report anonymously or give your name and telephone number. If you

provide this information, we will never reveal your identity to others.

During the call, you will be asked questions about the child or youth and their life. It is okay to call us even if you do not have all this information. Some questions you may be asked include:

Information about Yourself -Talk about:

- how you know the child and their family
- how long you have known them
- what you saw, heard or believe may be happening, or what someone else told you
- whether the child or family knows you are calling
- anyone else you know who could provide information about the child or family
- if you are willing to assist the child and family going forward

Information about the child or youth -Talk about:

- their name, age, gender, address and phone number
- any concerns for the child's immediate safety
- whether the child or youth is with you or somewhere else right now
- what other support people the child has in their life?
- whether they go to childcare or school, and the name and location if they do
- the child's cultural identity (for example, Indigenous, African, European, etc.)
- any medical conditions, behavioral or development concerns that you are aware of
- what the child may have told you about the abuse, including when and where they said it happened and how long it has been going on

Information about the parents or guardians Talk about:

- the parents' or guardians' names, approximate ages and address
- where they live, work or go to school
- any information about their family relationships and supports
- any information about their cultural connections or supports
- any strengths that they may have
- whether there are any professionals or agencies supporting the family
- their ability to understand English or any other communication issues
- whether they know about the concern or are involved in it
- anything about the situation or the parents or guardians that would cause a threat for an investigator

Information about the sexual exploiter Talk about:

- the sexual exploiter's name, approximate age and address
- what they look like
- the vehicle they drive and the license plate number
- where they live, work or go to school
- anything about the situation that would cause a threat for the child, youth or an investigator

After you call

After you contact us, we may contact you to clarify something you said or ask follow-up questions. Your identity will not be shared with anyone.

We are here to help children and work with families. Find out what happens after a report is made about [child abuse or neglect](#) or [sexual exploitation](#).

Contact

Connect with the Child Abuse Hotline:

Hours: 24/7 all year Toll free: [1-800-638-0715](tel:1-800-638-0715)

To get assistance in your area during business hours:

Children's Services offices

Abuse Prevention Committee

This Abuse Prevention Committee is responsible for managing this Child Abuse Policy including an annual review to ensure that it is regularly updated and current with the laws of the Province of Alberta. Any questions or concerns should be directed to one or all the committee members below. The committee will also ensure that all reported child abuse incidents are fully investigated and mitigated with respect to the laws of Alberta. The committee is appointed annually and is comprised of 3-5 individuals. See Form 10 for the current committee or email customer.service@underthelights.ca to receive same by email.

- **Police Check & Vulnerable Sector Search – (Form 4 & Form 5)**

All Member Organization's Coaches, Technical Directors, Board Members ("Volunteers"), Management & Staff of the Lethbridge Little League will be required

to have valid and clear police check that includes a vulnerable sector search within the last 3 calendar years.

Clear police check confirmation is a pre-requisite for writing the *Abuse Prevention Test* which will be uploaded as part of the process.

- **Properly Handling Sensitive Documents**

It is necessary to require volunteers and/or hired workers to complete a volunteer application and consent to a background check, but the local member organization's program also has due diligence to protect the information provided. To protect the privacy of volunteers and others, the following best practices have been established:

- The local League President shall only share, on a need-to-know basis, any personal, non-public record or information contained in the volunteer application or attached documents, with other League Officers to make personnel decisions.
- The local League President must maintain the record of a volunteer in a locked, secured location for at least two (2) years after the volunteer is no longer in the league. When it comes to the time to dispose of these records, they must be **shredded or confidentially destroyed**, as they contain sensitive personal information. All actions concerning these records must comply with any applicable laws.
- If a local Board of Directors has records utilized for reviewing a potential volunteer's background check, they must maintain these records for the same length of time that the league maintains the volunteer's application. The records must be maintained in a locked in a secured area, such as the League President's home, and not in a clubhouse or similar public facility. The records must also be properly shredded or confidentially destroyed when it is time to dispose of the records.

Training & Orientation

All Coaches, Technical Directors, Board Members (“Volunteers”) of any member organization of the Lethbridge Little League are required to complete an Abuse Prevention training, by way of an on-line course choices outlined below.

All training must be completed and submitted by the beginning of the season. (Form 11)

Available courses:

<https://www.littleleague.org/player-safety/child-protection-program/safesport-resources-parents/>

<https://safesport.coach.ca/> (Choose SafeSport)

Once members have completed the course and you have their certificate, please send it to your safety officers.

Volunteers – (Forms 4 & 5)

Volunteer or Hired Worker: Refers to any person in the organization who provides regular service to the league and has contact with minors: coaches, managers, the Board of Directors, program workers, coaches, bus and carpool drivers, maintenance workers, or anyone that has repetitive access to or contact with players or teams.

All criminal record checks (CRC) must comply with the Little League International Child Protection Program safety program. Link:

<https://www.littleleague.org/player-safety/child-protection-program/>

This includes the completion of the Little League Volunteer Form. This completed form and the Criminal Record Check (including vulnerable sector check) are being submitted to the League Safety Officer for review and verification. These shall stay with the Safety Officer ONLY for the period of 1 year.

Local Little League programs are now **required** to annually conduct a background check of Managers, Coaches, Board Members, Volunteers, or hired workers, who provide regular service to the league and/or have repetitive access to, or contact with, players or teams.

Any person whose background check reveals a conviction for any crime involving or against a minor and anyone refusing to fill out a volunteer application is ineligible to participate in the league in any way.

Coach's Code of Conduct – (Form 8)

All coaches and volunteers of the member organizations of Lethbridge Little League shall uphold the by-laws and goals of Little League Albert.

Coaches are required to pledge compliance with the statements in the coach's "Code of Conduct" document (see appendices); sign and date acknowledgement that they have read and understand the statements and comply with the Lethbridge Little League Child Abuse Policy, Procedures and Guidelines.

Guidelines

a. One-on-one contact

No activity should take place involving one-on-one contact between a single, non-related Member Organization volunteer and a player member if such activities can be practically avoided. Instead, a buddy system is encouraged where two adults should always be present during practices, games and special events. One such adult can be a parent spectator and need not necessarily be a Member Organization volunteer.

b. Transportation

Drop off and pick up of player members by non-related Member Organization volunteers is strongly discouraged. Parents should provide transportation for their own children to and from scheduled events and parents should be instructed to make back up plans with another parent in the event they are unable to provide transportation. If parents cannot provide transportation, it is recommended that they provide their team's coach/manager with the name of the person authorized to pick up their child.

c. Communication of start and end times to parents

The Member Organization should clearly outline the expected start and end time for all events and communicate this with all parents.

d. Travel

Individual travel teams who travel without parents must ensure all Member Organization chaperones, coaches, managers, have abuse training and testing and have completed a VSS police check. Also, they have signed a Code of Conduct prior to every event the Member Organization attends.

Drop off and pick up of player members by non-related league volunteers is strongly discouraged. Parents should provide transportation for their own children to and from scheduled events and parents should be instructed to make back up plans with another parent in the event they are unable to provide transportation. If parents cannot provide transportation, it is recommended that they provide their team's coach/manager with the name of the person authorized to pick up their child.

e. Housing

The Member Organization recommends that a player under the age of 16 be accompanied by, and stay with, a parent or legal guardian when hotel housing is required. In some cases, not every parent or legal guardian will be able to attend. In these cases, parents should arrange with another parent, not a non-related league volunteer. Players must room with players of the same gender when travelling overnight.

f. Itinerary

The Member Organization should provide a detailed itinerary containing the travel plans, hotel information and listing the dates and times for all practices, games and other activities. This itinerary should also include contact information for travel team chaperones/managers.

g. Supervision

When a team is not practicing, competing or taking part in a tournament-related activity, the Member Organization should have plans in place to monitor the activities of the player members and non-related adult Member Organization volunteers.

At no time should a non-related Lethbridge Little League volunteer and minor player be involved in an activity not attended by other adults or participants.

h. Physical Contact / touching

Physical contact between volunteers and/or hired workers with minors should be very limited. Some examples of appropriate physical touch should be limited to high fives or administering appropriate first aid.

i. Electronic Communication

If it is necessary for a non-related Lethbridge Little League volunteer to send a direct text message or email to a player, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. A parent or guardian must be copied.
2. It should be signed so that it is clear as to who is sending the message.
3. Just using the number or email address for identification is not sufficient.
4. An email or text message should never include or contain offensive, sexual or inappropriate language or photos.
5. The time of day and the number of messages sent should be considered.
6. Records should be kept of every Lethbridge Little League volunteer's current cell number and email address.

j. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that can cause emotional or psychological harm to a player member. Examples include making the following statements:

- You're stupid.
- You're an idiot.
- You're an embarrassment
- You're not worth the uniform to play in.

k. Physical Abuse

Besides the obvious examples of a Member Organization volunteer hitting, kicking, throwing equipment or shaking a player, watch out for the following:

- Behaviors seem violent versus disciplinary.
- Training practices have become abusive.
- Fighting is encouraged or ignored.
- Illegal moves, often associated with injuries, are encouraged.
- Coaches teach improper techniques or encourage conduct which violates safety rules.
- Coaches allow a player member to become physically or verbally abusive.
- Behaviors that result in injuries to athlete(s).

l. Bullying

Bullying is the use of coercion to obtain control over another person or to be habitually cruel to another person.

Bullying involves an intentional, persistent and repeated pattern of committing or willfully tolerating physical and non-physical behaviors that are intended to cause fear, humiliation or physical harm, to socially exclude, diminish or isolate another person.

Bullying can occur through written, verbal or electronically transmitted expression or by physical act or gesture.

Bullying does not include group or team behaviors designed to establish normative team behaviors and promote team cohesion. Bullying also does not include rough play or conduct between opponents that occur during or in connection with game.

m. Hazing

Hazing includes any conduct which is intimidating, offensive or physically harmful. Hazing conduct is typically an activity that serves as a condition for joining a group or team or being socially accepted by a group or team's members.

Some examples of hazing include:

- Consumption of alcohol or drugs.
- Tying, taping or physically restraining an individual.
- Beating, paddling or other forms of physical assault.
- Verbal abuse or implied threats.

n. Harassment

Harassment is a repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that;

- are intended to cause fear, humiliation or annoyance,
- offend or degrade,
- create a hostile environment,
- Reflect discriminatory bias to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual or group based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression or mental or physical disability.

O. Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse involves any sexual activity between an adult and a minor.

Minors cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult, and all sexual interaction between an adult and a minor is strictly forbidden.

This also includes sexual contact with a minor that is accomplished by deception, manipulation, force or threat of force regardless of whether there is deception, or if the minor understands the sexual nature of the activity.

An adult may not improperly sexualize touch by fondling instead of hugging (with permission), kissing or seductive stroking of various body parts.

On the other hand, appropriate touching may be used when a child needs comfort, reassurance and support. Appropriate touch is respectful of a person's personal boundaries and comfort level, public and nurturing (not sexualized).

Warning Signs of Abuse

With some forms of abuse, there may be physical indicators (i.e., with physical abuse – bruises, welts, broken bones or with sexual abuse – venereal diseases, genital swelling/soreness/ difficulty sitting or walking, pain or itching while urinating or defecating, stomach aches, pain/itching in the genital area and frequent and unexplained sore throats).

But most often the effects of sexual abuse are less obvious. For example, sudden shifts in behavior or attitudes when an outgoing child suddenly builds a protected or closed emotional wall, or a generally happy child becomes aggressive and angry, or a trusting child becomes fearful, may be an indication of abuse.

In sports, this can show up as losing interest or wanting to drop out of sports or a sudden decline in ability.

Please note that no indicators or symptoms are absolute. Many of these could be indicators of problems other than child abuse. However, if some of these things are going on, consider them to be a red flag. One difficulty is that some signs are ambiguous.

Children may respond in different ways, and some may show no sign at all.

Some indicators include:

- Disclosure by child. Most children won't just come out and say they have been abused, but instead, may hint at it.

- Observations, complaints, concerns or allegations about Lethbridge Little League volunteers.
- Unexplained/unlikely explanations of injuries.
- Difficulty walking or sitting.
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Fear of medical treatment or examination.
- Shrinks back from touch.
- Being overly affectionate or acting out sexually.
- Wearing excessive clothing.
- Emotions abuse others.
- Overreaction to mistakes.
- Continual self-deprecation.
- Extreme fear of a Lethbridge Little League volunteer.
- Extreme low self-esteem or self-worth.
- A child's attachment to a Lethbridge Little League volunteer to the point of isolation from others.
- A child's desire to drop out without a clear explanation or without one that makes sense.
- A child that misses a lot of games or practices with suspicious explanations or excuses.

Common Myths

Myth: Child abuse is rare.

Fact: All types of child abuse and neglect are common. Child abuse and neglect are often not identified as they occur in private or secret. Children also find it hard to disclose and be believed. Often there is little evidence to substantiate the crime.

Myth: It doesn't happen in our sport.

Fact: Abuse happens in all sports. Unfortunately, sports are just one part of our social system, suffering all the good, bad and ugly features of other sectors, including child abuse.

Myth: You can always spot a child molester.

Fact: You cannot assume someone is a child abuser just by looking at him or her. In fact, he is probably not the creepy guy down the street. More likely, abuse will be inflicted by a parent, a relative or a child's coach, teacher or caregiver.

Myth: It's only abuse if it's physical or violent.

Fact: Child abuse does not necessarily involve violence or anger. Abuse often involves adults wielding their power over children and using children as objects rather than respecting their rights.

Myth: Ours is a team sport, so we don't need to worry.

Fact: Abuses of all types take place in all sports. No sport is immune. There are many situations where team athletes might train alone. The competitive structure of a sport tells us nothing about the type or frequency of safeguarding problems that may be encountered.

Myth: Children are usually abused by strangers.

Fact: Children are more likely to be abused by someone they know and trust rather than by a stranger. Many children are unable to tell they are being abused when someone is familiar is the perpetrator. Disclosing what has happened (or is happening) to them also has a greater personal impact when it involves someone the child knows.

Myth: Children usually tell someone about their abuse.

Fact: Most children do not tell anyone. They are often silenced through threats or fear of not being believed. Some children don't have the words to say about what is happening to them or do not speak up because they have feelings of shame.

Myth: People lie about child abuse for attention or sympathy.

Fact: Research, including police and court statistics, shows that it is very rare for a person of any age to say they were abused if they weren't. However, false negative reports of abuse are common. For example, many adults state that they were not abused as children when they were.

Myth: Children get over bad experiences in childhood.

Fact: Adults are often deeply affected by childhood trauma and abuse. You can't just "get over" it. Survivors need the right care and support to overcome the impacts of abuse, recover and live full and healthy lives.

Myth: Only men sexually abuse children.

Fact: While statistically more men do sexually abuse children than women, women can also be perpetrators.

Myth: People who sexually abuse children are mentally ill.

Fact: Most people who sexually abuse children are not mentally ill. They are often married and/or have sexual relationships with adults. In anonymous surveys, a significant minority of men in the community indicate a sexual interest in children.

Myth: People do not "forget" child abuse.

Fact: For over one hundred years, traumatic amnesia has been documented amongst war veterans, survivors of natural and man-made disasters and adult survivors of child abuse. These memories can later resurface through flashbacks, nightmares and intrusive thoughts. These memories have sometimes been called, "recovered memories".

Myth: Children are very suggestible, and they can easily make up stories of abuse.

Fact: Children are no more suggestible than adults and can clearly distinguish between reality and fantasy. Research has shown that children resist making false reports during leading and suggestive interviewing techniques.

Recognizing Grooming

Grooming is the process by which sexual predators pave the way for sexual abuse by gradually gaining the trust of and conditioning of minors, parents and administrators. Aspects of sexual grooming may include:

- Targeting the victim.
- Securing access to and isolating the victim.
- Gaining the victim's trust.
- Controlling and concealing the relationship.

The purpose of grooming is:

- To manipulate the perceptions of other adults around the child.
- Manipulates the child into becoming a co-operating participant which reduces the likelihood of a disclosure and increases the likelihood that the child will repeatedly return to the offender.

- To reduce the likelihood of the child being believed if they do disclose.
- To reduce the likelihood of abuse being detected.

Understanding sexual grooming and common sexual grooming behaviors can help individuals prevent sexual abuse before it occurs. Common sexual grooming behaviors are often subtle and may not appear inappropriate.

These behaviors include when an adult:

- seems overly interested in a child.
- frequently initiates or creates opportunities to be alone with a child.
- becomes fixated on a child
- gives special privileges to a child.
- befriends a family and show more interest in building a relationship with the child than with the adults.
- displays favoritism towards one child within a family.
- find opportunities to buy a child gifts.
- caters to the interests of the child so a child or the parent may initiate contact with the offender.
- who displays age and gender preferences.

Creating a Player-Centric Environment

Both children and adults may experience frustration at times. It is important to recognize when a person needs to take a break from activities to calm down. Adult volunteers and hired workers should never escalate a situation when someone is upset. Instead, they should attempt to de-escalate any stressful situation.

It is recommended that member organizations create and issue a “Code of Conduct” that is upheld by players, managers, coaches, board members, umpires, other volunteers and parents. This should be reviewed each season to establish a safe environment for everyone involved with the local baseball season.

If an individual (player, volunteer, or parent) feels they are stressed out and cannot handle the situation, they should remove themselves from the area until the issue is de-escalated. These situations might include:

- A coach screaming at an umpire – the game should be paused until the coach and umpire can remove themselves until the issue is de-escalated.
- A player gets emotional about a bad play and starts to break down on his teammates – The coach should remove the player from the dugout until he can resolve the issue.
- A parent in the crowd that does not agree with the placement of their child in

the lineup/field - A volunteer should remind the parent about respecting the game and ask them to step away or to respect the coach's decision.

Investigation Procedures

All incidents, allegations or suspicions regarding inappropriate behavior **MUST** be reported as soon as possible to the **Abuse Prevention Committee**. (Form 10)

The committee will, at their discretion, consult with the implicated person(s), apply contextualized analysis and decide on any mitigation required. Involved persons may be suspended from Lethbridge Little League presence whilst investigations are pending.

The committee may seek guidance from its legal team, 3rd party consultant or relevant Alberta Government agencies e.g., Children's Services.

Any person that learns of a "child in need of protection" **MUST** report to Children's Services under the authority of the Child Youth & Family Enhancement Act. This legal obligation includes a situation where a person becomes aware of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child at the hands of a person having charge of the child.

To report or ask questions or report concerns, contact the **Child Abuse Hotline** at **1-800-6380715**

*I have read and understood all the above information relating to the **Lethbridge Little League Child Protection Program and Abuse Prevention Policy***

Employee/Coach/Volunteer (Name) _____

Employee/Coach/Volunteer Signature: _____

Date: _____