

University of Toronto Medical Society

Abuse Prevention and Response Policy for Vulnerable Sectors (this “Policy”)

1. Policy Statement:

The University of Toronto Medical Society (the “Organization”) is committed to fostering an environment that is free of abuse for all individuals of any vulnerable sector who interact with the Organization.

2. Purpose and Scope:

This Policy is designed to establish a framework for the prevention, detection, and appropriate response to abuse within the Organization that serves vulnerable populations. It applies to all staff, volunteers, mentors, contractors, and anyone associated with the Organization, who may come into contact with vulnerable individuals.

3. Individuals of Vulnerable Sectors:

For the purposes of this Policy, individuals of vulnerable sectors are those who may be at an increased risk of experiencing abuse due to factors such as age, disability, cognitive impairment, or other conditions that may impair or limit their ability to protect themselves.

4. Definition of Abuse:

“Abuse” means any treatment of a person in a manner such as to cause harm; any cruel or violent treatment; misuse of one’s position for a bad effect or improper purpose; and speaking or behaving in an offensive way to or about someone. The following are examples of “Abuse”:

- *Physical Abuse* is defined as but not limited to the use of intentional force that can result in physical harm or injury to an individual. It can take the form of slapping, hitting, punching, shaking, pulling, throwing, kicking, biting, choking, strangling or the abusive use of restraints.
- *Sexual Abuse* is defined as but not limited to any unwanted or inappropriate touching, fondling, observations for sexual gratification, any penetration or attempted penetration of the vagina or anus with a penis, digit or object, verbal or written propositions or innuendos, exhibitionism or exploitation for profit including pornography, or any form of grooming.
- *Sexual Grooming* is defined as but not limited to actions or behaviours used to establish an emotional connection with a minor, and sometimes the minor’s parent(s) or guardian(s) to lower the minor’s inhibitions with the objective of any form of sexual abuse.
- *Emotional Abuse* is defined as but not limited to a chronic attack on an individual’s self-esteem. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, berating, intimidating, isolating, hazing, scapegoating, or blaming.
- *Verbal Abuse* is defined as but not limited to humiliating remarks, name calling, swearing at, taunting, teasing, continual put downs.

- *Psychological Abuse* is defined as but not limited to communication of an abusive nature, sarcasm, exploitive behaviour, intimidation, manipulation, and insensitivity to race, sexual preference or family dynamics.

- *Neglect* is defined as but not limited to any behaviour that results in the failure to provide any services which are necessary, such as withdrawing basic necessities as forms of punishment, failing to assess and respond to changes in health status appropriately and refusing or withdrawing physical or emotional support.

- *Harassment* is defined as a course of conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. Harassment includes but is not limited to any unwanted physical or verbal conduct that offends or humiliates, including harassment on grounds because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of provincial or pardoned offences, marital status, family status or disability. It can be a single incident or more than one incident over time. It includes threats, intimidation, display of racism, sexism, unnecessary physical contact, suggestive remarks or gestures, offensive pictures or jokes.

- *Sexual Harassment* is defined as (a) engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace because of sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, where the course of comment or conduct is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome, or (b) making a sexual solicitation or advance where the person making the solicitation or advance is in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the worker and the person knows or ought reasonably to know that the solicitation or advance is unwelcome.

- *Discrimination* is defined as failing to provide equal treatment with respect to services, without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability.

- *Illicit or Criminal Activities* include but are not limited to any form of direct or indirect theft, fraud, or criminal activity.

5. Prohibition against Abuse:

All forms of Abuse are strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated by the Organization. For clarity, the Organization does not condone any form of abuse.

6. Commitment to Safety:

The Organization's commitment to safety for individuals of vulnerable sector includes implementing measures to prevent abuse, fostering a culture of vigilance, and responding promptly and effectively to any allegations or suspicions of abuse.

7. Prevention Measures:

- a. **Screening and Training:** All individuals working with the vulnerable sector must undergo background checks and training on recognizing and preventing abuse.
- b. **Supervision:** Adequate supervision protocols will be established to ensure the safety of vulnerable individuals in all settings.
- c. **Code of Conduct:** A clear code of conduct will be established outlining acceptable behaviour and interactions with vulnerable individuals.
- d. **Reporting Mechanisms:** Implementation of clear and confidential reporting mechanisms for staff, volunteers, mentors, and other stakeholders to report suspected or witnessed incidents of abuse.

****In addition, one-on-one mentoring is prohibited. All sessions must be done in a public, group setting at all times. Mentors are not to be alone with minors at any time, except as clearly necessary in the unlikely case of an ongoing emergency.****

8. Response to Allegations:

- a. **Immediate Action:** Any allegation of abuse will be taken seriously, and immediate action will be taken to ensure the safety of the vulnerable individual and others.
- b. **Internal Investigation:** A prompt and impartial internal investigation will be conducted following established procedures, involving appropriate authorities as necessary.
- c. **Support for Victims:** Provide appropriate support and counseling services for victims and ensure their well-being is prioritized throughout the process.

9. Reporting Obligations:

- a. **Legal Obligations:** The Organization will comply with all legal reporting obligations related to abuse, including reporting to relevant authorities.
- b. **Transparency:** The Organization will communicate openly and transparently with stakeholders about any incidents of abuse, while respecting the privacy and confidentiality of those involved.

10. Review and Improvement:

This Policy will be reviewed annually and updated in an effort to ensure its effectiveness in preventing and responding to abuse within the vulnerable sector.

11. Compliance:

All staff, contractors, volunteers, mentors, and stakeholders are expected to comply with this Policy. Non-compliance may result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate and permanent termination of employment, engagement or association with the Organization. To be clear, a single incident of abuse will likely result in immediate termination of the abuser's relationship with the Organization, subject to the Organizations compliance with any applicable minimum statutory obligations.

12. Conclusion:

This Policy is a critical component of our commitment to the safety and well-being of vulnerable individuals. By adhering to these guidelines, we aim to create an environment that is free from abuse and conducive to the overall welfare of those we serve.

APPENDIX: REFERENCES TO OTHER POLICIES AND LEGISLATION:

- Selected Relevant Legislation
 - Ontario *Occupational Health and Safety Act*
 - Ontario Bill 132, *Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act*, 2016
 - Ontario Regulation 131/16: *Sexual Violence at Colleges and Universities* (rev. September 16, 2021)
 - *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA)
 - Ontario *Human Rights Code*
 - *Criminal Code* of Canada

Selected Relevant University of Toronto Policies and Guidelines:

- Code of Student Conduct
- Policy with Respect to Workplace Harassment
- Policy with Respect to Workplace Violence
- Human Resources Guideline on Civil Conduct
- Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment
- Guidelines for Employees on Concerns and Complaints Regarding Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment
- Standards of Professional Practice Behaviour for all Health Professions Students
- Policy on Conflict of Interest – Academic Staff
- Conflict of Interest and Close Personal Relations