

**3****MODULE****Summary****RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED OR ALLEGED  
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

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<b>Subject</b>	Dealing with suspected or alleged cases of child sexual abuse
<b>Prerequisites</b>	Module 1 and Module 2
<b>Target Audience</b>	Board, Executive, Administrators, Coaches, Managers, Leaders, Parents, Older Players or Participants
<b>Aim</b>	To discuss appropriate organizational response to suspected or alleged child sexual abuse To recap basic information about what is legally required of organizations in response to such incidents.
<b>Desired Outcome of Training</b>	Participants will understand legal requirements, basics of the official child protection process, and can begin to plan organizational response mechanisms to meet legal obligations and to minimize harm to individuals and the organization
<b>Time</b>	Two hours and a half, minimum
<b>Opportunity/Setting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• at a regular board meeting</li><li>• at a specially called meeting</li><li>• as part of orientation and training of board, executive, administrators, managers, coaches, leaders, parent reps</li></ul>
<b>Group Size</b>	Six to 25
<b>Method</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilitator's Welcome, Introductions</li><li>• Review of legal requirements to report abuse</li><li>• Lecture – Understanding the child protection process</li><li>• Discussion: What should the organization do while authorities investigate?</li><li>• Lecture/Discussion: Helping people and the organization heal, learning from incident, improving risk management</li></ul>
<b>Training Aids</b>	Flip chart or blackboard Prepared overheads/handouts Copy of <i>Making It SafeR</i> for reference or copy of the <i>Child and Family Services Act</i>
<b>Facilitator Preparation</b>	Familiarity with <i>Making It SafeR</i> , Sections I, II, III, IV, and VI, at a minimum
<b>Legend of acronyms used</b>	PS: participants HO: handout MIS: Making It SafeR (reference to resources) CFSA: <i>Child and Family Services Act</i> .
<b>Handouts</b>	Handouts provide the facilitator with supplementary speaking notes.

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Note: Instructions to facilitators are *italicized*.

*Facilitator Welcomes Everyone. Introductions are made if necessary.*

TIME	SPEAKING NOTES	CUES
5 MINS	<p><b>INTRODUCTION</b></p> <p>Organizations need to know what they are legally required to do, and should have a response plan in place, in case child sexual abuse is suspected, alleged, or disclosed. Being prepared to respond quickly, appropriately, and thoroughly may, at least, help prevent a recurrence of abuse, and may help people and the organization recover sooner from the trauma. In addition, organizations should create and implement a plan to identify and deal with incidents or allegations that can be dealt with internally. This session focuses on these three matters.</p> <p><i>The facilitator should emphasize at this point the need for organizations to seek legal advice, especially when a member of their organization is under investigation. The Making It SafeR resources provide general information only, and this information does not constitute legal advice. Lawyers can advise as to how these general principles may affect an organization.</i></p>	
30 MINS	<p><b>DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p><b>The Legal Obligations to Report Suspected or Alleged Abuse</b></p> <p>The <i>Child and Family Services Act</i> (CFSA) imposes certain obligations on individuals and on organizations that have charge of children.</p> <p><b>Duty to Report</b></p> <p>The CFSA recognizes that each of us has a responsibility for the welfare of children. It states that members of the public, including people who perform professional or official duties with respect to children, have an obligation to report promptly to a children's aid society if they suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection. The suspicion and the information upon which it is based must be reported.</p>	<p><i>Use HO 2.2 (from Module 2)</i></p>



TIME	SPEAKING NOTES	CUES
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Some of the situations in which a child is said to be “in need of protection” are also categorized as “abuse.” One situation where a child is said to suffer abuse is where the child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited by the people having charge of the child.

The Act recognizes that people working with children have a special awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect, and a particular responsibility to report their suspicions, and so makes their failure to report an offence. Any professional or official who fails to report a suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection, where the information on which that suspicion is based was obtained in the course of his or her professional or official duties, is liable on conviction to a fine of up to \$1,000.

**20** MINS

**Who is a “professional”?**

HO 2.3 (of Module 2) presents a list of people included in the legislation as performing professional or official duties.

HO 2.3

The Act identifies “youth and recreational workers” as one of the designated professionals or officials. This means that a paid youth or recreational worker is required by the Act to report, or face a fine.

The Act also stipulates that a “youth and recreation worker” does not include a volunteer. However, a volunteer board member who is performing professional or official duties with respect to a child may be considered to be a professional for purposes of the duty to report and be subject to the duty to report for professionals. For example, doctors who volunteer their time to be team doctors would be required to report.

While they may discuss the issue with the people in charge of the organization, they cannot and should not rely on the people in charge to report on their behalf. People in charge of the organization must ensure that a report has indeed been made, and that they take whatever steps are necessary to cooperate and respond to the investigation.

The Act also states that the duty to report is an ongoing obligation. This means that a person who has additional reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection is required to make a further report to a children’s aid society even if the person has made previous reports about the same child.

*Module 2 provides more in-depth discussion of the CFSA. The facilitator should be thoroughly familiar with the CFSA section in Module 2.*



TIME	SPEAKING NOTES	CUES
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**30** MINS

**To Report or Not to Report**

People do not have to be certain; they do not have to have proof; and they should not try to investigate the matter. The suspicion is enough ground to alert the authorities and let them investigate. It is not up to the sport organization to determine if the suspicion is valid or not; that is the job of the child protection authorities.

Suspicion or belief can come about in many ways, including when:

- A child discloses abuse or neglect; or
- A coach becomes aware of a pattern of suspicious injuries or bruises on a child's body.

Handouts 3.1 and 3.2 provide examples of behavioural and physical signs of sexual abuse.

Organizations must respond to any disclosure or allegation about child sexual abuse or any of other grounds of protection. All disclosures or allegations should be taken seriously, and dealt with immediately.

If someone does allege or disclose that a child has been sexually abused in any way (**regardless of who the alleged offender is**), a report must be made to the children's aid society and where appropriate, the police. If there is doubt as to whether an alleged or disclosed action constitutes abuse or not, the report should still be made. The children's aid society will make a determination and advise accordingly.

People may see physical or behavioural indicators of abuse, or notice or hear things that lead them to suspect or even to believe that a child has been sexually abused. For example, children often have to dress and undress in the course of participating in sport activities, and coaches, trainers, and others may see physical signs of abuse. Because children often find it very hard to disclose that they are being abused, an organization may be more likely to hear about the matter first from someone other than the child.

The individual to whom a child disclosed abuse should report the suspicion or belief to the children's aid society, and the organization should make sure that it is done. The organization's leaders should follow the instructions of the children's aid society about talking to the child or the person accused, if known.

*Use HO 3.1 and 3.2*

TIME	SPEAKING NOTES	CUES
<p><b>10</b> MINS</p>	<p><b>Responding to a Child who Disclose Sexual Abuse</b></p> <p>Children do, of course, sometimes disclose sexual abuse. If this happens, the individual to whom the disclosure is made must be extremely careful about responding to the child. No promise of secrecy should be given. The individual and the organization should, of course comfort and reassure the child, but they should not interview the child. That is the job of the child protection authorities, and the organization may unintentionally compromise an investigation and possibly the outcome of a trial if it takes this matter into its own hands.</p> <p>HO 3.3 sets out some useful guidelines for responding appropriately to a child.</p>	<p>HO 3.3</p>
<p><b>10</b> MINS</p>	<p><b>The Child Protection Process</b></p> <p><i>Ask participants to read the handout that describes the child protection process.</i></p> <p>The official child protection process is outlined on HO 3.4. Organizations should be aware of how the process works, and should take their direction about official dealings with the alleged victim and alleged offender from the children’s aid society and/or the police.</p>	<p>HO 3.4</p>
<p><b>20</b> MINS</p>	<p><b>What Should the Organization Do During an Investigation?</b></p> <p>Handout 3.5 includes some general guidelines for organizations dealing with a disclosure or allegation of child sexual abuse. Each organization should establish its own procedures; these guidelines should help.</p> <p><i>Lead the participants in a discussion about what procedures the organization should establish, based on these guidelines. Record the ideas for the board’s or executive’s consideration.</i></p> <p><b>Helping People and the Organization Heal</b></p> <p>If the offender or alleged offender is a member of the organization, one of the most important tasks the leaders of an organization face is trying to heal an organization once an allegation of abuse has been made or if abuse is confirmed. Such an incident can tear apart an organization and the relationships among people involved in it. Leaders should give serious thought to the steps they can take to restore trust, rebuild relationships, and to improve the organization’s prevention and response measures, to learn from the situation, so as to reduce the chance of it happening again.</p>	<p>Use HO 3.5</p>

**TIME****SPEAKING NOTES****CUES**

In fact, improving the organization's prevention and response measures is the best thing organizations can do at this time—it is a key step towards restoring trust and rebuilding relationships. Look at atmosphere, operations, structure and communications and brainstorm about what could be done in each to restore trust. Reviewing the organization's atmosphere and communications, in particular, can help restore trust and rebuild relationships. How does sexual abuse get talked about? Or does it? Hold special meetings for parents, coaches, officials, players, and give an accurate picture of what is happening. Ask them for feedback and ideas.

Likewise, an incident of sexual abuse would definitely call for an immediate review of operations and structural issues. The organization could sort out if what went wrong had anything to do with deficiencies in its risk management and/or sort out how things could be done better. The bottom line is that if there is an incident, the organization's leaders will need to face the situation and take concrete steps in each of these areas.

This work often doesn't get done by organizations that just want to "forget what happened and go on." It's vital that that not happen; that leaders especially take concrete steps to work on healing the organization.

*This will likely have been a very difficult session for people; try to keep some time for a discussion at the end of ways to rebuild, so that the session ends on a positive note. Record the suggestions for the board's use.*