

Prevention of Abuse
Protection Policy
Dover Heights Shule Inc ("DHS")

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1. Introduction

1.1 Policy Statement

Dover Heights Shule Inc ("DHS") is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its employees, members, visitors, Volunteers and particularly to children, aged and Vulnerable persons.

DHS aims to reduce the risk of abuse occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

1.2 Scope

This Protection Policy applies to:

- All service organisations or subsidiary bodies authorized by or under the control of DHS.
- All employees, office holders, members, Volunteers, contractors of DHS and visitors to DHS or engaged by DHS.

1.3 Authority

This Protection Policy was adopted for use by DHS on 15th Aug 2018

The DHS Board of Management ("**DHS Board**") is committed to implementing the Protection Policy and to training its employees, members, contractors and Volunteers in its content and application.

1.4 Definitions

Abuse can consist of one or more of but is not restricted to the following:

- **Elder Abuse** - a single or repeated act, occurring in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.
- **Emotional Abuse** - the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a person's self esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: Insulting, bullying, devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorizing or other extreme acts in the aged or Vulnerable person's presence.

- **Financial Abuse** may include:
 - Activities by an attorney in violation of their powers, duties and responsibilities under an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA).
 - Misappropriation of money, valuables or assets
 - Forging signatures on cheques
 - Denial of access to personal assets
 - Accessing a person's funds electronically and/or
 - Forced or unauthorized changes to legal documents

Financial abuse may also occur where a person takes advantage of an older person who has already lost (or is losing) capacity, by coercing or arranging for the older person to sign an EPA in circumstances where the older person is unable to understand the nature and effect of the document. This raises questions about the actions of witnesses to EPAs.

- **Neglect** - characterized by the failure to provide for basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's health or development.
- **Physical Abuse** - any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices including without limitation: Hitting, punching, kicking (marks from **belt** buckles, fingers), shaking, burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair, alcohol and/or other drug administration.
- **Sexual Abuse** - any assault or abuse of a sexual nature, sexual molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation.

Child - any person under the age of 18.

Leader - any person (paid or unpaid) who is responsible for the control and safety of Members placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a named organisation. A leader can include, but is not limited to:

- Activity coordinators
- Religious leaders
- Small group leaders
- Music, drama or other leaders
- Counselors
- Youth leaders
- Teachers
- Volunteers
- Club leaders
- Sports coaches and organisers
- DHS management or staff
- DHS Board members

Member - any person, including children, who attends or participates in DHS's services, activities, objectives or strategic plan.

Organisation - DHS, located at Blake Street, Dover Heights.

Rabbi – means the current serving Rabbi of the Dover Height Shule or his successor.

Vulnerable persons - any person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness.

Volunteer - any unpaid person over the age of 15 who is invited to assist in the care of aged and Vulnerable persons.

2. Policy Review

This Protection Policy will be reviewed annually at the DHS Annual General Meeting. The DHS Board will inform all interested parties when the date of review will occur, and any changes recommended by the interested parties should be submitted in writing to the Board for consideration one month before the review date.

Any proposed changes will be submitted to the DHS Board at its Annual General Meeting for approval before being implemented.

3. Obligations

3.1 Responsibility

The core expectations of any responsible organisation require us to treat all people with fairness and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

3.2 Legal

All relevant organisations within Australia are bound by Australian federal and New South Wales state legislation and principles established through common law. DHS is committed to adhering to all relevant legislation and regulations.

3.3 Ethical

Some actions may not be regarded as abuse, but are unacceptable behaviour for DHS. These include the following:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature;
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature;
- Suggestive gestures or remarks;
- Jokes of a sexual nature;
- Inappropriate touching;
- Inappropriate literature (e.g. M15+, M, MA, R or X rated material used with elderly or Vulnerable persons);

- Acts of violence committed by a worker, Leader or Volunteer in the course of an activity.

DHS's Board of Management will ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

4. Selection and Screening

4.1 Employees, Staff, Contractors and Volunteers

Employees, DHS office holders, contractors and Volunteers involved in activities or programs with children, aged and/or Vulnerable persons must be carefully selected and screened. Prior to commencing employment or volunteer services, the following precautions will be taken:

- All employees should, and/or Volunteers be congregants of DHS and have regularly attended DHS for at least six months
- All employees and/or Volunteers must complete an application form which requests details of relevant past experience, positions held, details of two referees and permission to contact them.
- Both referees will be checked and spoken to, using an agreed set of questions which have been drafted by DHS. The questions will seek to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position and the conversation will be documented and retained on file.
- All shortlisted candidates must undertake a formal interview which includes an analysis of past experience working with children, the elderly or Vulnerable persons.
- A police and/or Community Services check which complies with the legislative requirements of NSW will be requested and received prior to the employee or Volunteer commencing the proposed role. The check must show that the individual is not precluded from working in childcare or aged care.

Where DHS has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence, that applicant cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for employment or engagement with DHS.

5. Training

All new workers/employees, including staff, contractors and Volunteers will be issued with a copy of this policy and receive formal training in:

- The content and application of this Protection Policy
- Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements

Refresher training courses based on current 'best practice' and changes to legislation will be provided on an annual basis.

6. A Safe Environment

Incidents of abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, working in pairs is the preferred method.

Workers (employees, staff, contractors, Volunteers) will not transport children without express written permission from parents/guardians.

All personal counseling is to be carried out within sight of another worker.

Workers will respect a Member's feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact of any kind.

Initiations and secret ceremonies are prohibited. All aspects of any program related to children, aged and Vulnerable persons will be open to observation by family, friends or guardians.

Workers have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at such activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

7. Disciplining Children

It is not the responsibility of DHS or its workers, Volunteers or Leaders to discipline a child. If a child does not abide by the rules set down by the organisation, or becomes an obstruction to the care of other children or Members, and may cause harm, the child will be removed and referred back to their parent or guardian.

At no time will a Leader administer any form of physical, emotional, financial or mental discipline.

8. Reporting Procedures

DHS actively encourages the reporting of all abuse, including sexual abuse.

DHS is committed to building an environment where either a victim or employee/Volunteer feels able to report such abuse.

Employees and/or Volunteers must report reasonable suspicions of abuse to the senior management of DHS. Youth workers must report directly to the Youth Director, the Rabbi or a member of the DHS Board. The Youth Director must then report directly to a specific member of the DHS Board, designated for this purpose.

Reasonable suspicion means fair and practical reason to believe an incident involving abuse has occurred based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumour or observation of behaviour.

As reasonably determined by the DHS Board, an independent person will be appointed by the DHS Board with the specific duty of dealing with any allegations of harm or abuse that may arise, in consultation with the Rabbi.

The details of those reporting abuse will be kept private and confidential.

A documented reporting process with escalating procedures has been established by DHS for handling allegations of abuse and is subject to annual review

The escalating procedures will be as follows:

- The automatic suspension from all work or other duties within DHS of any person while under investigation by DHS, or by the police, for committing abuse.
- The automatic termination of their employment, or involvement with DHS if found guilty of committing abuse, either by internal investigation or by a court.

If there is reasonable suspicion that a Member has been or is suffering abuse, the police and the organisation's insurer will be contacted immediately.

The phone number for Bondi Police is: 9365 9699

The phone number for DHS is: 9371 0055

The Phone number for NSW Family and Community Services is 132 111

The police will also be notified if a Member discloses an incident of abuse that has occurred somewhere other than DHS's premises (e.g. an outing).

If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be swept under the carpet.
- Not pushing the Member to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the Member that they are understood; that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Reporting the abuse to the police and to DHS's insurer (via the chain of reporting detailed above).
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator.
- If the alleged assault has taken place recently, clothing worn by the Member should be, if reasonably practical, retained and handed to the police for forensic examination.
- Maintaining confidentiality.

Any disclosures by a Member, reports of suspected abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.

9. Alcohol and Drugs

The unsupervised or authorised consumption of alcohol on DHS's grounds or during an activity is not to be allowed or condoned by any worker.

All office holders are to ensure that any current Alcohol policy is adhered to.

The consumption of illegal drugs on DHS's grounds or during an activity is not to be allowed or condoned by any worker. Any Member found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counseled and family contacted.

Any Member required to take prescription medication administered by a worker, Volunteer or Leader, must provide a letter from their physician to DHS.