

**ABUSE  
AND HARASSMENT  
DO EXIST**

**BE VIGILANT!**

**GUIDE  
FOR  
SPORTS  
AND  
RECREATION  
PERSONNEL**



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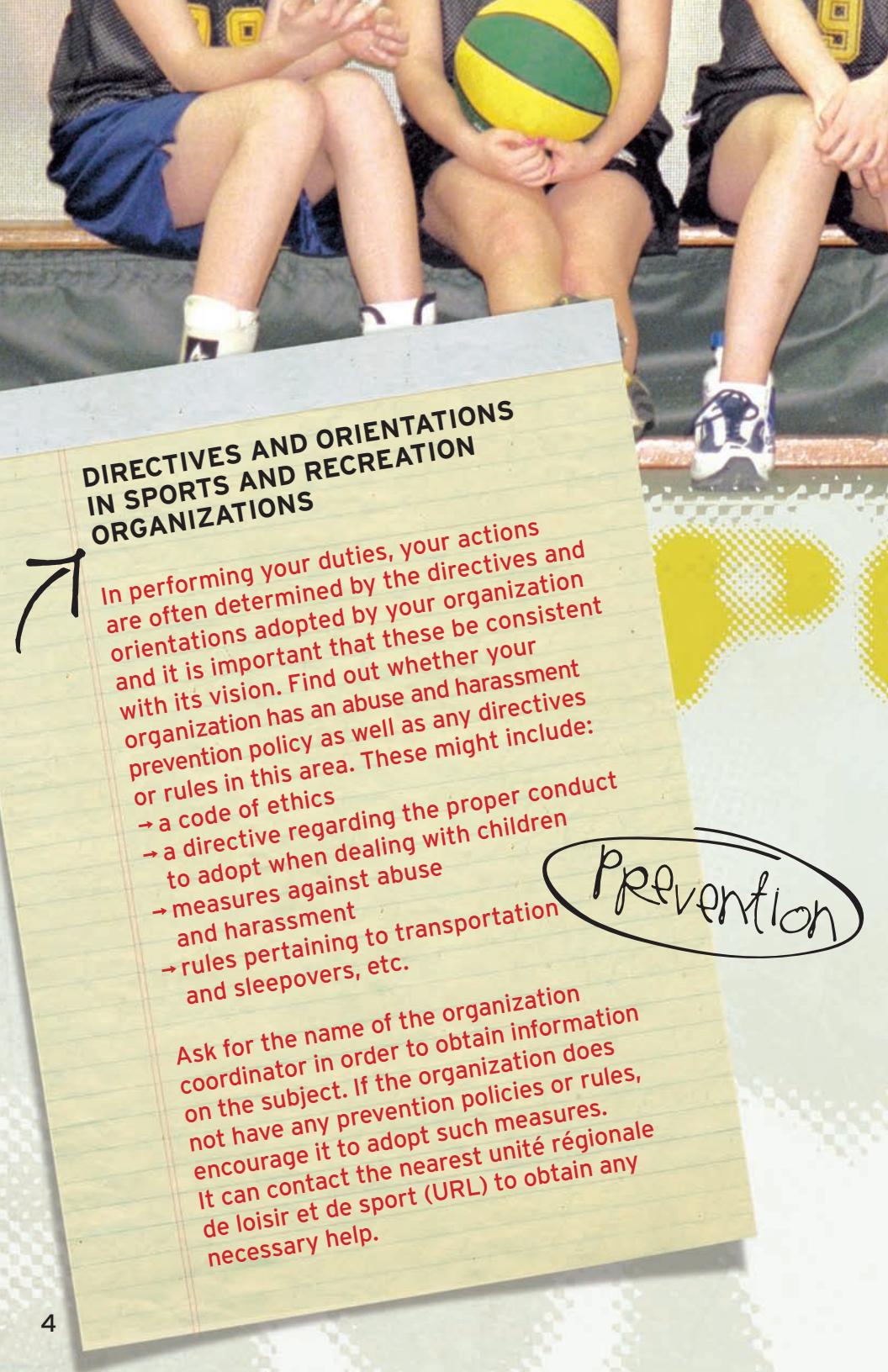


# ABUSE AND HARASSMENT DO EXIST

## GUIDE FOR SPORTS AND RECREATION PERSONNEL

As a volunteer or employee who works with children in a sports or recreation organization, you naturally care about children's welfare. Whether at school, at home or in sports and recreation activities, the best way to work effectively with young people is to be well informed. When you are faced with the question of abuse and harassment, you and your organization can ensure that children are protected while you intervene wisely in problem situations.

This guide is designed to provide you with information and with tools to assist you in your work with young people, specifically in the prevention of abuse and harassment and in dealing with emergencies and crisis situations.



## DIRECTIVES AND ORIENTATIONS IN SPORTS AND RECREATION ORGANIZATIONS

↗ In performing your duties, your actions are often determined by the directives and orientations adopted by the organization and it is important that these be consistent with its vision. Find out whether your organization has an abuse and harassment prevention policy as well as any directives or rules in this area. These might include:

- a code of ethics
- a directive regarding the proper conduct to adopt when dealing with children
- measures against abuse and harassment
- rules pertaining to transportation and sleepovers, etc.

Ask for the name of the organization coordinator in order to obtain information on the subject. If the organization does not have any prevention policies or rules, encourage it to adopt such measures. It can contact the nearest unité régionale de loisir et de sport (URL) to obtain any necessary help.

Prevention





# POWER AND THE ABUSE OF POWER

As a reasonable individual, you will normally be observant, intervene when necessary, maintain control of your group or activity, provide for the safety of the young people entrusted to your care, and deal with problems promptly. Whether you work with children as a volunteer or a paid employee, you are in direct contact with them and in a position of authority over them. In order for you to intervene as effectively as possible when needed, it is important that you understand certain basic concepts.

You should be aware that the authority you exercise in your relationships with children gives you power that must be properly managed. When this authority is used for personal ends or to the detriment of children, it becomes abusive. For example, when a coach exerts undue pressure on children, telling them that they must win before they can be proud of their performance, he abuses his authority. This must be used, rather, to enable individual children and groups of children to attain their objectives and, especially, to progress and develop.



vigilance



# SOME GUIDELINES ON REASONABLE FORMS OF INTERVENTION

People who work with children have become more and more cautious and often avoid all expressions of affection and encouragement toward them. However, there are ways of continuing to demonstrate one's affection for children while protecting their integrity. A responsible adult knows the limits that must not be crossed and is always aware of the impact of his or her actions.

## TOUCHING AND EXPRESSIONS OF AFFECTION

- Be attentive to your influence over children. The positions occupied by adults give them a degree of power that they must manage properly. Avoid effusive expressions of affection. Be respectful towards all children.
- Be vigilant when making physical contact with a child. In all cases where this is necessary, tell children in advance.
- An adult may touch the back, head and shoulders of a child, but not the child's private parts (thighs, breasts, buttocks, etc.). If an adult inadvertently touches a private part of a child, a simple excuse should suffice. However, in some circumstances it may be important to discuss what just happened with the child and make sure that he or she understands that what happened was an accident. This is far better than feeling uneasy and saying nothing.
- If a child must be examined following an injury, always make sure that there is another person present. It is also preferable that this person be of the same sex as the child. Insofar as possible, have the child looked at by a health care professional.
- Children can be comforted by your listening to them and showing them that you understand their pain. If a child does need to be comforted, avoid ambiguous forms of contact (in which the adult's entire body comes into contact with that of the child).
- If a child spontaneously expresses affection for an adult in ways that, to the adult, seem embarrassing or out of place, establish clear guidelines defining the behaviours to be encouraged and those to be avoided.



*Adults must know the difference between forms of touching that are permissible and those that are not. They must show good judgment and common sense in establishing dynamic and stimulating relationships with the young people entrusted to their care.*



## **PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS**

- Make sure that private conversations are held out of earshot from other people but well within their field of vision.
- If a meeting takes place in an office, choose one with a window through which people can see inside, if available; or leave the door open if you are alone with a child.

## **OUTINGS**

- In outings where adults must share a room or dormitory with young people, an adult must never be alone with a young person and must always wear decent sleep attire. (Swimming trunks are fine at the poolside, but wearing undergarments in a dormitory may make young people feel ill at ease. In matters of attire, it is essential to keep the context in mind).
- Ensure that children are monitored at all times.
- Encourage people accompanying handicapped children to come to their assistance. If a handicapped child is not accompanied, make a clear agreement with the parents as to the type of assistance to be provided and do not go beyond these arrangements.
- Always make sure that there are two adults present (parents, monitors, etc.) in lodgings and toilet areas. If this cannot be done, provide visual access to these quarters.

## **SHOWERS AND CLOAKROOMS**

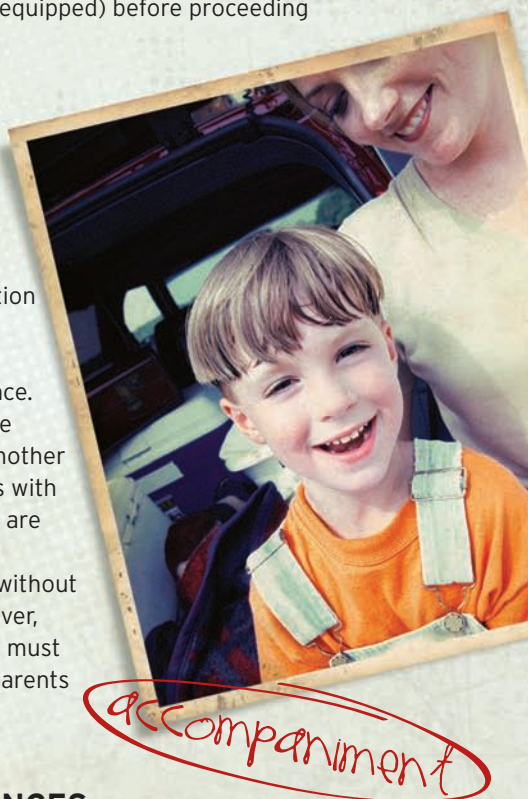
- Respect each child's sense of modesty, particularly in shower areas. Never force a child to undress.
- Avoid situations in which an adult is left alone with one or more children in a shower area or cloakroom.



- If there is only one shower and cloakroom for all the young people and staff (whether remunerated or working on a volunteer basis), the two groups must take turns using them. Never use these facilities (showers, toilets, cloakrooms, etc.) at the same time as children.
- If there are no separate sanitary facilities for boys and girls, they must take turns using them.
- If a child is unable to get dressed on his or her own, or put on protective equipment, ask the parents to help. Suggest that the child must be properly attired (i.e. in uniform and equipped) before proceeding to the play or activity area.

## TRANSPORTATION

- Try to use transportation arrangements in which children are accompanied by their parents; otherwise, obtain written authorization from the parents.
- Make sure that the driver holds an appropriate (and valid) driver's licence.
- Arrange to have several adults in the same vehicle. Be accompanied by another adult when on outings or excursions with children. Make sure several children are always present together.
- Go directly to the site of the event, without making any stops or detours. Moreover, the time and place of the return must be determined in advance and the parents must be clearly informed of this.



## LATE ARRIVALS OR ABSENCES ON THE PART OF PARENTS

- At the agreed-upon return point, check if there is a message from parents and wait with the children for any latecomers.
- Try to reach the parents at their home or workplace, then wait at the return point until they arrive. If possible, this should be done in the company of a team member or other parent.
- Never allow an unauthorized person to accompany a child to his or her home.
- Unless exceptional circumstances indicate otherwise, never accompany a child to his or her home alone, even if generosity prompts you to do so.

## COMMUNICATION

### With children

In the earliest stages of an activity, children must be told about:

- the basic rules to be followed (training times, discipline, etc.)
- the activities planned
- the names of the adults they can turn to if they have a problem (parent, coordinator, volunteer, etc.)

It is important to give a child a number of choices with regard to the people they can turn to if need be. All the children should feel free to express themselves and should be dealt with in a spirit of openness and through active listening. Inclusive language (him and her, boys and girls) should be used.

### With parents

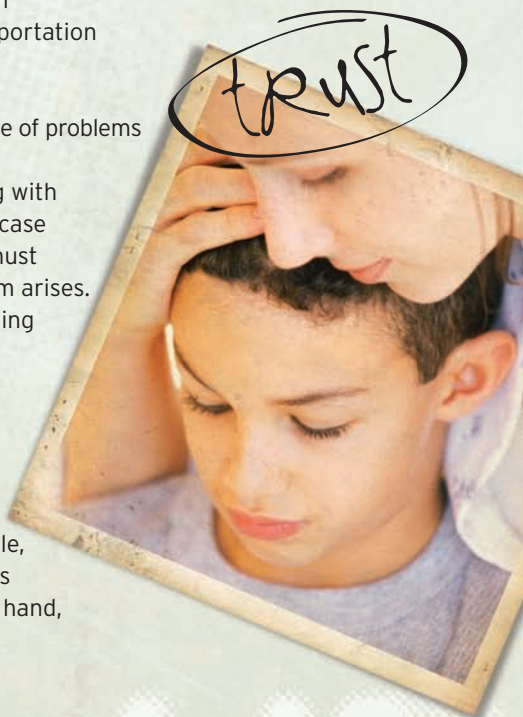
Good communication with parents is also a guarantee of harmonious relations. During meetings, parents should be informed in writing or verbally about:

- standard rules and planned activities
- schedules (when activities start and finish)
- where they can pick up their children
- the logistics of their children's transportation
- the organization's prevention policy
- the organization's code of ethics
- the names of people to contact, in case of problems

It is also important to determine, along with the parents, who should be notified in case of an emergency. Finally the parents must know who they can contact if a problem arises. A spirit of openness and actively listening to parents helps to build trust.

### With the other members of the organization (administrators, coordinators, colleagues, etc.)

Maintaining good communication with your organization makes it possible, on the one hand, to know the principles on which it operates and, on the other hand, to avoid proscribed behaviours.





## TO WORK SUCCESSFULLY WITH CHILDREN, A RESPONSIBLE ADULT SHOULD ADOPT RULES OF CONDUCT BASED ON THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

### Behaviours and attitudes

- 1 → Comply with the organization's policies and rules.
- 2 → Be respectful of the other adults (parents, administrators, colleagues, etc.).
- 3 → Create conditions that are conducive to the development and entertainment of children and to healthy competition and the achievement of precise objectives.
- 4 → Avoid all contacts or attitudes that could have a sexual connotation or be out of place.
- 5 → Never adopt or tolerate a behaviour that could frighten, embarrass, demoralize or have any other negative effects on children.
- 6 → Do not tolerate violent or aggressive behaviour.

### Communications

- 7 → Inform young people about, and involve them in, decisions relating to the rules of conduct.
- 8 → Establish healthy communication with the children, parents and other members of the organization (administrators, coordinators, colleagues, etc.).

### Principles and values

- 9 → Act in a democratic and nonauthoritarian fashion.
- 10 → Give young people an opportunity to express themselves, to present their world-view, etc.
- 11 → Respect children's dignity and intellect.
- 12 → Put young people's well-being before your personal ambitions.
- 13 → Make young people's safety a priority.
- 14 → Be determined to eliminate every vestige of harassment or abuse from the organization.

The sports and recreation worker and his or her organization should also establish a code of ethics for the children and their parents so that they can have clear guidelines to respect.



culpability





# ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

Unfortunately, in the world of sports and recreation, as in other areas, there are situations in which children are the victims of harassment or abuse.

- Some people take advantage of their positions of authority in the world of sports and recreation to perpetrate abuse or harassment.
- Child victims of abuse or harassment taking place at home or in social or recreational situations sometimes confide in adults they trust. Likewise, rumours or their own observations sometimes lead responsible adults to have suspicions that abuse and harassment are being perpetrated.

Abuse and harassment may be perpetrated by a parent, a coach, a volunteer, or by another child in the group, etc. In the vast majority of cases, the perpetrator is someone the child knows and trusts. Abuse and harassment can take place anywhere (generally out of sight of others). While some people may seem more vulnerable than others, abuse and harassment may potentially affect all children.

It is difficult to have a precise idea of the prevalence of sexual abuse and harassment in young people's social environment, specifically in the context of sports and recreation. Documentation of the phenomenon is sparse, which explains the limited statistics available. Indeed, the number of reported instances of sexual abuse is but a fraction of those actually perpetrated. There are many reasons for this. The fear of not being believed, threats made by the perpetrator, shame, feeling responsible for what happened, and the absence of resource people in whom the victim could confide are merely some of the factors that account for the silence of victims. According to Tourigny and Guillot (1999), studies conducted with adult populations reveal that one out of every three women and one out of every six men have suffered sexual aggression before reaching adulthood.

According to another study conducted with athletes and coaches (537 athletes and 72 coaches) with regard to harassment during the 1997 Canada Games, 47.9% of respondents had been subjected to one or more types of harassment: verbal violence (25.1%), harassment related to sexual orientation (12.6%), sexual harassment (12.6%), physical harassment (11%) and racial harassment (6.7%).

Whatever the forms of abuse or harassment that occur in the world of sports and recreation, and whether the perpetrator is an adult, a young person in a position of authority or a peer, reprehensible actions of this type must in no case be tolerated. Sexual abuse is a criminal act under the Criminal Code. In the case of sexual or psychological harassment, the victim can file a civil suit with the organization's board of directors.

Most cases of abuse or harassment remain undisclosed for relatively long periods of time. Indeed some victims never reveal what happened to them. Unfortunately, their silence prevents them from receiving help and enables the perpetrator to continue abusing other children.

isolation





# Definitions

## 1 **Abuse**

Abuse is defined as any wrong form of physical or emotional treatment or lack of care leading to a physical injury or causing an emotional problem for a person. All forms of abuse of a person manifest themselves as an abuse of power, authority or trust. In Québec, a person is deemed to be a child until the age of maturity.

## 2 **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is a persistent attack against a human being's self-esteem. It is a psychologically destructive form of behaviour exhibited by a person in a position of power, authority or trust. It can take the form of insults, contempt, intimidation, isolation or ignoring the other person's needs.

## 3 **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse occurs when a person in a position of power or authority physically injures or intentionally threatens someone. Such behaviour can be manifested in various ways: slapping, hitting, shaking, punching, kicking, pulling on the hair or ears, pushing, throwing, grabbing or imposing an excessive number of exercises as a form of punishment.

## 4 **Negligence**

Negligence consists in continuously ignoring a person's fundamental needs for clothing, housing, education, proper nutrition, good hygiene, proper supervision, medical and dental care, sufficient rest, a safe environment, an occupation, moral counsel, exercise and fresh air.

## 5 Sexual abuse

"Sexual abuse is an act committed by a person giving or seeking sexual stimulation inappropriate to the age and development of a child or adolescent. Where the abuser is a blood relative to the victim or is in a position of power or authority with respect to the victim, it is seen as a violation of the child's or the adolescent's physical or mental integrity."

Gouvernement du Québec, Table des DPJ, A.C.J.Q. (1998)

The revised version of the *Youth Protection Act* (2007) also stipulates that acts of a sexual nature need not involve actual physical contact.

## 6 Harassment

Harassment can take the form of discrimination, of abuse of power or of violence and it may be perpetrated through various actions: speech (comments, insults, jokes, nicknames, insinuations, persistent questioning, etc.), threats or gestures of a discriminatory nature (racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.); hazing or initiation rites causing embarrassment or degradation. It also includes the display of inappropriate material (posters, pornographic calendars, etc.). Harassment may be perpetrated by a coach, a parent, a spectator or by another child and can take place at any time (during an activity, workout, game, meeting, after an activity, etc.). Harassment can be physical, verbal, sexual or emotional.

The following are a few examples of harassment:

- upsetting pranks, insinuations or teasing relating to a person's body, appearance, race, sexual orientation, etc.
- condescending or threatening actions or punishments that undermine a person's self-esteem
- practical jokes that cause embarrassment or infringe on a person's safety
- undesired or gratuitous physical contact involving touching, tapping or pinching
- undesired behaviour, comments, actions or invitations of a sexual nature that can disturb or humiliate or, in some cases, be interpreted as a condition for keeping a job, being entitled to training or receiving a promotion

The new means of communication (the Internet, cell phones, etc.) are also used to harass people.



## ABUSE AND HARASSMENT: DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

abuse

harassment

TYPE	Emotional, physical, sexual, negligent	Emotional, physical, sexual; can be motivated by racial or other types of prejudices
VICTIM	Minor person, male or female	Person of any age, male or female
OFFENDER	Any person holding power or having authority over his or her victim, or who abuses a relationship of trust; can be male or female	Can be a peer or a person who holds power or authority over an adult victim; can be male or female
INVESTIGATION	Conducted by an outside organization: the Direction de la protection de la jeunesse in conjunction with the police	Generally conducted internally, unless handed over to the police in cases where physical or sexual abuse or criminal harassment is suspected
FOLLOW-UP	Provided for by the Youth Protection Act and the Criminal Code; may lead to civil action	Provided for in the organization's policy on harassment, the Criminal Code, labour rights tribunals, civil action procedures or provincial human rights tribunals (together or separately)
PHILOSOPHY	The victim is in no way to blame; the offender is solely responsible for his or her behaviour	The victim is in no way to blame; the offender is solely responsible for his or her behaviour

## WHAT TO DO IN PROBLEM SITUATIONS

- If you notice signs that cause you to suspect a child may be in danger or a victim of abuse or harassment.
- When rumours have given you cause for concern.
- When you have witnessed acts of violence or other inappropriate behaviour.

The first thing to do is to call the person in charge of ethics-related issues in your organization, or a director of your organization, in order to discuss the situation. You can also contact a youth protection agency in your area to obtain information that will help you do appropriate follow-up. However, if you are seriously concerned about the safety or development of a child who is, or who may be, considered compromised, you are duty bound to immediately contact the Direction de la protection de la jeunesse.





The following signs may lead you to suspect that a child is in danger or a victim of abuse or harassment:

- bruises or contusions, as well as irritation or excessive redness of the skin
- sudden and unusual changes in behaviour (e.g. a normally calm child who suddenly starts acting aggressively towards others)
- problems concentrating, a child's sudden tendency to keep to himself or herself, a loss of interest in games normally enjoyed, talk of suicide
- early arrivals at and late departures from training activities, or an unusually high level of absenteeism
- a reduction in performance level in the child's usual activity or sport
- signs of regression: trouble sleeping, fearfulness, bed wetting or incontinence, self-destructive behaviour, etc.
- unusual signs of fear around certain adults or places (toilet areas, cloakrooms), a refusal to undress in certain places (e.g. shower areas, locker rooms) or a tendency to overdress
- behaviour that is not age-appropriate with regard to sexuality: inappropriate seductiveness, sexually explicit drawings, excessive self-stimulation, sexual vocabulary too developed for the child's age

These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is or has been a victim of abuse or harassment. However, they could possibly indicate that something is wrong, especially if such behaviours persist or if they are combined with other unusual forms of behaviour.



## WHEN A YOUNG PERSON CONFIDES IN SOMEONE

Whether it is a matter of abuse or harassment perpetrated in or outside the organization, the same rules hold. The first person in whom the child confides plays a key role. He or she must:

- be **available to listen** to what the child has to say, in a calm and discreet location
- **simply take the time to listen and take in** what the child has to say, without passing judgment of any kind
- remain calm and **control his or her reactions**: this will calm the child, give him or her a feeling of safety and will help by not overly dramatizing the situation
- **reassure the child** and tell him or her that speaking up was the right thing to do
- **stress the fact that the child is not responsible for what happened** (it is not his or her fault). Do this only after having heard a factual account that tends to confirm that sexual abuse or harassment has indeed taken place
- **thank the child for having trusted you**, and tell him that you are going to help
- **also tell the child that his or her story cannot be kept a secret** since you have an obligation to report it to the authorities in order to obtain the help needed to guarantee the child's safety
- **tell the child** that you will have to notify his or her parents (if they are not suspects) and explain why you will do so (they are the ones primarily responsible for the child's safety)
- **immediately call the person responsible for the prevention of abuse or harassment, or for ethics-related issues, in your organization**, in order to determine the proper procedure to follow
- **quickly inform the parents** (if they are not suspects)
- **notify the Direction de la protection de la jeunesse (DPJ) and the police**

People working with children often develop a relationship of trust with them. Not only can this bond of trust help certain children to divulge instances of abuse and harassment, but it is often the only element that finally allows them to break the wall of silence.

In Québec, under the terms of the *Youth Protection Act*, every person who has reasonable grounds to believe that the security or development of a child is or may be considered to be in danger must bring the situation to the attention of the authorities without delay, even if he or she is subject to the bonds of confidentiality. The authorities in such cases are the Direction de la protection de la jeunesse (DPJ) or the police. Submitting a report to those in charge of your organization does not discharge you of the social responsibility to also submit one to the above-mentioned authorities. Notifications made to the DPJ are dealt with confidentially and, in case of doubt, it is always preferable to telephone the authorities to obtain clarification.

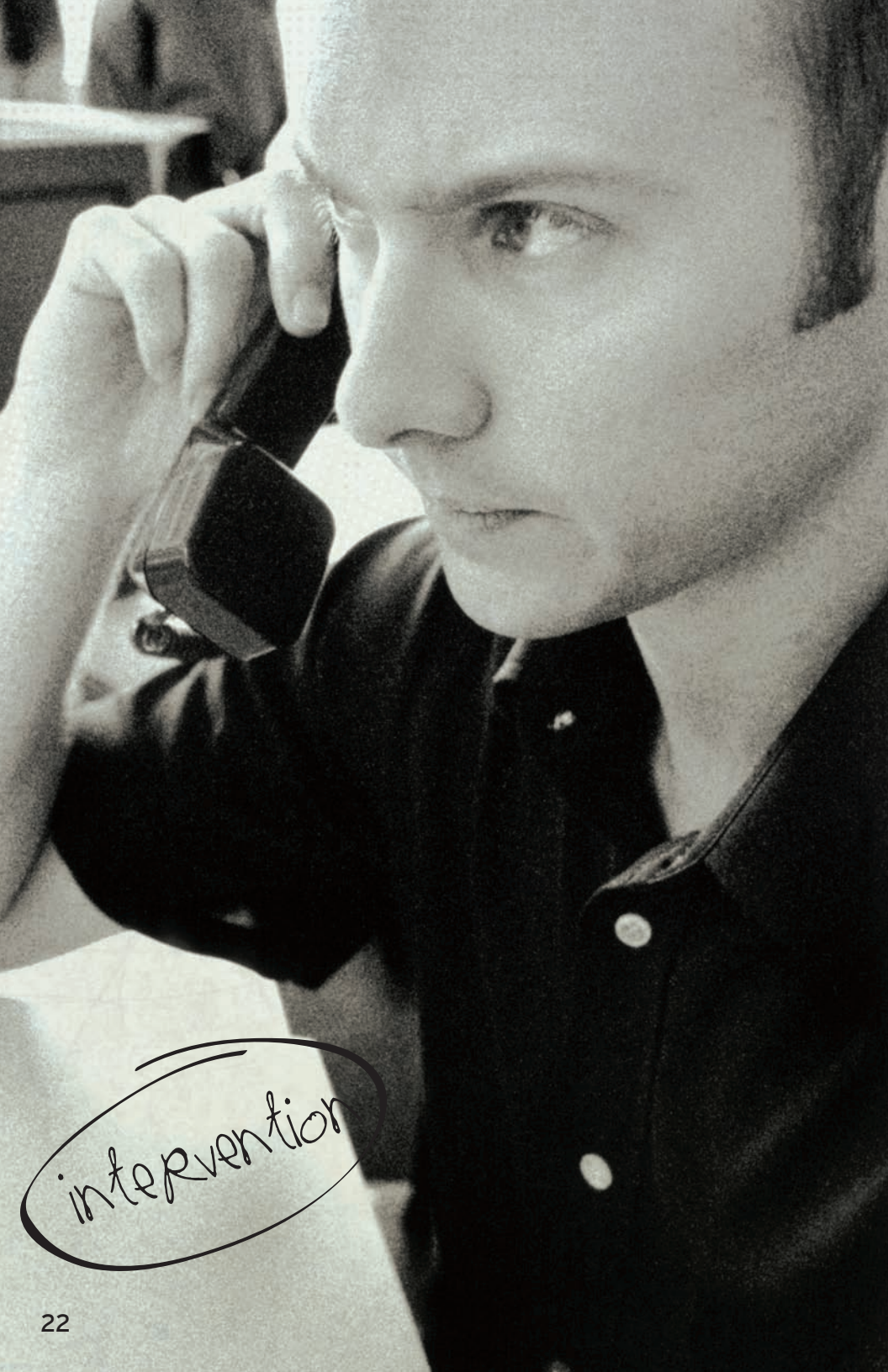




The Youth Protection Act requires every person "who has reasonable grounds to believe that the security or development of a child is or may be considered to be in danger must bring the situation to the attention of the authorities without delay."

From section 39 of the Youth Protection Act (R.S.Q., chapter P-34.1)

listening



intervention



# SOME RESOURCES YOU MIGHT WANT TO USE

## FOR PREVENTION

### **The unités régionales de loisir et de sport (URLS)**

The URLS in your area can provide you with documentation and help you develop prevention measures.

### **The person in charge of ethics-related issues in your organization**

Some organizations have policies dealing with prevention and intervention in the event of abuse and harassment. If your organization has such resources, you can contact the person in charge of ethics-related issues to obtain assistance and to determine the best way in which to intervene.

### **Your provincial federation**

You can contact your provincial federation to obtain information, documentation or support.

### **The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport**

You will find useful documentation on the MELS Web site:  
[www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/loisirSport](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/loisirSport)

## FOR PROBLEM SITUATIONS

### Youth Centres

A youth centre can help you and advise you on what to do in problem situations; or it can tell you the procedure to follow to report an incident.

### The police

You can also talk with a police officer in the youth section to learn what to do, or to determine the procedure to follow to report an incident.

### The centres de santé et de services sociaux (CSSS)

Some CSSS staff can provide necessary information, particularly on available resources. The CSSS are good places to direct a child or his/her parents in the aftermath of difficult events. Psychosocial follow-up services are generally provided.

### Different services available by phone

**Tel-jeunes** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Telephone hotline for young people between the ages of 5 and 20:

**1-800-263-2266**

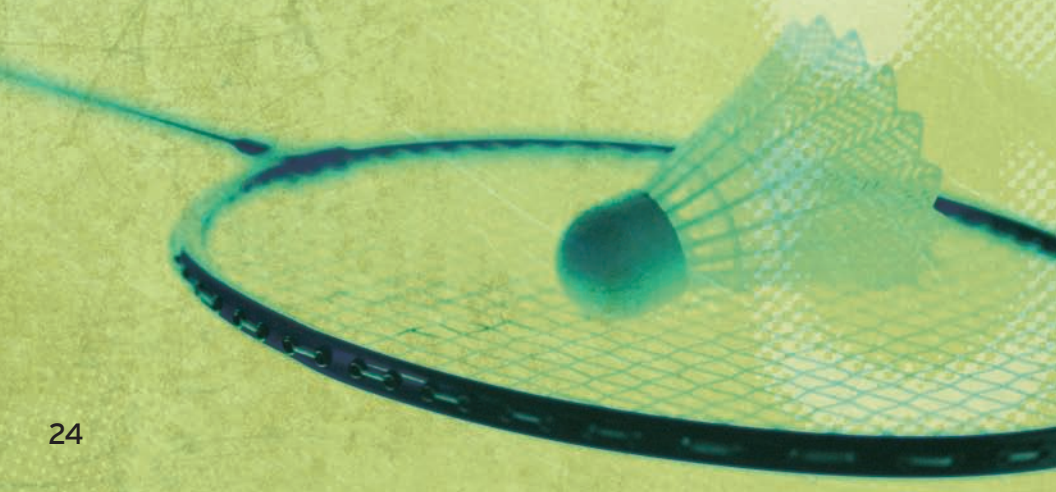
**The Parent Help Line** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Telephone hotline for parents:

**1-800-361-5085**

### The Web site

**[agressionsexuelle.com](http://agressionsexuelle.com)**







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