

Name: _____

Signed & Date: _____

HABITAT CANADA SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Trigger warning: Due to the nature of the subject of safeguarding, this policy contains language about sexual exploitation and abuse. The reader should be aware that it may be emotionally challenging.

1.0 Purpose

Wherever we serve, Habitat for Humanity's intent is to create and maintain a work and life environment that is safe, productive and respectful for colleagues, the people we serve, and the people we partner with. These safeguarding commitments guide our work as we strive to do good for (and never harm) each colleague, partner, beneficiary, and community member that we encounter while providing aid or promoting transformational and sustainable community development through shelter.

2.0 Policy

2.1. DEFINITIONS

- **Child** is defined as anyone who is not yet 18 years old.
- **Child Neglect:** Neglect occurs when a Child's basic needs have consistently not been met to the extent that it has a detrimental effect on the Child's health and personal development. These basic needs include food, clothing, shelter and supervision.
- **Child Sexual Abuse:** Child Sexual Abuse occurs when there has been any Sexual Exploitation (as defined below) of a Child. Child Sexual Abuse includes any actual, attempted or threatened sexual activity involving a Child such as intercourse, fondling, oral sex, indecent exposure, or exposing the Child to pornography.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Emotional Abuse occurs when persistent ill treatment of a person affects their self-esteem. This may include name-calling, exclusion, threatening, intimidating or any other acts that can affect the person's physical and emotional growth and self-esteem.
- **Habitat Representatives:** Staff members, board members, Key Volunteers (as defined below) and Volunteers in Leadership Positions (as defined below).
- **Key Volunteer:** Any volunteer, including a partner family member, who, through Habitat for Humanity programming, has consistent and direct contact with vulnerable populations, or is a repeat volunteer who consistently volunteers for more than eight hours per month.

- **Physical Abuse:** Physical Abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure anyone such as by punching, kicking, or burning. Physical injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures. Physical injuries will not always be visible.
- **Safeguarding** is preventing and responding to Emotional, Physical or Sexual Abuse, exploitation, harassment, or the bullying of the people in the communities we serve (especially Vulnerable Adults (as defined below) and Children) and the people with whom we work or partner.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal power dynamics or otherwise coercive conditions.
- **Sexual Exploitation:** Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Any unwelcome sexual advance, comment, expressed or implied sexual demand, touch, joke, gesture, or any other communication or conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, written, or visual.
- **Survivor:** A person who suffers harm resulting from a violation of this Safeguarding Policy.
- **Volunteer in Leadership Position:** Any volunteer who has access to Habitat for Humanity's beneficiaries, proprietary or other confidential information, especially if it includes sensitive personally identifiable information, or who has direct contact with beneficiaries.
- **Vulnerable Adult:** A person aged 60 or older with an impaired functional, physical or mental ability to care for themselves or an adult aged 18 or older who has a developmental disability and/or requires assisted care.

2.2. SAFEGUARDING BEHAVIOUR COMMITMENTS

Habitat for Humanity is opposed to any form of discrimination, exploitation and abuse, including slavery, coerced conscription, prostitution, trafficking of people for any purpose, Vulnerable Adult or Child abuse, and dangerous or exploitative Child labour. In the design and implementation of programs and policies, we seek to work without bias, to do no harm, and to minimize (rather than contribute to) the consequences of discrimination, exploitation and abuse.

All Habitat Representatives commit to respect and safeguard the rights and dignities of all people, and to protect our staff members, volunteers, partners, research participants, community members (especially Vulnerable Adults and Children) and those we intend to serve, from exploitation and abuse. This includes following the standards of behaviour listed below, both at work and away from work:

- Respecting, promoting and safeguarding the rights and dignities of all people (with particular attention to those we intend to serve, Vulnerable Adults and Children) without discrimination or bullying of any kind.
- Treating all those we serve or intend to serve with respect, courtesy and dignity.
- Not engaging in any form of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour toward those we serve or intend to serve in any circumstances.

- Not engaging in any abuse of authority, position or influence, such as by withholding humanitarian assistance or manipulating selection or targeting processes for those we serve or intend to serve.
- Helping to create and maintain an environment that prevents Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and that safeguards the rights of those we serve and intend to serve, research participants, and community members (especially Vulnerable Adults and Children).

2.2.1. Prevention of Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment

All Habitat Representatives are prohibited from engaging in Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment. This includes following the standards of behaviour listed below, both at work and away from work:

- Not engaging in Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment.
- Not engaging in sexual activity with a Child regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- Not exchanging money, employment, goods or services (including assistance that is due to those we serve or intend to serve) for sex, sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour.
- Not engaging in a sexual relationship with those we serve or intend to serve, since it is based on inherently unequal power dynamics and undermines the credibility and integrity of Habitat for Humanity's charitable mission.

2.2.2. Child Safeguarding

Habitat for Humanity believes that all children in all circumstances have the right to feel and be safe and to live free from harm, exploitation, abuse and harassment. Habitat for Humanity strives to be a child-safe organization and to reduce the risk of Child abuse in all aspects of our operations.

Habitat Representatives are prohibited from engaging in Child Sexual Abuse or Child Neglect. We must be aware of and comply with applicable local, provincial, and federal legislation related to child welfare and protection. We will strive to design our programs and execute Habitat for Humanity's mission in alignment with the following standards:

- Always keeping the health and safety of Children paramount.
- Considering Child Safeguarding in project planning and implementation to determine potential risks to Children associated with project activities and operations.
- Working to ensure that personal dignity and respect for Children is maintained in all projects, programs, and departments.
- Applying measures to reduce the risk of Child Sexual Abuse or Child Neglect, including but not limited to:
 - Limiting unsupervised interactions with Children.
 - Prohibiting exposure to pornography.
 - Complying with appropriate data responsibility standards and with applicable laws, regulations or customs regarding the photographing, filming or other activities generating images or audio recordings of Children.

2.2.3. Prohibition of Prostitution, Pornography and Human Trafficking

- a) **Prostitution:** Habitat for Humanity expressly prohibits sex trafficking and the procurement of commercial sex acts by any Habitat Representative.
- b) **Pornography:** Habitat affiliates will adhere to an affiliate board-approved internet use policy that prohibits all Habitat Representatives from accessing, possessing or circulating pornographic content using affiliate computers, affiliate-supported electronic devices, affiliate email accounts, affiliate-related electronic distribution lists, or an internet connection paid for by the affiliate; this includes sharing of emails or group texts (including jokes) containing explicit images. The policy should live in the employee handbook and appropriate volunteer documents. Habitat Representatives are also expected to model this behaviour away from the workplace.
- c) **Trafficking:** Habitat for Humanity expressly prohibits human trafficking and the use of forced labour by any Habitat Representative.

2.3. REPORTING AND HANDLING COMPLAINTS

2.3.1. Expectations of reporting

Habitat for Humanity International expects all Habitat Representatives (especially managers) to report all suspected Safeguarding misconduct immediately and expects affiliates to take swift action upon receiving a complaint.

Affiliates will adopt clear guidelines stating the responsibility to report potential Safeguarding misconduct and the disciplinary consequences of noncompliance. The guidelines will include a reporting process and require immediate notification to Habitat for Humanity International using the Habitat Ethics and Accountability Line (formerly known as MySafeWorkplace®) (link [here](#)) or by calling (800) 461-9330 for incidents in the following categories: Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Exploitation and Neglect.

Habitat for Humanity International will notify Habitat for Humanity Canada of any reports received concerning Habitat for Humanity Canada or a Canadian affiliate and will consult with Habitat for Humanity Canada, and with local affiliate management as appropriate, on the ensuing process, which may include investigation and/or notification of third parties.

2.3.2. Expectations of handling complaints

Habitat for Humanity affiliates will have an investigation process which should include a commitment to protecting confidentiality, clear documentation requirements, protocols for communication with the Survivor, and potential corrective actions. Habitat for Humanity affiliates will offer whistleblower protection in compliance with a board-approved whistleblower policy.

2.3.3. Outside reporting

Habitat for Humanity affiliates will comply with all relevant requirements related to mandatory reporting of alleged or confirmed Safeguarding misconduct to local authorities according to their

local jurisdiction. Additionally, there may be circumstances due to contractual, legal or donor obligations where it is required or appropriate to report alleged or confirmed Safeguarding misconduct to external parties such as donors, regulators or other governing bodies. Finally, Habitat for Humanity affiliates' approach for voluntary sharing of information related to Safeguarding misconduct allegations and investigations should be guided by the parallel philosophies of transparency (to donors, regulators and the public) and confidentiality (for the protection of Survivors). Wherever possible, information will be presented in a way that protects the Survivor's anonymity for confidentiality and safety reasons (except where relevant law might require disclosure).

2.4. PROTOCOLS FOR SURVIVOR ASSISTANCE

Support may be offered to Survivors, regardless of whether a formal internal response such as an internal investigation is carried out. In considering offering support, Habitat for Humanity may consult with both the Survivor and with appropriate local specialists. All decisions related to Survivor assistance will be documented.

2.5. OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SAFEGUARDING

2.5.1.

Habitat for Humanity affiliates will designate a Safeguarding Officer responsible for enacting this policy and sharing awareness on the issue of Safeguarding. The Safeguarding Officer will not be responsible for reporting (other than as a Habitat representative) or investigation unless otherwise agreed with the affiliate. In addition, affiliates will consider Safeguarding principles during strategic and project planning, along with monitoring and evaluation activities.

2.5.2.

Habitat for Humanity affiliates will ensure that their boards of directors receive regular updates on any Safeguarding allegations and investigations to facilitate effective process oversight.

2.5.3.

Habitat for Humanity affiliates will provide regular Safeguarding training and periodic refresher Safeguarding training as directed by Habitat for Humanity International or Habitat Representatives associated with the affiliate and may consider making such training available to other volunteers as it deems appropriate.

A Safeguarding training course is available from Habitat for Humanity International's Habitat Learns website here:

[Safeguarding Essentials Course: Habitat Learns](#)

2.5.4. Safeguarding Protocols during Recruitment

Safeguarding protocols must be considered during recruitment, for employees who have not been subject to a background check, and for board members and Key Volunteers who have not been subject to a background check in the previous three years, including consideration of references and available sources such as criminal background checks, sexual offender registries, and child abuse registries. For any prospective Habitat for Humanity employees, board members, or Key

Volunteers who are known to have had previous experience at another Habitat for Humanity organization, a reference check must be received by that organization and documented. Affiliate leaders receiving such reference requests will be expected to share any pertinent information of a serious nature relating to safeguarding matters and, if in doubt, should consult with their local legal counsel.

In rare cases where local law limits the ability to conduct a background check, Habitat for Humanity will seek local legal guidance and develop appropriate compensating controls. For information and resources regarding background checks, please see the link in the Supporting Resources section below.

3.0 Rationale

Habitat for Humanity recognizes that everyone has a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse. This policy sends a clear message that exploitation and abuse are not tolerated across the entire Habitat for Humanity network.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES:

- [Habitat for Humanity's commitment to safeguarding \(w/ENG subtitles\).](#)
- [Guidance for raising concerns](#)
- https://habitatlearns-sso.exceedlms.com/student/path/1005455-us-canada-affiliate-safeguarding-training?sid=a35732b6-3e00-45f0-90a4-3e17db482bdc&sid_i=15
- [Safeguarding Essentials Course: Habitat Learns](#)
- [Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\)](#) on Disasterready.org or [Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) on Kaya Connect

The Safeguarding Policy describes Habitat for Humanity's commitment to preventing and responding to harm caused by physical or sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment, or bullying of Habitat Representatives, people in the communities we serve (especially vulnerable adults and children), and people who we partner with.

I acknowledge that I have read and reviewed the requirements contained in the Safeguarding policy and agree that I will follow them. I further commit to report to Habitat Ethics and Accountability Line reporting tool ("HEAL") any suspected safeguarding misconduct and to help to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse, safeguards the rights of beneficiaries, research participants, and community members (especially vulnerable adults and children), and promotes the implementation of Habitat for Humanity's Volunteer Code of Conduct



We build strength, stability and self-reliance.

Name

Signature & Date
