

**Burlington Parks & Recreation Department
Child Abuse Prevention Policy**



Policy Statement

The Burlington Parks & Recreation Department supports and maintains environments that are free of child abuse, including but not limited to sexual abuse, and neglect. The Department does not tolerate abuse or misconduct in the workplace or during any programs or events. Further, the Department is committed to protecting minors from abuse while under the care and supervision of Department employees or volunteers.

Child abuse and neglect are defined as any recent act or failure to act which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.

Sexual abuse is defined as the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct, or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children.

Child abuse and neglect are unlawful acts, and it is against the Department's policy for any employee or volunteer to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any minor.

Employees and volunteers working directly with and/or supervising minors will be held to the highest standards. Those reasonably suspected or believed to have committed sexual abuse or misconduct will be appropriately disciplined, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service, as well as criminally prosecuted. No employee, volunteer, board member or other person, regardless of his or her title or position has the authority to commit or allow sexual abuse or misconduct.

Forms of Child Abuse

- Physical assault and threats of physical assault.
- Bullying and cyberbullying.
- Unwanted and intentional physical contact that is sexual in nature.
- Sexual activity or attempted sexual contact with a minor.
- Unwelcome and inappropriate comments that create a hostile environment for minors, including social media and electronic transmission of messages.

Signs of Suspected Child Abuse

Physical Abuse - Possible signs of physical abuse include:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes.
- Seems frightened of the parents or caregiver and protests or cries when it is time to go home.
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Neglect - Possible signs of neglect include:

- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- States that there is no one at home to provide care.
- Is unusually hungry or states lacking meals.

Sexual Abuse - Possible signs of sexual abuse include:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting.
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.

- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Employee Screening & Selection

All candidates where job duties involve interaction with minors are required to complete an application, have a personal interview(s) and submit a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) request prior to hire, in accordance with Town of Burlington's hiring policies.

Applicants that will have contact with minors will be required to consent to criminal background screening as a condition of employment when an employment offer is made. The CORI background screening shall be conducted through the MA Department of Criminal Justice Information Services. Employees with history of violent behavior, sexual abuse, or operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be disqualified. The Burlington Parks & Recreation Department will use the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Mandatory Disqualifications as a guideline when considering disqualification. (A copy of this list can be requested at the Burlington Parks & Recreation Department office.) For more information on the background screening, please see Burlington Parks & Recreation Department's Criminal Offender Record Information policy.

The Department ensures that all information obtained through background screening shall remain confidential. Only upon successful completion of screening can an employee be scheduled for duty.

All employees are expected to maintain vigilance and compliance to create and sustain an environment that is safe for minors.

Relationships with Minors Prohibited

Employees are prohibited from having any type of sexual relationship with a minor even if the minor or his or her parent(s) provide their expressed consent. Employees that are discovered to have violated this prohibition or have committed or are reasonably suspected of committing child abuse will be reported to the proper legal authorities and shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Proper Interaction with Minors

Physical contact between employees and minors shall always be (a) non-sexual, (b) appropriate to the circumstance, and (c) unambiguous in meaning. Boundaries consistent with employees' roles as supervisors of minors shall always be respected. Violations of boundaries include:

- Intentional contact that constitutes physical or sexual abuse or is otherwise potentially harmful to the well-being of a minor.
- Physical contact with a minor that is not age-appropriate or within the scope of the employee's responsibilities or duties.
- Touching or grabbing a participant to get his or her attention.
- Physical contact that demonstrates an intent to discriminate between participants or otherwise show favoritism.
- Touching for the purpose of punishing or intimidation. This does not include manual interventions necessary to protect the safety of the participant or others.
- Any gestures or movements that imply physical or sexual contact.

Prohibited Activities

- Being with a minor in a concealed area, including a locked room or a place where other adults cannot see or hear the adult's interaction with a minor or minors.
- Hosting an event for minors or inviting minors to homes unless such hosting or invitation is part of an approved departmental function.
- Inviting minors to employees' home without the presence of the minor's guardians, parents, or multiple adults as part of an approved departmental function.

- Entering a home with a minor unless the minor's guardians or parents are present and/or without the guardian's or parent's consent.
- Giving a minor a gift without the consent of the Department and the guardians or parents of the minor.
- Providing tobacco products, drugs, or alcohol to minors or purchasing tobacco products, drugs, or alcohol for minors. Always report use of tobacco products, alcohol, or illegal drugs by minors.
- Providing transportation to a minor or minors without approval of the Department and consent of the minor's guardians or parents; and without other adults being present; and
- Communicating to a minor on matters unrelated to performance of your duties in an unprofessional manner; or inappropriately via phone, letter, instant messaging, social media, email or in a chat room.

Volunteers

The Department utilizes volunteers for a variety of activities. Volunteers are classified into two categories; Type 1: One Time Volunteer and Type 2: Regular Volunteer.

Type 1 Volunteers are unpaid individuals not employed by the Department, that provide aid in support of programs and events on a one-time basis. Examples of Type 1 Volunteers include, and not limited to, , score/timekeepers, unpaid umpires, referees and other athletic officials, and guest presenters. These volunteers are those that will not have direct contact or supervision of minors.

Type 2 Volunteers are unpaid individuals, not employed by the Department, that provide aid in support of programs and events on a long term, regular or standing basis or have direct contact or supervision of minors. Examples of Type 2 volunteers include, and not limited to, chaperones, coaches, assistant coaches, equipment managers, counselors, care providers, aides, tutors, mentors, and instructors.

Volunteer Screening

The following screening criteria apply to Type 1 Volunteers:

- Must be interviewed by a Department employee
- Must be able to present a form of current, government-issued photo identification or school ID.
- Must complete a CORI background screening.
- Are required to display any volunteer identification badge or other as assigned by the Department which is to be surrendered at the conclusion of the volunteer activity.

The following screening criteria apply to Type 2 Volunteers:

- Must be. Interviewed by a Department employee
- Must be able to present some form of current, government-issued photo identification or school ID.
- Must complete and submit for approval a Volunteer Application.
- Must complete a CORI background screening
- Are required to display a volunteer identification badge or other to be surrendered at the conclusion of the day's volunteer activity.

Training

All employees and volunteers working with minors are required to successfully complete child abuse awareness training within the first thirty days of service. Training programs must include the following information:

- Forms of child abuse
- Signs of child abuse and neglect
- Reporting procedures
- Department policies and procedures related to abuse.

Reporting

The following reporting procedures apply to employees and volunteers working with minors.

Employee Reporting

In the event a minor tells an employee or volunteer that he or she has been the victim of child abuse or neglect, or an employee or volunteer suspects a minor to be a victim of child abuse or neglect, as described in this policy, that employee or volunteer is required to immediately report the alleged abuse to his or her supervisor or manager.

It is also expected that an employee, or volunteer, who witnesses or suspects a minor is intentionally hurting his or herself will report the incident or suspicion to his or her supervisor or manager.

If the minor is not in immediate harm, the employee or volunteer shall document the information as thoroughly as possible within 24 hours of the suspected or reported abuse and provides documentation to his or her supervisor or manager.

If the child is in immediate harm, the employee or volunteer should contact the police department or other child services agencies and notify his or her supervisor/manager.

Management Reporting

Supervisors and Managers shall follow the employee procedures in the event he or she learns that a minor has been the victim of child abuse or neglect or suspects a minor to be a victim of child abuse or neglect.

Supervisors and managers should immediately notify their department head upon any report of child abuse or neglect or suspected child abuse or neglect.

Department heads should, based on the totality of available information, make determination to notify the police department or other child services agencies.

Mandated Reporters

Nothing in this policy supersedes the State's mandated reporting requirements for the following positions: attorney; health care professional; licensed school psychologist; marriage and family therapist; coroner; administrator or employee of a child day-care center; administrator or employee of a residential camp, child day camp; administrator or employee of a certified childcare agency or other public children services agency; teacher; school employee; school authority; peace officer; humane society agent; dog warden, deputy dog warden, and animal control officer. Employees in these positions are required under Chapter 119 Section 51A of the Massachusetts General Law to adhere to specific reporting protocol.

Investigations

Investigations of reports of child abuse or neglect or suspected child abuse or neglect shall only be conducted by qualified individuals.

If additional information is required to determine if any reports of child abuse or neglect or suspected child abuse and neglect employees may engage in age-appropriate dialogue to confirm (or refute) initial reports.

Confidentiality

All reports of child abuse or neglect or suspected child abuse or neglect shall remain confidential and available only to law enforcement agencies and child services agencies.

Reports shall remain securely filed for a duration no less than 10 years after minor victim turns the age of majority.

Approved by Commission: 3/3/2025