



## **The Drake House Child Protection Policy**

### **I. Purpose**

The goal of The Drake House is for all residents, staff and volunteers to have a safe and fulfilling experience while at The Drake House. We are required by law to report any instances of abuse or neglect, including lack of supervision, to the Georgia Department of Children and Family Services. All staff members, residents and volunteers are trained on and required to sign off on The Drake House Child Protection Policy.

### **II. Definitions**

Sexual Abuse is sexual conduct with any person under eighteen years of age or without the mental capacity to consent. This includes the use or coercion of any child to engage in, or to assist in, any sexual conduct (or simulation for the purpose of producing a visual depiction) including, but not limited to molestation, rape, indecent exposure, the viewing of pornographic materials, and the specific acts listed in Georgia Annotated Code 19-7-5(b).

Sexual Harassment includes sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature such as sexual jokes, innuendo, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or display of sexual images that insult, degrade or sexually exploit others.

Physical Abuse includes, but is not limited to non-accidental punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand or object) and restraining a child. The Drake House considers such contact physical abuse even if the child sustains no injuries, or the adult never intended injury. Corporal punishment is never tolerated at The Drake House; this includes physical discipline such as paddling or spanking.

Emotional and Verbal Abuse includes (but is not limited to) belittling, insulting, rejecting, teasing, bullying, and unreasonable demands beyond a child's capabilities. Such actions threaten a child's psychological development, and The Drake House considers them emotional abuse even if there is no observable change in the child's behavior, mood, response or cognition.

### **III. Safety Practices**

#### **Background Checks**

Staff: Criminal background checks are performed for all staff members of TDH.

Volunteers: All volunteers are required to complete a volunteer application and orientation. All approved Drake House volunteers must agree to a criminal background check, as well as reference checks.

Residents: Background checks are performed on all residents. Residents of TDH are required to review and sign TDH Family Expectations and Guidelines.

#### **Standards of Operation for Child Safety**

##### **1. General**

a. All approved volunteers and staff working with children/youth must exhibit appropriate behavior at all times including: appropriate language (no profanity, no belittling, and no sexual banter, either explicit or by innuendo), appropriate dress and appropriate physical contact (no pushing, no striking, no wrestling, no unwelcome touching).

b. Other prohibited conduct includes using, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or being impaired by legally prescribed drugs. Any tobacco use is also prohibited. Weapons (other than those of law enforcement personnel) may not be brought onto TDH property.

c. Volunteers and staff shall respect the identity of all residents at TDH, and shall not disclose any information about the families, nor acknowledge a family's residence at TDH, unless authorized by the family for such disclosure.

d. Volunteers and staff are asked to refrain from initiating any physical contact with residents. Parental permission in regards to physical contact with children is advised.

e. The Drake House does not expect, ask, or encourage volunteers to transport families. In the event that a volunteer chooses to transport any adult or children residents of TDH, total liability is upon the volunteer.

f. When interacting with residents of TDH, two (2) adults must be present when a volunteer or staff member is alone with children or with adults of the opposite gender. This includes transporting residents in one's private vehicle.

g. Giving residents of TDH money is not advised. Should a volunteer be made aware of a family's need for assistance, the volunteer should discuss the matter with a staff social worker.

h. Persons violating this policy may be removed from the privilege of working or volunteering at TDH.

i. Best practice of TDH is two approved adult volunteers (age 18 and older) or staff members present when tending to children/youth. When one-on-one contact between an adult and a child/youth is required, the meeting should be conducted in view of other adults.

j. All classrooms and meeting rooms which do not have an unobstructed glass panel must remain open. If a door does not have a glass panel, the top-half of the door must remain open.

## **2. Monday Night Program**

a. Seventh graders and younger should be escorted to and from their classroom/meeting place by a parent/authorized guardian or an approved volunteer/staff. Children will be released only to those authorized on their registration or sign-in form or as specified by the parent or guardian.

b. If a child/youth needs adult assistance in a restroom, the door must remain ajar and another volunteer/staff member must be present. This includes the changing of diapers.

c. If a younger child cannot be comforted, nursery attendants will make every effort to locate parents/guardians before the child becomes too distraught.

d. Diaper bags, sippy cups, bottles, and other personal possessions brought into the nursery should be labeled with the child's name.

e. Nursery toys will be cleaned and sanitized regularly.

f. While on the playground, volunteers and/or staff will monitor all areas of the playground, being especially mindful of high areas, gates, and swings.

## **IV. Emergency Plan**

The lower level of The Drake Center is the designated safe area for all individuals upon weather siren alerts. Should the dangerous weather occur after business hours, TDH Resident Manager will facilitate access to the building. TDH shall ensure that all fire extinguishers, alarms, first-aid kits, and emergency lighting are functional and that evacuation routes are posted in every classroom and apartment.

In the event of a fire alarm, residents will exit the building safely and meet on the lawn in front of The Drake House sign.

## **V. Reporting**

1. Georgia Code – Title 19-7-5 defines "*Child service organization personnel as persons employed by or volunteering at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children.*" The law further states that child service organization personnel, "*having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused shall report or cause reports of that abuse to be*

*made as provided in this Code section."* Therefore, under this law, TDH volunteers and staff members are mandatory reporters of child abuse.

2. An individual (whether a volunteer or employee of TDH) who deems **physical or sexual child abuse** (as defined in Section II) has or is taking place, shall notify law enforcement immediately. Anyone who suspects or who has witnessed an incident of emotional or verbal abuse (as defined in Section II) must, after ensuring the safety of the victim, report the incident immediately to law enforcement. The reporter is requested to then provide a written report to The Drake House staff member in charge of the facility or program (if that staff member is not the alleged abuser). The recipient of this report will immediately notify the parent/guardian of the child involved unless the parent or guardian is the alleged abuser.
3. If a situation of **verbal or emotional abuse** is observed, a report should be made immediately to a member of the TDH staff. TDH staff will handle the situation with appropriate investigation of the incident, education or discipline of the accused (including his/her removal from work with children).
4. Georgia Code – Title 19-7-5 requires that an oral report of child abuse be made *"no later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused, by telephone or otherwise and followed by a report in writing, if requested, to the child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Services, or in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney."* (Note: in most instances, the Police Department will be the only readily available agency for reporting within the necessary time frame). Leaving a message on the DFCS answering machine does not satisfy the reporting requirement.

Phone Numbers:

- a. Roswell Police Department: (770) 640-4100 or (770) 993-4100 or 911
- b. If child is in immediate danger: 911
- c. DFCS: (404) 699-4399 or (404) 252-2180

#### **VI. Policy Review**

The program committee of TDH Advisory Board will review the Child Protection Policy every year for the purpose of making recommendations for changes to TDH Board of Directors.

#### **VII. Attachments**

TDH Family Expectations and Guidelines  
Volunteer Guidelines

I have read and understand The Drake House Protection Policy and agree to abide by its standards. I also agree to provide references and submit to a drug screen and criminal background check.

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Staff/Volunteer

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Date

6/20/13; updated 1/18/18