



# SEX ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

# SEX ABUSE PREVENTION: A KATY CARES SAFETY POLICY



## STATEMENT

**Keeping women and children safe from abuse through prevention, observation, evaluation, recognizing and by responding effectively to situations and circumstances that might, in any way, compromise their safety and security.**

## INTRODUCTION

Katy Cares is committed to creating a safe environment for women and children, our Program participants, our employees, and volunteers. This allows everyone the opportunity to communicate, share, learn, grow, work, live and serve together and impact lives positively. It is important to us that all Program participants, staff and volunteers are not harmed in any way or experience any threat while participating in activities. Katy Cares' policy is developed to address, discuss, evaluate and treat victims of sexual, emotional, psychological and physical abuse. Part of our Program curriculum also focuses on preventing any form of abuse.

Sexual abuse is defined as any sexual activity with where consent is not or cannot be given by the woman or the child. This includes sexual contact that takes place through violence, force or threat of force, intimidation and/or manipulation. This is true regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual contact between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity.

Sexual contact between older and younger children can also can be abusive if there is a significant disparity in age, development, or size, rendering the younger child incapable of giving informed consent. The sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching, or non-contact sexual acts such as exposure or voyeurism and or verbal remarks, suggestions to have sex or perform sexual favors in return for gifts, financial or other benefits. The following components were identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through comprehensive consultation and research:

- Screening and selecting employees and volunteers.
- Guidelines on interactions between individuals.
- Monitoring and evaluating behavior.
- Ensuring safe therapeutic environments
- Responding to inappropriate behavior, breaches in policy, and allegations and suspicions of sexual abuse Training about sexual abuse prevention.

# SEX ABUSE PREVENTION: A KATY CARES SAFETY POLICY



The same dynamics in a therapeutic environment that create a nurturing and safe environment, that may ultimately protect against sexual abuse, can also open the door to sexually abusive behaviors by those who are in power, control or older. Research has shown that those who are emotionally insecure, needy, and unsupported may be more vulnerable to the attentions of offenders.

Katy Cares understands by promoting close and caring relationships between adults and adults and youths and adults, we can help those involved in our Program feel supported and loved and thus reduce their risk of sexual abuse. That same closeness, however, between Program participants can also provide an opportunity for abuse to occur. When acknowledge that there must be a balance between the need to keep everyone safe with the need to nurture and care for them.

## RESPONSIBILITY

Sexuality is both a gift from God but also comes with enormous responsibility. It is central to our being and, used and practiced rightly, a source of joyous fulfilment. But it is a divine gift susceptible to abuse, particularly in relationships of trust, and/or between adults and children. Those who work and serve Katy Cares, whether paid or unpaid, maintain a powerful relationship of authority and trust with the individuals, single parents and children who are enrolled and participate in our Program. The betrayal of that trust through the violation of sexual boundaries causes great emotional, spiritual and physical harm. Katy Cares is committed to take every step to prevent abuse, and to respond with swift action should misconduct occur.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, suggestions and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when: submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's behavior, unreasonably interferes with an any individual's work performance or participation in our Program and/or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or therapeutical environment.

## APPROACH

Katy Cares will not tolerate any form of sexual misconduct involving its therapists, employees and/or volunteers. Every person who serves our organization in any form or capacity is expected to maintain the highest ethical standards in relationships with those individuals, single parents and their children. That commitment extends to sexual behavior. If it is discovered that any person who is currently involved or is potentially going to be involved with Katy Cares who has a civil or criminal record of child sexual abuse, who have admitted committing prior sexual abuse, or who are known

# SEX ABUSE PREVENTION: A KATY CARES SAFETY POLICY



to have a paraphiliac diagnosis (for example, paedophilia, exhibitionism, or voyeurism) as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, will not be permitted to interact or serve in our organization in any capacity.

If an employee or paid contractor is guilty of any form of abuse, such individual's employment/contract will be terminated with immediate effect. The same is applicable to any current and potential volunteer.

Katy Cares is also committed to providing Trauma Informed Therapeutic care to all involved with and/or affected by instances of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct. It may include providing guidance, support, consolation and even confrontation, involving law enforcement, if and when required.

## DEFINING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse of a child is a criminal offense in the United States. A sexually abused child is younger than 18 years of age whose parents or any other person/s responsible for his or her care: commit or allow to be committed any illegal sexual act, including rape, incest, indecent exposure, and prostitution, or allow a child to be used in any sexually explicit and/or pornographic visual material.

Child abuse, including sexual abuse, that takes place within the immediate family or where the child is in the care of another adult, is the responsibility of the County's/City's Child Protective and Welfare Services. In other situations where the child is abused by a non-caretaker, whether that person is known to the child or not, local law enforcement is responsible for the investigation. Child neglect or abuse is also defined as:

- Causing, or threatening to cause a non-accidental physical or mental injury, or creating a substantial risk of impairment of bodily or mental function.
- Neglecting or refusing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, health care and/or any other basic need or necessity.
- Neglecting or refusing to provide adequate supervision in relation to a child's/children's age and level of development, and
- Abandoning the child/children.

Sexual abuse encompasses acts of sexual assault and sexual exploitation by a parent or both parents or any other caregiver/s and/or adult/s. It includes a broad range of unethical and unwanted behaviors, such as fondling, oral vaginal or anal intercourse, indecent exposure, voyeurism and

# SEX ABUSE PREVENTION: A KATY CARES SAFETY POLICY



sexual exploitation. It may consist of a single incident or of many/several incidents over a long period of time. Victims range in age from infants to teenagers. It can be overt, such as where favors, gifts, goods and money are given in return for sexual favors.

It can be more subtle, such as where a sexual relationship develops between an employee or therapist or any person employed by the organization or any individual enrolled in our Program. This includes someone receiving therapy, coaching and mentoring or any supervisory relationship. Feelings of attraction can develop from unequal relationships, giving rise to exploitation even where there is apparent consent from both individuals. This is why a romantic relationship between a Katy Cares employee whose role as a therapist, coach, mentor and/or advisor places him/her in a position of power, whether or not it involves sexual relations is prohibited.

## **ADULT SEXUAL ABUSE**

Sexual abuse refers to any act committed with the intent to molest sexually, or to arouse or gratify, where the abuser touches or forces the abused to touch the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, buttocks, or the material touching such intimate parts. It also can include sexual contact with minors or legal incompetents, even where that contact seems consensual.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

The term sexual harassment comes from employment law and refers to behavior of a sexual nature that is experienced by an employee in the workplace. This is applicable to adults participating in the Program and those who are receiving benefits and support services. There are two broad categories:

- In quid pro quo harassment, an employee's hiring, pay, remuneration, promotion or maintenance of a job/employment is made contingent on their response to sexual advances.
- In quid pro quo harassment, a Program participant's therapy, counselling and especially support services and benefits is made contingent on their response to sexual advances.
- In a hostile environment harassment, unwelcome sexual conduct unreasonably interferes with an employee's job performance or creates a hostile, intimidating or offensive work environment.
- In a hostile therapeutic environment harassment, unwelcome sexual conduct unreasonably interferes with a Program participant's progress, openness, willingness to share and eventually resulting in leaving the Program.

# SEX ABUSE PREVENTION: A KATY CARES SAFETY POLICY



Harassment can take four forms:

- Physical Harassment involves unwanted physical touching of the hair, body or clothing, or even purposefully brushing against someone. Prolonged hugs, especially front to front, or those with pelvic contact or rubbing the hands across the back, could constitute physical harassment, as could the unwanted massage of the shoulders, back or neck. Even behavior that is intended to be playful could be considered physical harassment.
- Verbal Harassment includes making explicit comments or innuendos about one's own sex life, or asking questions about another's sexual behavior. Verbal harassment can include comments about a person's anatomy or clothing that may be perceived as sexual, using nicknames with sexual connotations (such as "hunk" or "babe"), or making repeated requests for social engagements. It can also take the form of sexually oriented humor or language, or sending e-mails, telephone messages or other communications that contain such humor or language. It is important to note that appropriate conversational norms develop and evolve in every workplace or therapeutic environment or community over time.
- Non-verbal Harassment can include displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, from cartoons to calendars, photos or images, to displaying one's own body parts through lack of clothing or positioning of the body. It also includes making sexual gestures with hands or body movements, and making facial expressions that communicate sexual or romantic interest
- Online Harassment often referred to as cyber-bullying describes the use of any electronic device or equipment to harass, threaten or maliciously embarrass. It can involve such behaviors as sending unsolicited and/or threatening email and/or text messages, encouraging others to send the victim unsolicited or threatening email, sending viruses by email (electronic sabotage), spreading rumors, making defamatory comments, sending negative messages, impersonating the victim by sending inflammatory, controversial or enticing text messages which can cause others to respond negatively to the victim, harassing the victim during a live chat, leaving abusive messages online, sending the victim pornography or graphic material that is knowingly offensive or sharing online content that depicts the victim in negative or intimate ways.

Katy Cares requires healthy boundaries while employees and/or therapists communicate and engage with fellow employees and/or Program participants as no digital communications are confidential. Everything posted online or sent to and received from any electronic device is public and accessible.

# SEX ABUSE PREVENTION: A KATY CARES SAFETY POLICY



## PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND ADULT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT TRAINING

Training is also a crucial deterrent to child sexual abuse and adult sexual misconduct. It is important that employees and volunteers, where applicable, are orientated regarding what types of behavior can foster an environment where misconduct can take place. Kay Cares is committed to equip all staff to recognize warning signs of misconduct and has policies and practices in place to prevent misconduct. Our therapists know how to respond in the event that misconduct does happen.

## SCREENING, RECRUITING AND OR HIRING

Another effective means of reducing the incidence of child sexual abuse or adult sexual misconduct is to screen all potential new employees and volunteers paid and unpaid. Such screening includes:

- Carefully reviewing a signed job application.
- Conducting a personal reference check.
- Conducting a background check.
- Within the first six months volunteers will not be in a position that puts them in one-to-one contact with children.

## WARNING SIGNS AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Our therapists are aware of the power differential that exists between leaders and employees or employees and Program participants. They understand the danger signs of sexual boundary breakdown:

- Excessive self-disclosure by the employee/volunteer.
- Excessive availability, including giving or receiving inappropriate gifts.
- Excessive touch; undue anticipation of future visits, including rearrangement of one's schedule.
- Excessive fretting about clothing or appearance.
- Meeting at a secluded or private location.
- Anything tying extra emotional energy to the meeting.
- Continual fantasy about the person; and keeping secrets that go beyond the requirements of professional confidentiality.

Our therapists are aware that there are sexually aggressive, emotionally very needy, even predatory individuals in any community. Their purpose may be an inappropriate attachment and perhaps sexual misconduct. Our therapists use prudence regarding times and places of meeting, especially

# SEX ABUSE PREVENTION: A KATY CARES SAFETY POLICY



until a person's motives are known. All Katy Cares employees know that the person in power, they themselves, are responsible for keeping appropriate boundaries even if pursued.

All allegations of sexual misconduct will be taken seriously by the therapist, the President and the Board of Directors. If they involve a minor, the allegations will be investigated and if found to be true, law enforcement will be involved. If management learns of or suspect sexual misconduct by any employee, therapist or volunteer, it will be addressed without delay.

## PERSONAL PRECAUTIONS

No employee or therapist should do a home visit to any Program participant unless accompanied by a therapist or a member of the therapeutic team. Discretion and good judgment should be exercised to avoid any occasion when misconduct might occur or might appear to be occurring.

Employees understand that they need to be careful about social occasions with only one Program participant that can lead to sexual misconduct or the appearance of sexual misconduct. It may be appropriate, when one an employee or therapist is comforting a grieving victim of sexual abuse, for example, to embrace a Program participant in a reassuring manner that communicates acceptance or inclusion. However, an identical embrace might be inappropriate when an employee or therapist shares about his/her dysfunctional marriage or relationship and the embrace unintentionally conveys an alternate form of intimacy.

Sensitivity and discretion are necessary. It is proper to ask first before offering a physical embrace. It is always safer to hug side-to-side, instead of face-to-face. A pat on the shoulder may be most appropriate when you want to express concern and keep some emotional distance at the same time. None of these precautions are meant to inhibit appropriate therapeutic intimacy. They are illustrations of the prudent limits mature employees and therapists accept for effective counselling.

## INSTITUTIONAL WARNING SIGNS

Abuse is more likely to occur when:

- The boundaries in an organization are not clear. When, for example, work and personal/social situations are consistently blended.
- When there is very rigid or closed communication so that what happens takes place in secret.
- When there is poor or non-existent supervision, particularly with new or junior staff and newly enrolled participants.

# SEX ABUSE PREVENTION: A KATY CARES SAFETY POLICY



- When there is a controlling or charismatic person and disagreement would be seen as a betrayal of that person.

## INSTITUTIONAL PRECAUTIONS AND PROHIBITIONS

- Katy Cares do not allow any romantic or intimate relationships between staff, volunteers and Program participants.
- Appropriately screen staff when hiring. The same principle applies to volunteers.
- Ensure that all staff receive training in the prevention of sexual misconduct.
- While there are no rules about having mutually agreed upon romantic relationships, they ought to be entered into very carefully so as not to disrupt the Organization's ability to fulfil its mission and meet obligations. Secrecy in a relationship can be particularly dangerous.
- Criminal background checks will be completed before any employees are hired or should a volunteer's hours/involvement exceed five hours a week.
- Interview/communicate with all the references provided in the application process. Keep records at all stages of the screening process, making them easily accessible for future reference, and to maintain their confidentiality.
- No computer or other electronic device in a Katy Cares office space may be used to access any form of pornography or used to solicit any sexual acts.
- Katy Cares expressly prohibits viewing any form of pornography on official computers and in the office space.
- Those who are designated to drive must have no record of convictions for the past five years for drunk driving, driving under the influence, driving with a suspended or revoked license, or reckless endangerment.
- A therapist, employees and/or volunteer should never be alone in a vehicle with a child other than their own.

## SAFE PRACTICES FOR CONGREGATIONS FOR PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

The best way to prevent child sexual abuse is to make sure that there are always two or more unrelated adults with one or more children at all times. Be aware of any physical, behavioral, and emotional boundary violations. These safe practices are not meant to inconvenience therapists, employees and volunteers but to protect children. They can also help protect adults from unfounded accusations. Some of the behaviors that can lead to false allegations include:

- Meeting and/or counselling alone in isolated places.
- Wearing provocative or revealing attire.

# SEX ABUSE PREVENTION: A KATY CARES SAFETY POLICY



- Meeting in homes and in bedrooms without others present.
- Giving special or secret gifts and/or money.
- Keeping secrets about the relationship.
- Failing to adhere to uniform or accepted standards of affection.

## INDIVIDUAL THERAPEUTIC CARE

While one-on-one therapy is a fundamental part of our Program, care must be taken to see that it is conducted in an environment that provides visibility. Another therapist, employee or adult should know the volunteer's or staff member's whereabouts and with whom he or she is meeting. No one should engage in secretive and private relationships with children younger than 18 years of age. As a general rule, there should be no more than three to five private meetings with any one child or young person per year.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of the complainant, the accused and all other parties will be observed, provided it does not impede the organization's ability to investigate or take corrective action. All reports and reported incidences will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated and will be treated confidentially.

## MEDIA INQUIRIES AND STATEMENTS

A spokesperson will be appointed by the Board of Directors to respond to media inquiries and to advise the Board on media relations. No statements shall be made by anyone other than the appointed spokesperson. Written statements are to be prepared and presented to the Board before released to the printed and electronic media.

### *Katy Cares thanks and acknowledges:*

- *The guidelines provided and published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control Division of Violence Prevention Atlanta, Georgia.*
- *The Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Prevention and Response Manual of the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego, California.*

**END**