

Safeguarding and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy

GNCA's work, both internally and as a collective of members, is grounded in our shared vision of global social justice, human dignity and participation for all. Our policies are designed to meet GNCA's internal needs as an organization, however they are guided by ideals about anti-oppression, human rights, international cooperation, and the appropriate meeting of human needs articulated in a multitude of places by multilateral bodies, states, and civil society groups.

1. Purpose

As a humanitarian development charity with an inherent power dynamic between service providers and service users, it is vital that Good Neighbours Canada and all Good Neighbors offices maintain the strictest safeguarding procedures so as to minimize the risk of harm to all service users we come into contact with; particularly children and vulnerable adults. Good Neighbours has a zero tolerance to any harm or sexual exploitation and abuse against any beneficiaries or program participants.

On the whole, the work of Good Neighbours Canada is more removed from direct service users than our international partner Good Neighbors offices. However, it is vital for all GNCA staff to know and understand the correct protocol for navigating safeguarding concerns since they could occur at any time.

2. Scope

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everybody. As such, this policy applies to all GNCA staff, volunteers, board members, partners, contractors and other third parties.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy,

Child: Any individual under the age of 18 years old.

Service user: Any individual accessing the support of Good Neighbors programs.

Vulnerable adult: Any individual aged 18 or above, who has limited cognitive capacity. This can include, but is not limited to, mental disabilities, learning disabilities, physical impairment, lived or current experience of trauma, and old age. Cognitive capacity can also be considered to be temporarily limited among adults who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

4. Mandate

Safeguarding and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) is everyone's shared responsibility, and all GNCA employees and partners are required to adhere to the Good Neighbors Code of Conduct both during and outside working hours. Familiarization with and adherence to the

GN Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct is an essential requirement of all employees and partners, in addition to related mandatory training. All employees and partners must ensure that they understand and act in accordance with this clause.

5. Background checks

All staff and long-term volunteers shall be required to undergo a criminal background check. These can be acquired directly from one’s local police unit. It will be made clear in the job posting whether this will be the responsibility of the prospective employee, or Good Neighbors Canada, to obtain and pay for it.

In circumstances where a prospective employee has recently moved to Canada, they may also be required to obtain a criminal background check in their previous country/ies of residence. This will be communicated by GNCA management, again with clear instructions regarding whose responsibility this process shall be.

6. Safe onboarding of staff

The hiring manager/s for any role are responsible for ensuring safeguarding commitments are upheld at each stage of recruitment.

- Including a clause related to safeguarding in job advertisements
- Ensuring criminal background checks are obtained for any prospective employee whose role will go beyond back office work, and who will be in direct contact with children and/or vulnerable adults. Candidates with a former history of interpersonal crime will be rejected; other types of non-interpersonal misconduct will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Including a question relating to safeguarding protocols during the interview process and ensuring candidates are willing to comply with safeguarding procedures.

New staff are expected to sign to agree to abide by this Safeguarding and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse policy. The direct supervisor for each staff member is responsible for obtaining this signature.

Training relating to safeguarding shall occur as follows:

Who?	When?	What?
All staff and long-term volunteers (support term of 3 months or more)	Within 2 weeks of onboarding	Complete the GN GPC Safeguarding training program (parts I and II)
All staff and short-term volunteers who have direct contact with service users	Immediately, and before any contact with service users takes place	Complete the GN GPC Safeguarding training program (parts I and II)

Any staff or volunteers with questions regarding our safeguarding policy and protocols	Within 2 working days of questions arising	To be directed to the GN GPC Safeguarding Policy explanation training.
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7. Raising a safeguarding concern

Any staff member, volunteer, board member or other associate of Good Neighbours Canada with suspicion of any safeguarding concern has a duty to report this immediately. Failure to raise a safeguarding concern, no matter how seemingly small, may result in severe damage. We encourage all staff to raise concerns even when they appear to be minor, as they may add to a bigger picture and a broader understanding of any goings-on.

Safeguarding concerns may include a suspected perpetrator, however often may be unexplainable events relating to a child or vulnerable adult. Even if there is no suspected perpetrator at the time, again, the concerned individual is obliged to report their concerns immediately.

There will never be any negative consequences to the reporter for raising a legitimate safeguarding concern.

There are multiple channels for raising a safeguarding concern, such that anyone who has witnessed or suspected safeguarding violations may come forward to any one of these channels. We encourage reporting to the lowest numbered contact on this list where possible, to enable the timeliest response to any reports, however in situations where it is not possible for management to be notified (e.g. if the concern you have is related to them directly), please proceed to contact the next available contact on the list.

Within Good Neighbours Canada, the channels are as follows:

1. Project Manager - Matthew Neill - 833-614-4663 ext 705 | m.neill@gncanada.ca
2. Executive Director - Hyang Cho - 833-614-4663 ext 700 | h.cho@gncanada.ca
3. Chair of Board of Directors - Beth Zener - 437-580-5167 | bethleighz@gmail.com
4. Good Neighbors safeguarding hotline - safeguarding@goodneighbors.org.

(Individuals wishing to report via this safeguarding hotline will need to fill in the Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form which can be found as Annex 6 of the GN Safeguarding Policy).

Safeguarding concerns are to be relayed by GNCA safeguarding contacts to the local authorities as follows:

- Child or vulnerable adult is at risk of immediate harm → Immediate referral to police by calling 911.
- Child is at risk of future harm → Referral within 24 hours to the closest children's aid society as per Ontario guidelines (see Appendix for link).

- Vulnerable adult is at risk of future harm → Referral within 24 hours to ReportON as per Ontario guidelines (see Appendix for link).

If an alleged perpetrator is a staff member or partner of Good Neighbours Canada, immediate action will be taken. The individual will be suspended while the issue is investigated, including the placement of appropriate referrals where required. In situations where allegations are proven justified, the individual's contract will be immediately terminated for-cause, without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Stakeholder notification of an incident, including to donors where applicable, is to be made within 14 business days after completion of an investigation and determined on a case-by-case basis in line with contractual, legal, and ethical obligations, while upholding confidentiality and the safety of all parties involved.

8. Safe management of information relating to children or vulnerable adults

GNCA staff may occasionally come across identifiable information of Good Neighbors service users, or personal information or photographs of other children or vulnerable adults. As per the Good Neighbours Canada Employment Manual, staff are reminded that such information remains confidential and should be shared internally only on a need-to-know basis. Any breaches of this protocol will be addressed by management and formal warnings, revoking of access, or contract termination notices may be issued to repeat offenders.

9. Appendix

- [GN Code of Conduct](#)
- [GN Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [GN GPC Safeguarding training program](#)
- [GN GPC Safeguarding policy explanation training](#)
- [GNCA Employment Manual](#)
- [Ontario guidance on Children's Aid Societies](#)
- [Ontario guidance on ReportON for vulnerable adults](#)

Policy adopted by Good Neighbours Canada

Date: August 27, 2025

Approved by Chair of Board of Directors: Ms Beth Leigh Zener

Date of next review: August 2027