



## **CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services**

### **Youth Protection Policy**

This policy provides guidance for programs, services and activities related to successful implementation of CAPTAIN's Youth Protection Policy, however this document is not exhaustive.

Use good judgment and ask your supervisor for clarification or when in doubt.

### **CAPTAIN Youth Protection Policy**

CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services is committed to providing a safe and caring environment for all young people. Our greatest priority is the well being, health and protection of youth in our care. All CAPTAIN employees and volunteers are vital to this comprehensive youth protection strategy and will actively work to ensure the safety of youth, report suspected abuse, and create an environment of care that will enrich the lives of the young people we work with.

### **Purpose of Policy:**

To create a safe and caring environment for the children and young people who receive services from or are involved in programming with CAPTAIN at its various sites. This policy provides a guideline that should be followed in all interactions between adults and youth. This policy was created to help protect children, staff, volunteers and others who are a part of any and all CAPTAIN related programs and services.

A significant component of this policy is a background check and screening process for all employees, and those volunteers who have direct contact with youth. CAPTAIN's screenings process may include checking any or all of the following; NYS Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, NYS Sex Offender Registry, Social Security verification, and NYS felony criminal conviction check. Background checks and screenings will be handled by a third party provider and all information gathered during this process will be kept confidential and locked in a secure file cabinet in the Executive Director's office. The only individuals who will have access to this information will be the Executive Director, who may consult with the Director of Program Services and the President of the Board of Directors.

### **Who is this Policy For?**

All CAPTAIN staff and volunteers.

### **Policy:**

1. All CAPTAIN employees and volunteers will receive Youth Protection Policy training upon hire or engagement as a volunteer, and will participate in annual recertification training. Compliance is a mandatory condition of employment and volunteering. All employees and volunteers will sign off on training certification sheet upon completion of the training session.



## CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services

### **Youth Protection Policy**

2. CAPTAIN programs, services and activities are primarily group based. Staff and Volunteers should spend time working with students in the identified program areas. Some activities such as case management, counseling and other activities require individualized services; however every effort should be made to provide these individualized services in common areas and public places. No activities or services should be provided behind closed doors.
3. CAPTAIN policy does not allow a ratio of **1 staff/volunteer and 1 youth**. CAPTAIN policy is to maintain the ***“Rule of Three”*** with all activities. This translates to 1 staff/volunteer to 2 or more youth, or 2 staff/volunteers to 1 youth. If an emergency situation arises or a critical staffing issue presents itself, this ratio may be temporarily suspended until the situation stabilizes. However, the specific program site Coordinator, Supervisor, or their immediate supervisor are the only people who can make that determination, and can authorize a staffing/volunteer ratio of 1 staff/volunteer to 1 youth.

If there is a need to discuss an issue with a youth in private, volunteers should let a CAPTAIN staff know the situation, and find an area that is quiet, but not completely isolated from others in the program. CAPTAIN staff and volunteers should let another staff member or adult know they are speaking with a youth in private. No interactions, activities, or counseling should be done behind closed doors.

4. Any contact between a staff/volunteer and a youth beyond the identified CAPTAIN program or activity hours and site locations are ***not allowed and are not*** considered a component of CAPTAIN authorized activities, unless recognized and ***approved*** by CAPTAIN staff, a specific program coordinator/supervisor, or their immediate supervisor.
5. Transportation to and from CAPTAIN programs and activities is the responsibility of parents and students, unless ***previously authorized*** by CAPTAIN staff, a specific program coordinator/supervisor, or their immediate supervisor. Volunteers should not be transporting students to or from the program unless approved by CAPTAIN staff. CAPTAIN staff should not use their personal vehicle for transporting youth. All transportation should be done with CAPTAIN vehicles, unless approved by the program coordinator/supervisor or their immediate supervisor beforehand.
  - Please see program specific policies and procedures for transportation of youth by CAPTAIN employees.

### **What To Do In The Event of Suspected Abuse, Neglect, and/or Maltreatment of a Youth:**

1. In accordance with our Youth Protection Policy, all employees and volunteers of CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services are required to report any suspected cases of abuse, neglect or maltreatment involving any of the young people who come in contact with our programs and services to their immediate supervisor.
2. Depending on program activities and interactions with youth through services, some CAPTAIN employees are ***Mandated Reporters*** and by New York State Law are obligated to report suspected cases of abuse,



## **CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services**

### **Youth Protection Policy**

neglect or maltreatment to the New York State Central Registry. These employees are identified by their individual job descriptions. These employees will receive ***Mandated Reporter*** training upon employment with the agency and will be required to maintain certification on an annual basis as a condition of employment.

3. All CAPTAIN employees will report any suspected cases of abuse, neglect or maltreatment involving youth in our care to their immediate supervisor. The supervisor will initiate the incident management plan for allegations and/or suspicions of abuse (please see attached), contact the Director of Program Services and the Executive Director immediately.
4. If a volunteer suspects a child has been abused, neglected or maltreated, they should immediately report their suspicion to the program staff. As a volunteer, if you report an incident of suspected abuse or neglect to a CAPTAIN staff person, please follow up with them at a later date to understand how they handled the situation. If that staff person did not follow up on your concerns, did not report it to their supervisor, or handled it in way that makes you uncomfortable, please contact the Director of Program Services or Executive Director at **518-371-1185**.

### **TO REPORT AN INCIDENT OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT:**

Phone Number for NYS Central Registry Hotline:  
**1-800-342-3720**

1. If a youth discloses information, or you have sufficient reason to believe abuse or neglect is taking place, ask yourself the following questions:
  - Is the youth you observed or with whom you spoke, the same youth about whom you are concerned?
  - Do you know this youth's name?
  - What exactly did the youth say, or what did you observe to make you concerned?
  - When did you make or have contact with the youth?
  - When did the incident of suspected abuse or neglect take place?
2. Report this information to the CAPTAIN staff person in charge. Remember all information above.
3. Child's Physical Abuse Indicators
  - **Unexplained bruises and welts:** on face, lips, mouth; in various stages of healing; clustered, forming regular patterns, reflecting shapes of articles used to inflict (electric cord, belt buckle); regularly appear after absence, weekend or vacation.
  - **Unexplained burns:** cigar, cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back or buttocks; immersion burns (sock-like, glove-like, doughnut shaped on buttocks); patterned like electric burner, iron.



## **CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services**

### **Youth Protection Policy**

- **Unexplained fractures:** to skull, nose, and facial structure; in various stages of healing; swollen or tender limbs.
- **Unexplained lacerations or abrasions:** to mouth, lips, gums, eyes, on back or arms, legs or torso.
- **Human bite marks**
- **Frequent injuries that are “accidental” or unexplained**

#### **4. Child’s Behavioral Indicators**

- **Wary of adults or frightened of parent(s) or caregivers**
- **Behavioral extremes:** aggressiveness, withdrawal
- **Afraid to go home**
- **Seeks affection from any adult**
- **Wears clothing to cover bruises/wounds**

### **Crisis Management Plan for Dealing with Allegations of Child abuse and/or Maltreatment:**

1. If a youth, volunteer or staff reports an incident, a suspicion or makes an allegation, in good faith, of abuse of a youth in care with any CAPTAIN program or service, the situation **must be dealt with immediately**. All activities are suspended, the safety of youth in question is ensured and staff return to their home program location to deal with the situation. Those who report an incident or allegation in good faith are protected from future retaliation under agency policy.
  - If a CAPTAIN volunteer or staff witnesses an incident of abuse, neglect or maltreatment of youth in care, they should intervene immediately to protect the safety of the youth.
    - **Note:** *Volunteers and staff should not put themselves in an unsafe situation that could result in bodily injury or harm to themselves, or others. If the volunteer or staff feels they cannot intervene safely they should immediately contact another adult, CAPTAIN staff, or the authorities, in an attempt to stop the abusive behavior.*
2. **All other activities and steps to this plan follow after the safety of youth is ensured.**
3. If an incident, allegation or suspicion of a youth being abused involves an employee or volunteer of CAPTAIN, then the supervisor of the volunteer or employee involved will tell that volunteer or employee they must leave the CAPTAIN premises immediately. The supervisor or employee will tell the employee or volunteer involved that they may not have contact with any employee of CAPTAIN, contact with any youth in CAPTAIN programs,



## **CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services**

### **Youth Protection Policy**

and will be contacted by their supervisor within 24 hours regarding the situation. The employee or volunteer against whom the allegation is levied will be encouraged to:

- Fill out an incident report detailing their actions to the best of their recollection.
- Contact their supervisor within 24 hours if not contacted first.

4. The reporter (*which can include the youth themselves*) of the incident or suspicion is removed from the program activity and will fill out a CAPTAIN **Incident Report**. Other employees or volunteers who witness or have knowledge of the incident or allegation will be required to fill out an incident report detailing their information as soon as practical after the incident. The incident report will include (but not limited to) the following information:

- Is the youth you observed or with whom you spoke, the same youth about whom you are concerned?
- What is the youth's name?
- What is the date and time of the incident?
- What exactly did the youth say, or what did you observe to make you concerned?
- When and Where did the incident of suspected abuse or neglect take place?

**\* Note: Please see attached copy of blank incident report**

5. The CAPTAIN staff on duty will contact their immediate supervisor to report the incident, allegation, or suspicion of abuse. The supervisor will immediately contact the Director of Program Services, who will in turn immediately contact the Executive Director.
6. At that time, the Executive Director or the Director of Program Services will take over the internal investigation, ensure the safety of the youth has been achieved, make the determination regarding contacting external authorities, if warranted ensure a Central Registry Report is filed, make determinations about contacting the family of the youth, notify the President of the Board of Directors, and handle all other aspects of the situation to include contact with the press.
7. CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services will make every attempt to protect employees and volunteers from false allegations. All investigations, internal and external, will be handled in an open and transparent manner, which will ensure all parties involved are protected and an emphasis on their safety is maintained throughout the process. False allegations are a violation of agency policy and will result in termination of employment or separation from volunteer assignment.
8. The Executive Director or the Director of Program Services will be the point of contact for all external questions, concerns, investigation related activities, comments to the press and contact with the family of youth involved in the incident. All CAPTAIN staff and volunteers will refer all questions to the Director of Program Services and the Executive Director. The family will be notified as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours of a reported allegation or suspicion of abuse, neglect, or maltreatment.



## **CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services**

### **Youth Protection Policy**

9. For incidents and allegations of abuse at the Youth Shelter, the Executive Director or the Director of Program Services will contact the Saratoga County Homeless Liaison at the Youth Bureau and the NYS Office of Children and Family Services liaison to the Youth Shelter to report the incident or allegation. This will follow contact with the Central Registry, the authorities (as necessary), the youth's family, and the president of the Board of Directors.
10. Upon resolution of the incident, the Executive Director or the Director of Program Services will conduct an after-incident review of the policy and procedure to evaluate the situation and how it was handled.

### **Addendum for Individualized Service Programs:**

This section is to accommodate programs which offer individualized services, which could result in service related situations that appear to be in violation the Youth Protection Policy.

Those programs include: 1.) Family Development; 2.) Employment Readiness Program; 3.) Youth Shelter Aftercare Services; and 4.) Outreach Center Mentoring Program.

### **Policy Addendum:**

1. Individualized service is a foundation of our service delivery and program effectiveness for many of our services.
2. Every effort should be made to follow the Youth Protection Policy in its entirety.
3. If a situation arises which demands individualized service between a volunteer/staff and another adult or youth, the volunteer/staff responsible for service delivery ***must*** make arrangements with their immediate supervisor no less than 4 hours in advance of a "service-related" appointment or activity.
4. Non-CAPTAIN related activities, appointments or other personal engagements outside the scope of an identified CAPTAIN program are discouraged by the agency and are not considered a part of an agency sanctioned program, service or activity.
  - a. In the event of a non-CAPTAIN related (or sanctioned) program, service or activity, the volunteer/staff are no longer operating as a member of CAPTAIN or have the rights and protection afforded them as such.
5. Staff is prohibited from maintaining personal relationships with clients outside of identified CAPTAIN programs and services.
6. If volunteer(s) decide to maintain a personal relationship with a person(s) with which they worked with through a CAPTAIN sponsored and sanctioned program or service, they do so at their own discretion and risk. Additionally, the person(s) (i.e. former clients of CAPTAIN) must be inactive from any, and all CAPTAIN programs and services.
  - a. Any former client(s) can be re-enrolled in any CAPTAIN program at the urging of volunteer/staff, but these person(s) must be enrolled by a Program Coordinator, or their supervisor.