

The other primary duty of the Council Rep on the weekend is in the area of “Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse”. If anyone on the team becomes aware of an instance of child abuse (as described in the training material on the following pages), they are instructed to come to you with that information. Based on the definition of child abuse provided by the State of Georgia, we must determine if this is the situation that is described to you, should be reported to the

Department of Family and Children Services (1-855-GACHILD). The primary consideration when making this decision is whether or not the young person is currently in danger. You should involve the Head Spiritual Director on the weekend in this decision, but for the protection of the child, do not speak to anyone else on the team about this matter. We should not “question” the young person, but if the Spiritual Director believes it is critical to speak to them to determine the proper course of action, the two of you can speak to the young person at a time and place that will not be a distraction to them or to the weekend in general.

If you then determine that the young person is in an abusive situation that has them currently in danger, you should contact the Chairman of Vida Nueva Council. Together, the two of you will decide if this should be reported. From the time that a team member becomes aware of this situation, we have 24 hours to determine if it should be reported and for the Chairman to contact DFACS at the number shown above. If, for any reason, the Chairman is not available, the decision will be made between you and the Head Spiritual Director and you will need to contact DFACS at the toll free number shown above.

It is important for you to document the details of any incident that is reported to you, whether or not it results in DFACS being contacted. This can be done on a word document utilizing the VN laptop which should be in the Tech Cha room. Once this is done, print out a copy to give to the Council Chairman at closing and then delete the word document for the protection of the young person.

Training – You are responsible to make sure that the team receives the training that the state requires. To assist you with this, we have prepared a document that you can read to the team. This is found on the next two pages. This training should be done on two occasions. One time will be during the announcements at one of team meetings. You should coordinate with the Director and Head Cha to decide which meeting this will be done. The second time should be at the Camp on Friday evening at 6 p.m. (prior to the team communion). After each training session, team members need to sign the form signifying they have received the training. This form follows the training information. There are three forms per

page. You will need to make sure you make enough copies for everyone to sign a form, if they have not signed one on a previous weekend.

Since you will need to be at send off, you will not be available to do the training session prior to team communion. The Assistant Head Cha will handle that one. This will be in their training materials, but you are responsible to make sure they are aware of this responsibility and carry it out.

You will need to collect the signed mandated reporting training forms from the Assistant Head Cha Friday night and give them, along with the signed forms from the earlier training session, to the Council Chairman at closing. If there are any team members who have not received the training at one of these sessions (or on a previous weekend) you need to make an effort to get with them one on one during the

weekend to explain their responsibility in this area, and to have them sign the form. Remember, only team members 18 or over are required to sign the form.

Training for Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse

The State of Georgia requires that all organizations who work with young men and women under the age of 18 be trained to report any incidences of child abuse that they may become aware of. Georgia Code Section 19-7-5 refers to “child service organization personnel who are employed by or volunteering at a business or organization” as “being legally obligated to report child abuse” when they become aware of it. Georgia Mountains Vida Nueva has always made the protection of the young people in our charge our utmost responsibility. This law does not change that mandate, but it does require that we have a detailed plan as to how to respond correctly if we become aware of an instance of abuse. Part of this plan includes making sure that every member of this team is prepared in case they become aware of such an instance. What I will share with you now constitutes your training in this area so please give me your close attention.

First, to help prepare you, we will address some questions that often come up:

- 1. What specifically is meant by the term “child abuse”?** – Abuse is defined as “physical injury, neglect, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation”. (repeat definition) If someone shares with you that they are currently in an abusive situation related to any of the above, we need to report this for the protection of this person.
- 2. Is everyone on the team obligated to report these instances?** Anyone on the team who is 18 or over is required by law to report any incidence of child abuse that they become aware of.
- 3. What if I don’t know the age of the person who tells me they are being abused?** We need to be aware of these situations, even if the person is 18 or over, so please report this regardless of their age.
- 4. What do I do if someone shares with me that they are being abused?** You go immediately to the Council Rep on the weekend _____ and make them aware of the situation. If for any reason, the Council Rep is not

available, then go to the Head Cha _____ and make them aware of what you have been told.

We are obligated to report suspected child abuse to the proper authorities within 24 hours, so please don’t delay in speaking to the Council Rep or Head Cha.

For the safety of the person who has shared this with you, you should not discuss it with anyone other than the Council Rep or the Head Cha. You should report things of this nature, even if you are not 100% certain that they constitute abuse under the definition I read to you. The Vida Nueva Council will determine if they believe it constitutes abuse and if it needs to be reported to the authorities for the protection of the young man or woman. It is also not your responsibility to try to determine if the

person who is sharing the abusive situation is telling you the truth or not. We must deal with these incidents as they are reported to us, without judging whether or not they are valid.

Brothers and Sisters, we do not anticipate that this will be something that we will be dealing with on this weekend. But in the event we do become aware of a young person who is in an abusive situation, we are obligated to handle this in a manner that first and foremost, protects the young person and also protects the integrity of what God is doing through Vida Nueva.

Are there any questions about what your responsibility is in this matter?

The information I have provided you constitutes your training in this matter. If you are 18 or older, I want to ask you to sign this form (hold up form) indicating that you have received this training (repeat). If you have received the training and signed one of these forms on a previous Vida Nueva weekend, you do not need to sign one now.

I have received training in the “Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse” as required by the State of Georgia, I understand that I am to report to the Council Rep of this Vida Nueva team I am serving on, any incident of suspected child abuse that I become aware of.

Name: _____ Notary: _____

Date: _____

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