

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR SOCIETY LTD

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Policy Statement

The ACWS has a duty of care to safeguard all children and young persons involved in re-enacting with the Society. ACWS policy is to safeguard the welfare of all children and young persons at its events and venues by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm or from neglect.

Good Practice Guidelines

All members should be encouraged to demonstrate behaviour of an impeccable nature in order to protect themselves from false allegations.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy:-

1. Child means any person up to and including the age of 13 years
2. Young person means any person of age between 14 and up to 18 years
3. Disabled person means any person of any age with any medical physical or mental disability that impairs them and for which they have been so Medically Certified.

ACWS does not allow children “on to the field” to partake of battles and events. Only those 14 and 15 year olds who have passed through a prior approval process are permitted “on to the field” (as above) in controlled circumstances. Age 16 and above, Members are allowed full participation in ACWS activities subject to training and other qualification requirements.

Good Practice Examples

- 1) Always avoid private/unobserved situations (especially in a one to one situation)
- 2) Treat all children and young people equally – show no favouritism
- 3) Treat all children and young people/disabled adults equally and with respect and dignity and acknowledge their right to personal privacy
- 4) Secure parental consent (in writing if practicable) to administer emergency first aid and any other medical treatment if the need arises
- 5) Avoid being drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour e.g. tantrums and crushes
- 6) Keep a written record of any injury that may occur, along with details of any treatment administered

Practices to be avoided

1. Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with any child/children or young persons: always have other people present, or at least within sight and hearing of others close by
2. Never engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
3. Never involve any young person in any hand to hand combat during battle situations (This should be policed by ALL NCO's and Officers)
4. Never engage in any form of inappropriate touching (this includes the practice of searching the dead on a battlefield re-enactment)
5. Never share a tent with a child or young person unless that person is a family member or

with parental consent (if applicable)

6. Never allow children or young persons to use inappropriate language or behaviour unchallenged
7. Never make sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person or in their presence, even in fun
8. Never reduce a child or young person to tears, or hit them, even as a form of control or punishment
9. DO NOT do things of a personal nature for children/disabled adults young persons that they can do for themselves
10. Never allow allegations made by a child or young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not to act upon such allegations

N.B. Sometimes it may be necessary for members to do things of a personal nature for children and/or young person if they are young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the consent of the child or young person and the parents or guardian or person in “loco parentis” at the event.

Incidents that must be recorded

1. If any member accidentally hurts a child or young person
2. If a child/young person seems distressed
3. If a child/young person misunderstands/misinterprets something a member may have done or said

Members associating with children/young people

If any adult member spends time with a child/children or young persons in any official capacity, the Society should obtain his/her consent for a Criminal Records Bureau check on that adult member. The highest standard of propriety and behaviour is required when dealing with children. Young persons must also be treated with respect and propriety, in accordance with their age, ability and maturity.

Responding to Allegations and Suspicions

It is not the responsibility of any member of ACWS to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. There is, however, a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities. The Society assures all members that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith, reports a concern that another member is, or may be abusing a child, young person or disabled person (whether physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect).

A Member or members of ACWS, observing injuries which appear to be non-accidental, or who are told anything significant by a child or young person, MUST report their concerns to a member of the Board of ACWS, who in turn will share the information (on a confidential basis) as soon as practicable with all the other Members of the Board there present at the event/venue with a view to (a) taking such action within the powers and responsibilities of ACWS as they deem appropriate and (b) referring the matter on to specialist agencies if appropriate.

Where there is a complaint against a member there may be:

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection investigation
- and/or a Society investigation.

The results of any police and/or child protection investigation may influence a Society investigation, but not necessarily. All such matters or issues, when arising, are for the Board of Directors of ACWS to deal with and address as above (or such Directors as are present at the event/venue).

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled on a need-to-know basis. This includes:

- a) The parents or guardian of the child or young person who is alleged to have been abused
- b) The person making the allegation
- c) Social Services and/or Police
- d) The alleged abuser
- e) The Board of Directors of ACWS

Social Services and/or Police advice should be sought on who should approach the alleged abuser. Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people to conform to data protection laws.

Internal Enquiries

ACWS Board of Directors should make any decisions as to whether the alleged member should be suspended or expelled from the Society or otherwise dealt with pending evidence or a decision from the appropriate authorities. **THE WELFARE OF THE CHILD AND/OR YOUNG PERSON AND/OR DISABLED PERSON SHOULD BE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE.**

Allegations of Previous Abuse

Sometimes allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event. The Society should act as above.

Action if bullying is suspected

- 1) Take all signs of bullying seriously
- 2) Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns. Listen to them – let them speak
- 3) Investigate all allegations – never “turn a blind eye”
- 4) An appropriate person will be designated to speak to both victim and bully(ies) as selected by the Chairman and/or Secretary or any other Board member in the absence of the above
- 5) Keep records of all that was said by everybody concerned
- 6) The findings will be reported to the Board of Directors of ACWS as a whole

Action towards the Bully

- 1) Talk with Bully(ies), explain the situation and speak about the consequences of their actions
- 2) Seek an apology to the victim
- 3) Inform the Bully’s parents/guardian
- 4) Encourage Bully to change their behaviour
- 5) Keep a written record of all action taken

Information for Social Services/Police about suspected Abuse

Ensure that this information is as helpful as possible. Include:-

- 1) Child's or young person's name, age and date of birth
- 2) Child's or young person's home address and telephone numbers
- 3) Child's or young person's regiment, battalion and Officer in charge
- 4) Whether person is making known their own concerns or is making it on behalf of someone else
- 5) Nature of the allegation
- 6) Description of any injuries including behavioural differences
- 7) Details of any witnesses and any witness statements
- 8) The child's or young persons account of what happened
- 9) Details of the alleged abuser
- 10) Any referral to Police/Social Services should be confirmed in writing as soon as possible