



# **Riverdale Jewish Center Child Protection Policy**

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## Section I. Child Protection Policy - Values Statement

The Riverdale Jewish Center (RJC) is a synagogue that holds the safety and well-being of our children as sacred. This policy applies to all members of the congregation and community - including all staff members, congregants, volunteers, and guests.

The RJC aims to provide children with a positive and enriching Jewish, educational, religious, social, and cultural environment that promotes their intellectual, moral, and emotional growth. We are deeply committed to safeguarding the young people in our community so they feel and are safe at all times. To that end, we strive for the highest standards towards protecting them from abuse. With that goal in mind, we have created **The RJC Child Protection Policy**.

This policy is meant to be a fluid and an evolving document, periodically reviewed by our Child Protection Committee.

## Section II. Definitions

**Child** refers to any youth, from birth through 18 years old.

**Community Member** refers to RJC congregants, clergy, staff, volunteers, guests, visitors, and contractors.

**Emotional Abuse** is defined as acts toward a child that cause or have a substantial likelihood of causing harm to the child's physical, psychological, social, spiritual, or moral development. Emotional abuse might include, but is not limited to, patterns of:

- restricting a child's movement
- discriminating
- blaming
- belittling
- denigrating
- threatening
- scaring
- ridiculing
- other non-physical forms of hostility or bullying.

**Grooming** is when an adult may use seemingly innocent behaviors to gain the trust and cooperation of a child, establish a relationship with a child, the child's family, or the community, for the purposes of his/her own sexual gratification. Such behaviors may include, but are not limited to:

- the giving of preferential gifts to a child
- asking a child to keep a secret
- seeking the attention of a child
- spending an increasing amount of time with a child
- being overly physical with a child
- inappropriate interactions with a child in person or via electronic devices or social media
- the testing or ignoring of professional boundaries or rules.

**Neglect** is the failure of a responsible person to provide for a child's basic needs or to protect them from harm to the degree that the child's health, safety, or well-being are threatened.

**Physical Abuse** occurs when an adult inflicts non-accidental physical force that has a substantial risk of causing, or does cause, bodily injury or emotional trauma. Physical force between minor children can also be abusive.

**Policy Violations** are those actions by individuals that either accidentally or intentionally breach or disregard the expectations for behavior and conduct delineated by this Child Protection Policy, such that they may or may not rise to the definition of abuse.

**Sexual Abuse** is any occurrence in which an adult engages a minor in sexual activity. Such activities are deemed sexual abuse even if the minor verbally states that they consent to such behavior or does not communicate that they do not consent.

Sexual activity may include, but is not limited to:

**Contact behavior:**

- fondling
- inviting a child to touch or be touched sexually
- any other physical activity intended to abuse, degrade, arouse, or gratify sexual desires. For the purposes of this document, those activities will not be explicitly listed.

**Non-contact behavior:**

- sexual communication (whether verbal or written, including by telephone, text message, email, or social media)
- voyeurism (spying on private or intimate behaviors, such as those involving undressing, bathroom use, nudity, or sexual activity)
- exposing a child to pornography or other sexually explicit material
- exposing part or all of an adult or child's naked body (except as necessary for caregiving or medical purposes)
- exploiting a child by prostitution and/or pornography
- any activity intended to abuse, degrade, arouse, or gratify sexual desires.

Sexual activity between children can also be abusive; some indicators might include a significant disparity in age, development, or size; if one child is in a position of responsibility, trust, or power over the other; if one child is unconscious; or anytime coercion is used.

### **Section III. Scope of Policy**

This policy applies to all activities under the auspices/sponsorship or co-sponsorship of the RJC, whether held inside the RJC facility or at another location.

## **Section IV. Role, Composition, & Proceedings of the Child Protection Committee**

### **Role**

In keeping with the Riverdale Jewish Center's commitment to protecting children from abuse, a standing Child Protection Committee has been established to oversee the development, implementation, and monitoring of an ongoing child protection program at the RJC. The guidelines included in this policy, along with educational training for the entire staff and community, are at the core of our child protection program.

The Committee's role is to:

- advise on all questions related to child protection
- coordinate educational forums/trainings for staff and the RJC community on safeguarding children from maltreatment
- develop and implement a child protection policy that includes clear protocols for reducing the risk of, and responding to, child maltreatment
- oversee ongoing maintenance and evaluation of the RJC child protection plan and related policies.

The engagement of an independent child protection professional is required to pursue a formal investigation of cases involving community members, staff, and non-members (see Section XI on Policy Compliance and Violations). Additionally, the Committee must report any and all suspicions of child maltreatment to the proper governmental authorities (see Section X on Reporting).

### **Meeting**

The Child Protection Committee shall meet at least four times a year to oversee the development and implementation of the RJC's Child Protection Program. At least one meeting each year will be dedicated to reviewing the state of child safety at the RJC. Additional meetings will be held as necessary to address child protection concerns that may arise.

### **Committee Members**

The RJC President, in consultation with the Executive Committee, will designate a chairperson of the Child Protection Committee. In consultation with the President, the chairperson will appoint members to the Committee. The Committee shall consist of at least five and no more than seven members and shall include the President and one of the chairpersons of the Youth Department. The Senior Rabbi and the Youth Director

shall serve as ex-officio members of the Committee. Child Protection Committee members shall commit to a one-year term, with the option of remaining on the Committee, at the recommendation of the chairperson, for two additional one-year terms. When feasible, no more than one existing Committee member shall be replaced in any twelve-month period. The intent will be to annually create space for new Committee members.

Committee members shall be individuals possessing maturity of judgment, deep integrity, compassion, sensitivity, the ability to work well with others on sensitive matters, and shall be individuals in good standing of the RJC.

Committee members shall keep all meetings and communications confidential, except as otherwise stated within this policy. Committee members must agree to follow the protocols as outlined in this policy for reducing the risk of, and responding to, child maltreatment. Any member of the Committee who has been allegedly implicated in violating child safety policies will be excluded from all Committee meetings until the allegations against such member have been addressed to the Committee's satisfaction. Committee members, including the Committee chairperson, who fail to comply with the policies and protocols set forth herein shall be removed by vote of the disinterested Committee members.

### **Voting**

A majority vote is required for Committee decisions relating to policy compliance and violations. The Committee must, however, report any and all suspicions of child maltreatment to the proper governmental authorities.

## Section V. Staff Hiring and Volunteer Engagement

### Hiring and Screening

The objective of the Hiring and Screening section of this policy is to ensure that all employees and volunteers who will interact with the children of the RJC are appropriately vetted, so that the RJC can provide a safe and nurturing environment for all of our children.

All staff members and volunteers, and those applying to become RJC employees or volunteers, who interact with children and adolescents, will be required to read and acknowledge receipt of this policy prior to commencing their responsibilities at the RJC. In doing so, these individuals will affirmatively demonstrate their understanding of, and agreement to adhere to, this policy.

### Interview Process and Screening

The basic screening program for all staff and volunteer applicants may include the following elements, depending upon the position for which they are applying (see **Application and Screening Table** below):

- A completed employment/volunteer application form
- Personal interviews
- A conversation
- Reference checks
- Background check
- Social media and internet check

Subject to the information obtained through the screening process, the potential employee's or volunteer's application may be denied.

Applicants are to be informed during the initial conversation that the RJC is vigilant in the protection of our children. During the interview, the following subjects should be explored:

- the applicant's beliefs and values in relation to the treatment of children and young people (including beliefs about discipline and reinforcement)
- his or her reasons for wanting to work with children and young people
- general awareness and understanding of child protection issues and this policy.

New employees/volunteers may not begin their engagement at the RJC before the interview and screening process has been completed successfully.

Confirmation that all of the above items in the checklist have been completed will be maintained by the Executive Director in the RJC's personnel files.

### **References and Checks**

The RJC requires a current background check to be completed for all staff hires and regular volunteers. The RJC has the discretion to re-screen employees and regular volunteers at any time, with or without cause, and to terminate employment at any point for concerns regarding an individual's ability/reliability to keep children safe.

**Application and Screening Table**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Registry Check</b>	<b>Background check</b>	<b>Internet check (Review Public Information Only)</b>	<b>Calling of references</b>	<b>Personal interview</b>
Clergy	Search Committee or Senior Rabbi	Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director	Search Committee or Senior Rabbi	Search Committee or Senior Rabbi
Executive Director	Senior Rabbi/ President	Senior Rabbi or President	Senior Rabbi or President	Senior Rabbi or President	must be done by Senior Rabbi/ President	Senior Rabbi/President
Youth Director, Assistant Youth Director, Other Youth Department Staff	Search Committee or Senior Rabbi or Youth Director	Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director	Search Committee or Senior Rabbi or Youth Director	Search Committee or Senior Rabbi or Youth Director
Youth Leaders	Youth Director			Must be done with parental consent	Youth Director	Youth Director
Other RJC staff	Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director
Youth Committee Members		Youth Committee Chair				
Contracted vendors for Youth activities	Must be done with contract					
Contracted vendors for non youth activities	Must be done with contract					
Host families for shabbaton						Executive Director
Volunteers at programs involving youth		Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director

Coaches	Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director	Executive Director	Must be done by Youth Director or League Commissioner	Must be done by Youth Director or League Commissioner
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## Section VI. Code of Conduct for Interactions with Children

### Identifying and Minimizing Risk

The RJC will provide practical guidance to all members of the RJC Community (including staff, volunteers, contractors, vendors, congregants, parents and visitors) about acceptable and unacceptable behavior with children in order to minimize the risk of child abuse occurring within the community and at all RJC sanctioned events. This guidance will be offered by way of in-service and/or a review of the Child Protection Policy. It is a violation of this policy to neglect, or sexually, physically, or emotionally abuse a child, or groom a child for such abuse.

In addition, all members of the RJC community are required to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with being a positive role model for children and other adults, and to adhere to this policy.

### Conduct and Behavior

Nurturing touch is an important part of healthy child development. This policy does not ban all physical contact between adults and children, but rather limits such contact to the parameters listed below.

- **Appropriate Touch:** The appropriateness of physical contact will vary with different ages, the context of the interaction, and the stages of childhood development. Three key principles regarding touch include: parental consent, child consent, and ensuring that at least one additional adult is present. In circumstances where the principles listed below cannot or were not followed, the Youth Director should be proactively informed by the Youth Leader about the details of the event and should relay the information to the parents.
- **Parental consent:** Whenever possible, when an adult intends to pick up, hug, or comfort a child, that adult should seek permission from the child's parent or guardian before doing so.
- **Child consent:** Before touching whenever possible it is best to "check first" with the child, when developmentally appropriate and within context. An adult intending to pick up or hug a distressed child should first ask the child if that is acceptable to him or her and respect the child's response.
- Whenever possible, the touching of a child should always occur in a public space with more than one adult present.

The following touching policies apply for all interactions with children:

- Appropriate physical contact may include a hand shake, a shoulder tap, a fist bump or high five, side hugs, or comforting a distressed child by picking him/her up or providing a hug.

- Whenever possible, verbal instructions and directions should replace physical contact.
- A side hug may be appropriate at a moment of happiness (or sadness). For example, a member of the clergy may want to express that sentiment with a hug on the bimah during a bar/bat-mitzvah celebration. Such sentiments should always be expressed in public, and never in private. Ideally, the child should be asked in advance if s/he approves of a public hug in these circumstances.

A child's development, age, and gender must be noted when considering if contact is appropriate. Examples of this type of touch, may include but are not limited to:

- For infants through five years of age, appropriate touch may include assistance with the changing of clothing, toileting for those children that are not toilet trained, assisting a child in walking upstairs, lifting a child onto a chair or into a stroller, or providing comfort during moments of distress.
- Parents can opt out by notifying the Youth Director, in writing, if they are not comfortable with the interactions listed above. Opting out may require that the parent remain with the child at the activity.
- For school aged children and older, nurturing touch may be appropriate especially during moments of distress in order to provide comfort.

### **Inappropriate Touch**

Under no circumstances should an RJC community member have physical contact with a child that could be considered, or result in, sexual, physical or emotional abuse of a child, as defined in this policy. Example of inappropriate touch may include contact that:

- Is private, in a one-on-one setting, or otherwise out of sight of other adults.
- Is initiated against the wishes of the child.
- Includes touching genitals, breasts, thighs, or buttocks and would appear to a reasonable person to have a sexual connotation or purpose.
- Is intended to cause pain or distress to the student or child, including physical punishment.
- Is overly physical and may include roughhousing, tickling, wrestling, or carrying children.
- Includes lap sitting, unless it is a parent/guardian/family member, or in their presence.

Staff/Volunteers should gently block and redirect a child who attempts to touch anyone in an inappropriate or sexual manner. They will discourage children from inappropriate expectations of touch in a gentle manner, being mindful to not embarrass the child. Staff and volunteers should notify the Youth Director who in turn will notify the parents of the incident.

Additionally, all staff and volunteers should be mindful of the child's behavior and actions, taking notice of behaviors that may be suggestive of past abuse or neglect, as communicated during trainings. Such behaviors should be communicated to the Youth Director, who will notify the CPC.

### **Interactions with Youth**

All interactions with youth, including both instructional and non-instructional interactions, are to take place in spaces that are both observable and interruptible. This includes, but is not limited to, classrooms and/or spaces with observable windows, and rooms that are reported as being used for instructional purposes with unlocked doors.

In addition to the above, the following guidelines apply in all instances of one-on-one interactions with youth at the RJC (including both instructional and non-instructional interactions):

- One-on-one interactions should be scheduled on the calendar of the one-on-one instructor and shared with the RJC administrative calendar.
- During one-on-one instruction, the door should be open or there should be an unobstructed window view with clear visibility into the room. The door should be unlocked and the adult should not physically be between the child and the room exit.
- Ideally, one-on-one instruction should be scheduled at times when additional staff and/or adults are present in the RJC building.
- Parents should be aware of where and how to access the rooms where instruction is taking place.
- When one-on-one instruction must occur at times when the RJC building is not otherwise occupied, an adult other than the instructor must accompany the child into the RJC building and remain in the building within a reasonable distance and within sight and hearing of the instruction for the duration of the session. The room door for the instruction should remain open during such sessions.
- This policy applies even when a parent/guardian engages an RJC community member for private teaching. Such tutoring and/or instruction conducted off the RJC premises will be considered separate and distinct from RJC sponsored sessions.

### **Language and Communication**

What we say and how we communicate with others can and should be nurturing and supportive. Language and communication can also be destructive and hurtful. All

members of the community should be careful and cognizant of the language used at all times, and especially when we speak to and/or are in the presence of children.

All RJC community members, including teachers, tutors, peers, staff members, or volunteers, must refrain from making any sexually suggestive comments, jokes, innuendos, or using inappropriate language with a child or in the presence of a child.

In addition:

- Communications with children should include language that is encouraging, respectful, and confidence-boosting.
- Adults may not use language that teases, belittles, or shames a child.
- Adults should never ask a child to keep a secret.
- Adults should never share explicit sexual material with children, including pornography, photos, videos, or other explicit media.

Inappropriate language/conversation may include, but is not limited to:

- cursing
- using lewd or sexually suggestive language.
- comments about the way a child looks, is dressed, or about his/her body.
- questions about a child's sexuality.
- information about an adult's intimate behaviors, relationships, desires, or body.

## **Photography**

The RJC actively promotes photographic recording of our community for archival and promotional purposes. We also acknowledge that images of children may be used inappropriately or illegally. The following rules apply to photography and videography of children at the RJC:

- Permission from the child and the child's parents/guardian must be obtained prior to the public posting of any photographic images or video recordings taken of children at the RJC. This permission may be obtained through an annual permission/consent.
- These images may include those used for promotional purposes, including, but not limited to, the RJC website, the RJC Bulletin, press releases, promotional flyers, and other electronic or printed means of communication.
- No photography may be conducted inside changing areas, bathrooms, or while a child is in a state of undress.
- Images of children may not include identifying personal information such as full name, address, or phone number.

- All photographers/videographers seeking permission to photograph at RJC sponsored events must agree to and adhere to the guidelines set forth by this statement.
- Any image (digital or other) of a child, taken with permission, but which unintentionally reveals private body parts, and violates these rules or is otherwise not suitable for public display, is to be destroyed or deleted.

### **Acceptable Boundaries**

People who intend to inflict harm on children are known to engage in grooming behavior, such as giving compliments, gifts, or affection. RJC staff members and volunteers should refrain from showing favoritism to children whom they supervise. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Gift giving that is specific to an individual child. This does not include, for example, an appropriate Bar/Bat Mitzvah or other special gift from the institution.
- Meeting or contacting children alone or without the knowledge or permission of their parent/guardian.

### **Peer to Peer Relationships**

The RJC seeks to promote and foster healthy childhood and teen peer to peer relationships. We are committed to preventing emotionally and/or physically harmful peer interactions.

Prohibited behaviors (including those between adults and children) include, but are not limited to:

- sexual harassment
- sexually explicit language
- bullying
- sexting
- online bullying and harassment
- unwanted physical contact
- sexual pressure and/or coercion
- stalking

### **Transporting Children**

RJC staff and volunteers, while functioning in their official capacity, are not to transport children by any means (vehicle, walking) to or from RJC sanctioned events without parental permission. When transporting children, there must be communication with the parent/guardian and an RJC staff member. This communication must include notification of the departure and a notification of the completion of the journey. Since

Shabbat will preclude communication with a parent, arrangements should be made prior to Shabbat in regard to who will be walking a child home.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

The supply of drugs or alcohol to children is a criminal offense and is prohibited at all RJC sanctioned events. Similarly, it is prohibited for all employees, volunteers, and community members to interact with children while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

## Section VII. Protocols for Safeguarding Children and Teens in Online Communications

As a general rule, interactions between adults (or older youth) and children involved in RJC sponsored activities, should be *observable* and *interruptible*. In person, this is best accomplished by **two-deep leadership** (more than one adult is present) or by utilizing open layouts, glass walls, windows in doors, as well as inviting other adults to drop by. The same principle applies to virtual communications as well.

### **Two-Deep Leadership in Virtual Communication**

Two-deep leadership in virtual communications means that texts, emails, WhatsApp messages, and all other social media communications copy another adult (e.g., Youth Director, Parent, Rabbi, Youth Committee Chair). It also means that two staff members are present for video meetings. In the case of Bar Mitzvah lessons, or during learning sessions leading up to a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, a parent needs to be present. With online meetings, two-deep leadership can easily be introduced without significantly inconveniencing the second adult. For example, in the case of a teen meeting, a second adult can open the virtual meeting in a small window from their remote office. In the case of b'nei mitzvah lessons, tutoring, or one-on-one learning, parents can set up a laptop in the kitchen, dining room, or other living space.

When having two adults in the virtual program or lesson is impractical, it must be ensured that the interaction is observable and interruptible, as is the case with in-person interactions. This can be accomplished by providing parents with links and passwords to access virtual meetings.

### **Scheduling**

Online events should be scheduled on a shared or public calendar or shul bulletin, and should include a link to the meeting, so that other adults know where and when it will be held and have the option to drop in. Start and end times of these events should be included, when possible. The calendar or bulletin should be shared with the RJC's staff, parents, and children.

### **Communication Channels**

Online programs and communication should be scheduled and held on professional, rather than personal, accounts. This means emailing only from organizational email addresses and hosting video meetings via the RJC Zoom (or other official) account(s). Whenever possible, this rule should apply to social media as well: staff who plan to communicate with children on social media should have a professional social media

account separate from their personal account. In addition, communications on social media should occur in official groups (e.g., RJC youth Facebook group or RJC WhatsApp group chat) that are monitored by administrators and closed to the public. If private messaging is necessary, at least one additional adult should be included in the conversation.

### **Documentation**

Online communications should be documented (much the same way in-person attendance is taken) including the date, start time, end time, agenda, names of participating adults, and names of participating children. Recording video meetings increases their observability, but only retroactively. Even so, recording may be a useful safeguarding tool for organizations with limited supervisory capacity, in that supervisors can explain that they will review (or “spot check”) a subset of the recordings or, if concerns emerge, a specific recording.

### **Professionalizing Participation**

Employees and volunteers of the synagogue will ensure that guidelines for virtual communication create an appropriate environment for both adults and children participating. For example, participants should join video calls dressed and not in pajamas. The background of participants’ computer screens -- whether child or adult -- should be professional (e.g., home office) or neutral (e.g., blank wall), rather than intimate (e.g., bedroom). However, given the constraints of apartment living, or having numerous family members at home at the same time, participants may need to take video meetings from their bedrooms. In these instances, participants should sit on a chair or the floor in front of the wall, rather than lounging on their beds. Alternatively, some video conferencing options, like Zoom, offer the ability to add a virtual background or wallpaper, which replaces the actual background. When this option is available, staff can upload an image of a familiar and professional setting and/or all participants can select exotic or interesting wallpaper. Implementing this safeguard need not be burdensome; it can be fun!

## **Section VIII. Communication with the Committee**

The RJC Child Protection Committee welcomes questions, concerns, and input about child safety at RJC and the terms of this policy.

The committee can be reached by e-mail address at [cpc@rjconline.org](mailto:cpc@rjconline.org). Emails sent to this address are automatically forwarded to all members of the committee (excluding the ex-officio members) to ensure that emails are not overlooked. The chair of the committee (or another member, if the chair is unavailable) will acknowledge receipt of an email within 24 hours of receipt. The sender will be updated when the Committee has determined the issue to be resolved.

RJC members are also welcome to approach or directly contact individual members of the Child Protection Committee or RJC staff. The names of the committee members are listed on the RJC website.

A locked mailbox can be found outside the RJC office. RJC members can leave identified or anonymous reports or other correspondence for the committee here. A digital option for submission will be made available as well. Unless required by law, the committee will not disclose the identity of a reporter to an alleged abuser.

The Child Protection Committee will host ongoing conversations dedicated to discussing issues of child protection and abuse and answering questions.

The Child Protection Committee will present a report to the Executive Committee on child safety matters in advance of the annual RJC membership meeting and welcomes questions at that time.

## Section IX. Training

The RJC will require completion of an annual live training covering the details of the Child Protection Policy for all RJC staff members, members of the Child Protection Committee, and volunteers who regularly interact with children. The RJC may offer in-person or online training and educational opportunities to children, teenagers, and adult congregants.

RJC staff, CPC members, and regular volunteers working with children who begin their duties mid-cycle will be expected to complete an in-person or online training module at the time they begin their duties.

All employees and regular volunteers working with children must sign an affirmation that they have read and will abide by the RJC's Child Protection Policy before engaging with children. Training should be completed within one month of beginning their employment or beginning their activities with children.

These trainings will be consistent with the requirements outlined in the Training/Workshop/Program Chart.

### Training/Workshop/Program Chart

Group	Frequency	Content	Coordinator
Youth	Annual/Fall	Educational sessions	CPC
Parents/ Congregants	As needed	Dependent upon youth related activities **	CPC
Volunteers	Annual/As needed	Share Policy/Affirm *	CPC
Teen Coordinator/ Group leaders	Annual/As needed	In person or online session/Affirm *	CPC
Clergy/Full-time staff	Annual	In person or online session/Affirm *	CPC Chair
Maintenance Staff	Annual	In person or online session/Affirm *	Executive Director
Vendors and Subcontractors	As needed	Share policy/Affirm *	Executive Director
Scheduled Visitors	As needed	Share policy/Affirm *	Executive Director
CPC members	Annual	In person or online session/Affirm* PLUS additional annual training *	CPC Chair

\* Required



## Section X. Reporting

### Requirements

State laws mandate that certain persons (*Summary Guide for Mandated Reporters NY State Mandated Reporters* - see Resources section) report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect to civil authorities. Extending the NYS statutes to our community, the RJC policy requires all RJC staff and volunteers, whether they are mandated reporters according to NYS law or not, to report ***any reasonable suspicion that a youth is being abused or maltreated***. In addition, all members of the community are empowered and encouraged by this policy to report incidents of suspected child abuse and maltreatment.

Reports may be made directly by an individual to the Statewide Central Register (SCR) of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. There may be cases in which the SCR may not be the appropriate reporting body, in which case the appropriate governmental agency should be notified (e.g., District Attorney's office, Police Enforcement, Federal Hotline). Individuals are encouraged, but not obligated, to notify the Child Protection Committee (CPC) after making such a report.

Alternatively, individuals may directly notify the Child Protection Committee of any suspected incident of child abuse. The committee will support this individual in reporting the incident to the SCR; or when necessary by law or to protect a child, report directly to the SCR. To the extent that is possible, all reports facilitated by the CPC will be held in the strictest of confidence protecting the confidentiality of the information and the individuals involved.

For any noted violation of this policy that does not meet any of the definitions of child abuse, and thus SCR notification is not indicated, a report should be made to the CPC. Additionally, this policy encourages reporting to the SCR and other authorities suspected historical events that are suspicious for child abuse or maltreatment.

State law protects all individuals, who in good faith report an episode of suspected abuse to the SCR or the CPC, from any form of retaliation, or legal or criminal liability.

### Reporting Suspected Child Abuse to the Statewide Central Registry

The following procedures must be followed when reporting suspected child abuse to the SCR:

- Ensure the child is in a safe environment.
- In cases of emergencies, call 911 immediately.
- RJC staff and regular volunteers are required to notify the CPC or their supervising staff member subsequent to making a report.
- A telephone report must be made to the NYS Office of Children and Family Services. The telephone number for NY State legally mandated reporters is 800-635-1522. The telephone number for all others is 800-342-3720.
- Upon completion of the call, the reporter is encouraged but not obligated to complete an Incident Report (see page 30). This may be completed with the guidance of the CPC or the reporter may choose to complete it on their own.
- If the report was communicated to the Child Protection Committee, then the Committee is thereafter responsible for the filing, appropriate distribution, and preservation of all such forms.
- The parent or guardian of the victim should be notified as soon as possible, with permission of the SCR.

### **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Policy Violations to the Child Protection Committee**

The following procedures must be followed when reporting suspected child abuse to the CPC:

- As above, ensure that the child is in a safe environment, and, if indicated, call 911.
- For guidance regarding non-emergent incidents that may require reporting to the SCR, and for notifications of policy violations, the CPC can be contacted at [cpc@rjconline.org](mailto:cpc@rjconline.org), or members of the committee can be contacted individually.
- For urgent concerns about suspected abuse, or uncertainties regarding reporting, the designated CPC committee member can be contacted. During regular business hours this can be done by contacting the synagogue office (718-548-1850), and at any time by contacting any member of the CPC.

**Suspected Abuse/Policy Violation Reporting Chart**

Incident	Action	Means of notification	CPC involvement
Suspected Child Abuse	Option 1 - Direct report to SCR by individual	NYS Child Abuse Hotline (800-342-3720) and/or other relevant governmental agency	Encouraged, but not obligated, to notify CPC
Suspected Child Abuse	Option 2 - Contact CPC for SCR reporting guidance	e-mail <a href="mailto:cpc@rjc.org">cpc@rjc.org</a> or contact any individual member of the CPC	CPC provides guidance and facilitates report to SCR and/or other relevant governmental agency
Child Protection Policy Violation that does not require SCR notification	Report Incident to CPC	e-mail <a href="mailto:cpc@rjc.org">cpc@rjc.org</a> or contact any individual member of the CPC or place incident report/note in CPC mailbox	CPC review

## Section XI. Policy Compliance and Violations

All members of the community are responsible for the safety of our children. In the event that one observes any violation of this policy, s/he is expected to report such incidents to the Child Protection Committee. Information will be shared with the Child Protection Committee and if necessary with appropriate New York State personnel. Reports can be made verbally to a member of the Child Protection Committee, in writing, or via email at [cpc@rjconline.org](mailto:cpc@rjconline.org). (For more details on how to communicate with the committee, see Section VIII on Communication with the Committee.) A written Policy Safety Incident Report shall be generated for all such events.

Any violation of this policy reported to the Child Protection Committee will initiate actions that may include, but are not limited to:

- Notification of the child's parents or guardians of the violations.
- Immediate actions to protect the child.
- Separation of the alleged violator from the child and other children at the RJC.
- Police notification of the occurrence.
- Notification to the State Central Registry.

Upon completion of a State Central Registry investigation, if determined necessary, an independent investigation may be conducted.

If the incident involves an RJC employee or staff member, an investigation will be conducted and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including termination. Alternatively, the case may be closed or declined by the investigative individual.

If the incident involves an RJC member, a warning, limited access, assignment of a *Shomer(guard)*, or termination of membership may be recommended. The CPC will notify other synagogues of the actions taken by the RJC towards the member if it is determined that the individual may seek to participate in services at those Synagogues.

In those instances where a report is made to the SCR and the authorities are unable or unwilling to move forward, the RJC's CPC will continue to execute due diligence in responding, which may include:

- Enlisting the assistance of an independent investigator.
- Referral of the child for a medical evaluation.
- Referral of the child for psychological evaluation and mental health supportive services.

If the violation is one of the RJC's policies but does not rise to a required notification of the SCR, then the actions taken may include, but are not limited to, a discussion regarding the violation between the violator and a minimum of 2 members of the committee. During that discussion, the policy and the violation will be reviewed to ensure the violator understands the guidelines. There will be written documentation of the policy violation and subsequent discussion that will be added to the violator's file, and affirmation by the violator to abide by the policy going forward. Failure by the violator to comply with the procedures set forth in this paragraph may result in the violator being barred from the RJC and RJC sponsored events and/or the violator's membership being revoked.

Initial discussions by the CPC about a violator should be encouraged, whenever possible, to be name/identity blind - excluding the violator's and the child's name.

A formal written warning may be delivered following an initial violation. For subsequent violations the following actions may be required:

- Dismissal of the violator from the RJC, with membership revoked.
- Consultation with an outside expert.
- Referral of the violator for appropriate supportive and/or mental health assistance.
- Notification of other community institutions.
- Alleged abuser's suspension of contact with children.

Upon CPC notification of an alleged perpetrator of abuse or policy violator who is a staff member or an individual that otherwise has regular interactions with children, the individual's access to children in the synagogue will be immediately suspended, pending discussion by the CPC that may additionally include an independent investigation.

### **Exceptions**

Every effort should be made to strictly adhere to this policy. There may be exceptional situations where these guidelines do not apply, for example, in an emergent situation (such as a medical emergency or a situation requiring a building lockdown) where compliance with these guidelines would place the child or another individual's safety in danger. At such times, when security and safety are the primary concerns, an adult occupying a room alone with a child with secured and/or locked door and/or with lowered blinds may be necessary. In the event that the guidelines are deviated from, the committee should be notified as soon as possible after the incident.

Similarly, violations to the policy may be anticipated, and therefore exception requests may be made to the committee in anticipation of a potential policy violation. Such requests should be made in writing and at least one week in advance of the need. The committee will determine if the exception is acceptable. All policy exceptions will be documented in writing by the Committee.

## **Section XII. Supporting Victims and Survivors of Child Abuse**

The purpose of this Policy is to prevent occurrences of child abuse. Yet, we understand that no matter how hard we try to protect children, there will always be some individuals seeking to harm them. Should the committee or the RJC leadership become aware that a child has been, or is suspected to have been, abused, they will take the following steps to clearly communicate support for the child and the child's family:

### **Support Person**

The rabbi or other relevant professional or lay leader will be designated as "Support Person(s)" and will reach out to the child and the child's family within 24 hours of learning of the abuse to express the synagogue's unequivocal support.

Understanding that abuse can have ongoing impact on a child and a child's family, the Support Person will seek permission from the child and the child's family to continue offering support on an ongoing basis. This support will include:

- Showing up
- Listening
- Affirming
- Offering to accompany the child/family in filing a police report, meeting with Child Protective Services, to court hearings or trial and other related meetings, interviews, or hearings.
- Asking the child and the child's family how else the RJC can support them.

Support Persons will understand the limitations of their role and will not offer therapeutic, legal or other expert advice, but will instead function as members of a multidisciplinary support team, working when possible to support and complement the efforts of involved professionals to support the child and family.

### **Mental Health Treatment**

The RJC will offer to help the family find a qualified mental health practitioner with expertise treating victims of abuse and their family members.

### **Creating a Culture of Ongoing Support for Victims of Childhood Abuse**

The RJC aims to create a space that is safe for all victims of childhood abuse – both those we know about and those we do not. To this end, the RJC will:

- Make every effort to protect the privacy of victims of child abuse.
- Create and distribute a referral list of local organizations and therapists who specialize in abuse prevention and treatment.

- Speak about child abuse publicly.
- Initiate communal dialogue.
- Publicize the contact information for Committee members who are available to answer any questions about child safety.

At the rabbi's discretion he will speak from the pulpit about child protection.

### **Section XIII. Integration of Individuals Known or Suspected to Pose a Risk to Children**

The RJC is deeply committed to protecting our children from potential and known offenders of child abuse and maltreatment. The safety of our youth is paramount. This is a core value of our community and the unifying principle upon which this policy is based.

Inclusion is another core value of our community. As in all communities, there may be individuals already within the RJC community, or who may wish to join, visit, or participate in our activities, who pose a known or potential risk to children. These may include individuals who:

- Have been convicted of child abuse or neglect or otherwise have substantiated findings against them.
- Otherwise behave in a manner that is potentially harmful to children.
- Violate this policy

In considering whether and how to integrate such individuals into our community, the RJC will prioritize the safety of our youth. As such, the unqualified inclusion of an individual who presents a known or suspected risk to children is prohibited, as it violates the protective mission of this policy.

While the Child Protection Committee (CPC) aims to manage all situations in this manner, it also recognizes the limits of its expertise and role in addressing the complicated issues of integrating those who may pose a potential risk to children. At the discretion and direction of the CPC, an expert consultant may be engaged prior to including or excluding said individuals.

Based on the CPC's review of the consultant's recommendations, access will be denied, permitted, or permitted with clear limitations set forth in writing.

## Section XIV. Policy Review

The RJC Child Protection Committee will engage in an annual review of child safety at which will include:

- Feedback received from staff, volunteers, lay leaders, and the congregation's membership.
- Feedback from parents and children.
- Feedback from youth staff and volunteers.
- Review of the general compliance of the community with this policy.
- Review of Incident Reports and reports of RJC individuals known to have engaged in behavior concerning the safety of children.
- Review of the language and details of this policy, and revisions as necessary to ensure it meets the daily and programmatic realities of the RJC.

The CPC is empowered to make ongoing minor changes as needed to this statement, however, any qualitative or substantive changes to the policy will be brought to the Board of Trustees for approval. Revised versions of the policy will be presented for endorsement to the Board of Trustees annually, or more frequently as dictated by the need for revisions. The CPC may engage in expert review of this policy to ensure that it is up to date with current research and best practices.

The results of the above review will be compiled in a report presented in advance at the RJC's annual membership meeting. A summary of this report will be available in the RJC office.

## **Section XV. Policy Dissemination and Affirmation**

This Policy shall be disseminated widely to the RJC community through publications, public discussion, educational opportunities, rabbinic teachings, training programs, and other means of communication that will raise awareness and create a safe environment for our children. The policy will be available on the RJC website, in the RJC office, and will be communicated to every member. The RJC requires all staff and volunteers who have responsibilities with children to sign an affirmation indicating that they have read and agree to abide by the terms of this Policy. All new members of the RJC will be provided with a copy of the policy.

Intermittent volunteers, contractors, subcontractors, and lessees who are likely to be interacting with children will likewise be required to sign an affirmation indicating that they have read either the entire policy or an abridged version of the policy and agree to abide by its terms, as a precondition of engagement with the RJC community or space.

## **Section XVI. Third Party Use of this Policy**

Any organization wishing to use all or part of this policy is asked to submit in writing such a request to the RJC Child Protection Committee ([cpc@rjconline.org](mailto:cpc@rjconline.org)). If permission is so granted, they are then further requested to acknowledge the RJC when using the document for their own purposes.

The RJC wishes to acknowledge the CSAIR for allowing us to utilize their policies as a framework for this document.

## Section XVII. Resources

[Sacred Spaces](#)

[Home | Child Protective Services | OCFS](#)

[Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth Serving Organizations \(Center for Disease Control\)](#)

[Summary Guide for Mandated Reporters New York State](#)

[Safehorizon](#)

[Creating Child Safe Institutions Royal Commission \(Australia\)](#)

[Key Elements of Child Safe Organisations - Research Study Royal Commission \(Australia\)](#)

[Preventing Abuse in Jewish Organizations that Serve Youth: Ten Policies to Create Safer Environments](#)

## Policy Safety Incident Report

### Part 1

*This form may be used to report to the RJC Child Protection Committee any violation of the RJC Child Protection Policy, boundary violations, disclosures of abuse, child safety concerns, or other behaviors or allegations of behavior that might jeopardize the safety of a child. Proof or first-hand direct knowledge of a behavior or incident is not necessary to submit this form. The information contained in this report is confidential and will only be shared as part of its discussion regarding the incident with the members of the CPC and legal authorities if so directed.*

1. Date/Time of incident/behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location of incident/behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name individual(s) – adult or child – who accidentally or intentionally violated the Child Protection Policy, harmed or potentially harmed a child, or who otherwise engaged in a concerning behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Name of the child(ren) involved in noted incident: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Describe, with as many details as possible, the incident/behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Individual submitting this report (optional):

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Printed Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Email Address*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Cell phone number*

**Please submit this form to the RJC Child Protection Committee by emailing [cpc@rjconline.org](mailto:cpc@rjconline.org), mailing it to 3700 Independence Avenue, or by putting it in the lockbox outside the shul office.**

**Policy Safety Incident Report**  
**Part 2**  
(For Child Protection Committee use)

1. Date/Time/Name of CPC member in contact with individual submitting report in Part One:

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2. Summary of conversation between CPC member and reporting individual:

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3. Date/Time of full CPC discussion of reported incident, including those in attendance:

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4. Key discussion points and actions recommended by the CPC: \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Follow up to discussion and recommended actions: \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_

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**A copy of this document should be placed in a confidential file in the synagogue office.**

## Policy Acknowledgement

By signing below, I hereby acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the Riverdale Jewish Center Child Protection Policy, and I agree to abide by and adhere to the policy.

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Name

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Date