

# PEACE Program Policy Template & Guide

For the Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment  
(PEACE) Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence

PEACE



BC Society of  
Transition Houses



## Acknowledgements

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## BCSTH RESOURCES

In addition to the contributions of PEACE programs to this resource, content was drawn from a number of existing BC Society of Transition House (BCSTH) documents and training materials, including:

**PEACE Best Practices Manual, 2009**

[http://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/PEACE\\_Best\\_Practices\\_v2\\_online\\_version.pdf](http://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/PEACE_Best_Practices_v2_online_version.pdf)

**BCSTH Legal Toolkit, 2016**

<http://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BCSTH-Legal-Toolkit-2016-1.pdf>

**BCSTH Policy Template & Guide: Sample Policies for Transition Houses, Second Stage Housing and Safe Homes, 2015**

[https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/BCSTHPolicyTemplateGuide\\_Final.pdf](https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/BCSTHPolicyTemplateGuide_Final.pdf)

**BCSTH PEACE Program Toolkit: Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence, 2017**

<https://bcsth.ca/publications/peace-toolkit/>



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## Overview

This guide offers program policy samples to assist anti-violence organizations develop specific policies for their Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment (PEACE) Programs for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence which were formerly named the Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) Programs.

## PROGRAM NAME CHANGE

In 2017, in consultation with existing CWWA programs and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) the 86 CWWA Programs voted on a new name to reflect the current scope of the CWWA programs across BC. The new name is The Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment (PEACE) Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence.

This Guide reflects this name change both in name, and in the broadened understanding of how children and youth experience domestic violence and violence against women.

## POLICY TEMPLATES

The policy templates here reflect:

- The MPPSG mandate and contract service deliverables of the PEACE program.
- Current legislation.
- Policy examples that are specific to the PEACE program.

This guide is meant to be a supplement to an agency's current organizational policies. It does not presume to dictate the contents of policy for individual organizations but instead provides a possible framework in which PEACE program staff can work.

We encourage agencies to use this guide together with the PEACE Program Toolkit and BCSTH's Legal Toolkit as both offer supplemental operational and program templates and program specific details and resources.

The sample policy templates include a variety of headings for clarity and they include:

- **RATIONALE:** The rationale represents the "why." A statement of reasons/aims/objectives that detail why the policy has been developed and is important to the service. The rationale gives context (political or organizational) to the policy development (OAITH, 2010).

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- **POLICY STATEMENT:** The policy statement describes the rules, guidelines and boundaries of a specific issue. This statement should demonstrate the organization’s position or decision about how the organization will carry out its activities (OAITH, 2010).
- **PROCEDURE:** Procedures are the “how,” the methods to implementing a policy. They are action oriented. Procedures detail who performs the procedure, what steps are performed, when the steps are performed, and how the procedure is performed.
- **POLICY CREATED DATE:** Date policy created.
- **POLICY REVIEW DATE:** Date policy up for review.
- **POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY:** Who is responsible for overseeing the policy, for example, finance staff, executive director, board, volunteer coordinator etc..

**Note:** Policies and procedures may vary between agencies. The ones included here reflect the PEACE Program Toolkit and will assist PEACE programs to be in compliance with current legislation and the PEACE service deliverables contained in the MPSSG contract.

## A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

### Children and Youth Who Experience Violence

As noted above, the Program name change reflected a recognition in the field of the broadened understanding of how children and youth experience domestic violence and violence against women. Children and youth living in families where domestic violence occurs, may:

- Hear the violence.
- Be used as a physical weapon.
- Be forced to watch or participate in assaults.
- Be forced to spy on a parent.
- Be informed that they are to blame for the violence because of their behaviour.
- Be used as a hostage.
- Defend a parent against the violence.
- Intervene to stop the violence, during the violence.
- Telephone for emergency assistance after the violence.
- See a parent’s injuries after the violence, and assist in “patching up” a parent.
- Have their own injuries and/or trauma to cope with.
- Deal with a parent who alternates between violence and a caring role.
- See the parents being arrested.
- Have to leave home with a parent, and/or experience dislocation from family, friends, and school.



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The above list, although not exhaustive, illustrates that children and youth do much more than “witness” violence. PEACE Program Counsellors expand their understanding of children and youth’s experiences to include “experiencing violence,” “resisting violence,” “responding to violence,” “being exposed to violence,” “living with violence,” and “being affected by violence”.

Throughout the Guide we are using the language of “experiencing” violence or domestic violence rather than “witnessing” to be consistent with the MPSSG contract and to highlight that even when children are not the primary target of the violence, they still experience, are affected by, resist and respond to it—they are not passive in their witnessing and experiencing of the violence.

## Gender-based Violence

Throughout the Guide we refer to violence against women and gender-based violence. These terms are interchangeable and reflect the historical and persistent unequal power relations between men and women. Gender based violence in any form is a violation of human rights and can “result in physical, psychological, sexual, and economic harm or suffering”<sup>1</sup>. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women<sup>2</sup> defines gender-based violence as encompassing, but not limited to:

- Physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence, and violence related to exploitation.
- Physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, and forced prostitution.
- Physical, sexual, and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

This violence can be perpetrated by men and women and in same-sex relationships; however, it is disproportionately perpetrated by men against women and girls, and has long-term, far-reaching impacts on their health and well-being.

This understanding of gender-based violence extends to systemic violence, and acknowledges that it is not only women and girls’ individual experiences of violence, but also structural violence (e.g. poverty, food and housing insecurity), which further disadvantages and harms women. Structural violence—and political, economic, and social systems that privilege some and disadvantage others—contribute to the social and gender inequality that creates conditions whereby gender-based violence is perpetuated and condoned.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe. (2011). Article 3a, Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Council of Europe Treaty Series, No. 210. Istanbul.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. (1993). Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>.





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### **Child and Youth**

Throughout this manual, child or children and youth refers to program participants unless otherwise indicated. These terms will be used interchangeably. Child or children will refer to program participants between the ages of 3–9. Youth will refer to program participants between the ages of 10–18.

### **Parents who have experienced violence or who are survivors of violence/ Guardians**

Most children and youth referred to the PEACE Program will have seen, heard, and/or been aware of the domestic violence and the violence perpetrated against women in their families. In the MPSSG contract, the children and youth are the primary clients and the primary service principles are 1) the safety and support of the children (and youth) who have experienced violence and the parents who have experienced violence and 2) the individual situation, perspective and needs of the children and youth. When providing these services the contractor is supposed to apply the knowledge of: 1) power imbalances in society that lead to children and youth experiencing violence, threats of violence or violence against women; 2) the impact and dynamics of violence, threats or violence or violence against women; and 3) that perpetrators are responsible for their actions.

Regarding parents, the contract specifies that the PEACE Programs communicate with and support parents who are survivors of violence or guardians by providing information about services, and where resources permit, provide support groups and individual support services about the impact that the experience of violence has on children and youth and how to support them. The contract also allows, when resources permit and at the Agency's discretion, consultation to women with dependent children and youth who are unable to attend or receive services as typically provided.

Throughout the Guide to be consistent with the contract we use the language parents who have experienced or who are survivors of violence interchangeably or guardians (e.g. grandparent, foster parent, etc.) unless we specify otherwise (e.g. offending parent). Please note, individual PEACE Programs should consider which language best fits their program and services.



## 1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This Rationale will apply to Sections 1.1 - 1.7 in the Program Description section.

### **RATIONALE**

Agency XYZ is dedicated to supporting children and youth who experience domestic violence, most commonly male violence perpetrated against women. Agency XYZ provides PEACE psycho-educational support services based on the contract description in Agency XYZ's "Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence" with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) and reflect the PEACE Program mandate.

### 1.1 Program Description

#### **POLICY**

The Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment (PEACE) Program for children and youth experiencing violence is a psycho-educational program that grew out of a need identified by BC's transition house workers and women staying in transition houses to support children and youth in families where domestic violence occurs. This provincial program is the only provincial and territorial program in Canada aimed at supporting children and youth who have experienced domestic violence and violence against women. It includes:

- Free community-based support programs for children and youth between the ages of 3 and 18.
- Communication with and support to parents who have experienced or who are the survivors of domestic violence and/or guardians.
- School prevention activities and in particular, the Violence is Preventable (VIP) program.

There are currently 86 community-based PEACE programs in BC for children and youth.

### 1.2 Program Objectives

#### **POLICY**

In compliance with Agency XYZ's "Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence" with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) the PEACE Counsellor will ensure that each child and youth receive PEACE psycho-educational support services that reflect their individual situation, perspective and needs and meet the PEACE Program objectives.

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## PROCEDURE

The PEACE Program will tailor the PEACE Program psycho-educational support services and activities to best suit each program participant. The elements of the PEACE Program support services and activities are listed below.

- Each session plan will include the following program objectives to ensure each child and youth receive a psycho-educational support service that reflects:
  - The safety and support of the children and youth who have experienced violence.
  - The safety and support of the parents who have experienced violence.
  - The individual situation, perspective and needs of the children and youth.
  - The power imbalances in our society that lead to children and youth experiencing violence or threats of violence or violence against women.
  - The impacts of violence or threats of violence or violence against women.
  - The dynamics of violence or threats of violence or violence against women.
  - That perpetrators are responsible for their actions.
  - The objective of stopping the inter-generational cycle of violence by teaching children and youth non-violent ways of resolving conflict and by promoting the process of healing.
  - The support of the emotional health and self-esteem of the children and youth who have been affected by experiencing violence.
- The psycho-educational support service will in an age appropriate manner:
  - Support children and youth to label and express their feelings regarding the violence they have experienced.
  - Assist children and youth in understanding healthy ways of dealing with anger and expressing anger.
  - Support children and youth to recognize that they are not at fault for the violent actions of others.
  - Teach children and youth safety skills and strategies.
  - Encourage open communication.
  - Acknowledge loss and separation issues.
  - Facilitate understanding of abuse and myths about violence against women.
  - Explore other violence issues such as violence in the media.
  - Encourage self-confidence.
- Deliver prevention activities in schools, in particular the Violence is Preventable (VIP) Program when appropriate.

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- Where resources permit and at the program’s discretion, provide consultation to women with dependent children and youth who are unable to attend or receive PEACE Program services.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 1.3 Services

### POLICY

In compliance with Agency XYZ’s “Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence” with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) the PEACE Counsellor will provide PEACE Program psycho-educational support services to eligible program participants.

### PROCEDURE

The PEACE Program for children and youth experiencing violence provides group and individual psycho-educational support services for children and youth living in families where domestic violence occurs and who:

- Are between the ages of 3 and 18 years of age; and
- Reside in (Program Location) and the surrounding area, or at the discretion of the Agency XYZ reside outside this area.

In addition to providing age appropriate support services to children and youth, PEACE program Counsellors:

- Conduct a program eligibility assessment of:
  - The impact on the children and youth of the violence experienced;
  - The group readiness of the children or youth; and
  - The support needs of the parent who has experienced violence.
- Provide individual support services for children and youth who are not ready for group sessions and for children or youth who need service when no group for their developmental age is available.
- Communicate with and support parents who experienced or are the survivors of violence or guardians where resources permit, by providing information about the

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services, support groups and individual support sessions about the impact of violence on children and youth and how to support the children and youth.

- Where resources permit and approved by parties involved, deliver prevention activities in schools and in particular, the Violence is Preventable (VIP) program.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 1.4 Hours and Location of Services

**Note:** Under Schedule A of the MPSSG contract, hours of service vary based on Agency contracts as do hours of operation and program location. The local PEACE program contact and overview information can be added here.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 1.5 Service Principles

### POLICY

In compliance with Agency XYZ's "Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence" with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) the PEACE Counsellor will apply the following service principles to their work with program participants.

### PROCEDURE

As per the PEACE contract the primary principles when providing services are:

- The safety and support of children and youth who have experienced violence and the parents who have experienced violence; and

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- The individual situation, perspective and needs of children and youth.

When providing these services, the PEACE Program Counsellor will apply the knowledge:

- Of the power imbalances in our society that lead to children and youth experiencing violence, threats of violence or violence against women;
- Of the impact and dynamics of violence, threats of violence or violence against women; and
- That perpetrators are responsible for their actions.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 1.6 Service Guidelines

### POLICY

In compliance with Agency XYZ's "Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence" with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) the PEACE Counsellor will apply the following service guidelines to their work with program participants.

### PROCEDURE

As per the PEACE Program contract, Agency XYZ PEACE Program Counsellors will:

1. Provide psycho-educational support services with the objective of stopping the inter-generational cycle of violence by teaching children and youth non-violent ways of resolving conflict and by promoting the process of healing.
2. Support children and youth whose emotional health and self-esteem have been affected by experiencing violence.
3. Provide services in an age appropriate manner designed to:
  - Support children and youth to label and express the feelings they have experienced regarding the violence they have experienced.
  - Assist children and youth in understanding healthy ways of dealing with anger and expressing anger.

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- Support children and youth to understand that they are not at fault for the violent actions of others.
  - Teach children and youth safety skills and strategies.
  - Encourage open communication.
  - Acknowledge loss and separation issues.
  - Facilitate understanding of abuse and myths about violence against women.
  - Explore other violence issues such as violence in the media and social media.
  - Encourage self-confidence.
  - Where resources permit, and at the Contractor's discretion, provide consultation to women with dependent children and youth who are unable to attend or receive the services as typically provided.
4. Agency XYZ will ensure that every person involved with the provision of PEACE Program support services, are competent to perform the services, adequately trained, fully instructed and supervised.
  5. Agency XYZ will ensure, in addition to (4) above that:
    - The PEACE Program Counsellor Support Plan is developed and updated; and
    - PEACE Program Counsellors have access to an objective counselling supervisor who is preferably separate from their supervisor or employer who will possess the following qualifications:
      - Knowledge and skilled in feminist counselling, psycho-educational support services and counselling supervision practices; and
      - Experience in counselling and/or supporting children and youth who have experienced violence in the home and their parents who have also experienced violence and their parents who have also experienced violence.
  6. Upon request from the Province from time to time provide evidence satisfactory to the Province that Agency XYZ, its employees, and all personnel engaged by the PEACE Program, hold or have been issued all required licenses, certificates and memberships and that they are valid and in good standing.
  7. Agency XYZ will all times maintain a standard of care, skill, and diligence in performance of the services exercised and observed by persons engaged in the provision of services similar to the services.
  8. Agency XYZ will ensure that the children and youth, and the parents who have experienced violence are entitled to independence from the religious, political, social beliefs or affiliations of the Agency, its employees and volunteers.
  9. Agency XYZ will establish and maintain intake and operational policies that are intended to:



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- Provide for the safety of children and youth, the parents who have experienced violence, and the programs employees and volunteers.
- Protect the children and youth and the parents who have experienced violence, the program's employees and volunteers from sexual and racial harassment during the provision of services.
- Ensure confidentiality by adopting a confidentiality agreement in a form content satisfactory to the Province, with signatures by each board member, employee, sub-contractor, service provider, volunteer, student, trainee or work placement. Agency XYZ will provide a copy of this confidentiality agreement to the Province upon request.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 1.7 Anticipated PEACE Program Outcomes

### POLICY

In compliance with Agency XYZ's "Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence" with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) the PEACE Counsellor will ensure that each child and youth receive PEACE psycho-educational support services that reflect their needs and meet PEACE Program outcomes.

### PROCEDURE

The anticipated PEACE program outcomes are that:

- Children and youth will be able to label and express their feelings regarding the violence they have experienced.
- Children and youth will understand healthy ways of dealing with anger and expressing anger.
- Children and youth will understand that they are not responsible or at fault for the violent actions of others.
- Children and youth will understand that they are not alone in their exposure to violence. This is often exemplified during group support services.
- Children and youth will understand safety skills and strategies and be able to identify who they can talk with to be safe and how to develop a safety plan if needed.

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- Children and youth will be able to identify their current support system which may need to be broadened based on their individual needs.
- Children and youth will be able to communicate openly about their circumstances and needs.
- Children and youth will be able to respond to feelings of loss and separation.
- Children and youth will gain an understanding of violence in our society and myths about violence against women and children.
- Children and youth will consider with the PEACE Counsellors other violence issues such as violence in media and social media.
- Children and youth's self-awareness and confidence will be enhanced;
- Children and youth will be able to identify their strengths and how to overcome the challenges they face.
- Children and youth will learn how other people view them and how they see themselves, especially with respect to their family relationships.
- Children and youth will feel some control over themselves, their family relationships, and their environment.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

### 1.8 PEACE Counselling Philosophy

#### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program is dedicated to supporting children and youth who have experienced domestic violence in their families and most commonly have experienced violence against women. The PEACE Program support services use a psycho-educational framework.

#### POLICY

The PEACE Program for children and youth experiencing violence provides group and individual services using psycho-educational methods. Children, youth and/or the parents who are survivors of violence consent to a psycho-educational support service program that will help them learn skills to respond to their experiences of violence.

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## PROCEDURE

The PEACE Program Counsellor provides support to children and youth through psycho-education by:

- Providing information that helps children and youth understand their experiences and the impacts of experiencing violence.
- Providing a place where they can feel safe and supported.
- Exploring their feelings and responses e.g., grief, loss, anger.
- Providing emotional support.
- Setting and teaching boundaries.
- Fostering and acknowledging resistance and resilience.
- Assisting with goal setting.
- Teaching skills, such as grounding skills and safety planning.
- Challenging established thinking and behaviours.
- Sharing family stories.
- Exploring, acknowledging and validating their responses to violence.
- Providing opportunities for social interaction with safe adults and peers.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 1.9 Funding

The PEACE program is funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) and the terms of the funding are contained in Agency XYZ's contract with MPSSG.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	



## 2. INITIAL CONTACT PROGRAM POLICIES

### 2.1 Initial Contact

#### **RATIONALE**

There are a number of steps that take place before a child or youth can begin psycho-educational support services as a participant in a PEACE Program. This is to ensure that the child or youth is ready to participate in PEACE Program.

#### **POLICY**

Initial contact with children, youth and the parent who has experienced or survived violence or the guardian will be conducted in a manner that is sensitive, timely and clear. Initial contact will be a safe, friendly, and flexible process designed to maximize the opportunities of the referred families to gain access to the PEACE Program services.

#### **PROCEDURE**

##### Initial Call

When a PEACE Program Counsellor receives a referral it is helpful to:

- Have a conversation with the referring source to get a sense of who is being referred and what are their primary needs and concerns.
- Ask the referring source to invite the parent who has experienced or survived violence or the guardian to call the Program. During this initial phone call it is helpful to:
  - Provide a brief description of the PEACE Program, your role and what they can expect.
  - Get agreement from the parent who is the survivor of violence regarding the child's or youth's participation in the Program.
  - Assess a child's or youth's willingness to participate in the Program.
  - Determine if it is a crisis situation, and if so book 1-3 sessions as soon as possible to discuss safety if the parties are willing.
- Record basic contact information on referral and/or intake forms. Sample Forms for you to consider are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.
  - Sample Form A: Referral
  - Sample Form AA: Mature Minor Intake
  - Sample Form C: Initial Contact/Phone assessment
  - Sample Form D: Parent/Guardian Intake

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At the time of initial contact, the PEACE Counsellor should gather only enough information to:

- Establish whether the child or youth and their parent who has experienced or survived violence is safe.
- Conduct a program eligibility assessment.
- Determine the child's or youth's readiness for a particular type of service (for example, individual or group service).
- Determine a safe way to contact the parent who has experienced or survived violence or the children and youth.
- If relevant, determine a safe way to contact the guardian.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 2.2 Assessing Eligibility for Service

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program is dedicated to supporting children and youth who have experienced domestic violence and most commonly have experienced violence against women. Agency XYZ provides PEACE psycho-educational support services based on the contract description in Agency XYZ's "Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence" with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) and reflect the PEACE Program mandate.

### POLICY

In compliance with Agency XYZ's "Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence" with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) the PEACE Counsellor will provide PEACE Program services to eligible program participants.

### PROCEDURE

The PEACE Program eligibility criteria is for children and youth who are:

- Between the ages 3-18 years of age; and
- Reside in the Agency XYZ Program area or, at the discretion of Agency XYZ reside outside of the Program area.

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The PEACE Program eligibility assessment will also consider:

- The impact on the children and youth of the violence experienced;
- The group readiness of the children and youth; and
- The support needs of the parent who has experienced violence.

During initial contact, PEACE Program Counsellors will clearly state any geographical boundaries, age limits, and other restrictions, such as whether it will accept children who are living with the offender, to what degree it supports the parent who has experienced violence and if, and in what capacity, it will support the offending parent.

If the child is not eligible for the PEACE Program, they and/or the parent who experienced violence or the guardian will be informed about the reason(s). Referrals to other programs/services are discussed and can be processed with the consent of the parent and/or a mature minor.

## FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form A: Referral
- Sample Form AA: Mature Minor Intake
- Sample Form B: Orientation
- Sample Form C: Initial Contact/Phone assessment
- Sample Form D: Parent/Guardian Intake
- Sample Form E: Interview with Parent/Guardian
- Sample Form F: Consent to Provide PEACE Program Support to Minors
- Sample Form FF: Consent to Provide PEACE Program Support Services: Mature Minor
- Sample Form G: Parent/Guardian Confidentiality Agreement for Minor Child
- Sample Form GG: Mature Minor Confidentiality Form

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	



## 2.3 Entry Process

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ provides PEACE psycho-educational support services based on the contract description in Agency XYZ's "Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence" with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) which reflects the PEACE Program mandate.

### POLICY

Acceptance to the PEACE Program is based on MPSSG's PEACE Program eligibility criteria and assessment outlined in Agency XYZ's Schedule A - PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence.

### PROCEDURE

After children and youth are assessed and determined to be eligible to participate in the PEACE Program, entry guidelines generally follow on a first come, first serve basis. However, priority may be assigned based on need and/or group structure which is designed to accommodate the following: age similarities, gender balance, emotional and physical health, behavioural considerations and the capacity of the program staff to accommodate special needs.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
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## 2.4 Referral to Other Agencies

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ accepts PEACE Program participants based on the agency's PEACE Program Service agreement with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. Not all children and youth meet the eligibility criteria outlined above in Section 2.1. children and youth may not be suitable or ready to begin PEACE Program and may need other referrals first.



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## POLICY

The PEACE Counsellor will determine whether a child or youth is suitable to participate in the PEACE Program based on the eligibility criteria. If there are concerns about whether a program participant requires outside referrals, the PEACE Counsellor will seek guidance from an experienced peer, counselling supervisor or Program supervisor.

## PROCEDURE

- Determine whether a child or youth meets the eligibility criteria of the PEACE Program based on the PEACE Program eligibility assessment.
- Discuss program alternatives and resources with the child or youth and/or the parent who has experienced domestic violence or the guardian.
- Get consent/permission and a release from the parent, guardian or mature minor child to refer the child or youth to another program which meets the child or youth's needs at this time. Typically, referrals include personally identifiable information, thus the PEACE Program Counsellor will need to have the relevant parties sign a release of information to allow for the referral.

## FORMS

Relevant sample forms are provided in the Policy and Template Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form M: Parent/Guardian Release of Information Form
- Sample Form MM: Mature Minor Release of Information Form

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 2.5 Participant Assessment

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ provides PEACE psycho-educational support services based on the terms contained in Agency XYZ's "Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence. Agency XYZ's participant eligibility assessment is reflected in Agency XYZ's Schedule A.

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## POLICY

The PEACE Program Counsellor will conduct a brief initial assessment that can be done by phone or in person with the parent who has experienced violence or if relevant the mature minor. This assessment is psychosocial in nature, not a clinical or diagnostic assessment. As such, the PEACE Program Counsellor does not require any diagnostic assessment tools (e.g., those that assess for anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, etc.). For the purposes of the PEACE Program the assessment is to determine eligibility - whether or not the referral is appropriate or if a child needs to be referred to another agency – and whether there are any immediate safety concerns.

## PROCEDURE

When conducting an assessment with a program participant a PEACE Program Counsellor will assess:

- The impact on the children and youth of the violence experienced.
- The group readiness of the children and youth.
- The support needs of the parent who has experienced violence and potential referrals.
- Motivation to attend the PEACE programming must also be considered. It is important to give the children and youth and the parents who experienced violence a sense of control over the decision and ensure there is no pressure to participate in this voluntary program.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 2.6 Wait List Process

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ provides PEACE psycho-educational support services pursuant to Schedule A – PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence and Section 2.e. in Agency XYZ's Schedule A lists the services provided and the funded hours for the contracted program.

### POLICY

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program is funded by MPSSG for XX hours per week. Often, there is a greater demand for PEACE support services than the Program has capacity.

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All referrals are reviewed and every effort is made to accommodate the placement of the children or youth into the Program, as soon as possible. If a PEACE Program is full, a waitlist will be started and children and youth will be placed on the next spot on the current waitlist. Typically, waitlists are maintained on a first come first served basis but there may be circumstances which would allow for a variance from this policy and they are detailed below in the Procedure section.

## PROCEDURE

If the PEACE Program is at capacity, entry guidelines generally follow on a first come, first serve basis. However, priority may be assigned based on need and/or group structure which is designed to accommodate the following: age similarities, gender balance, emotional and physical health, behavioural considerations, and the capacity of the Program staff to accommodate special needs.

Enter Agency XYZ waitlist policy here.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
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## 2.7 Participant Orientation Process

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is dedicated to supporting children and youth who experienced domestic violence in their families and most commonly male violence against women.

### POLICY

PEACE Counsellors will make an effort to the best of their ability to meet with the children and youth, mature minor and parent who experienced violence for an orientation session regarding the psycho-educational support services within one week of receiving the referral.

### PROCEDURE

Schedule a PEACE Program orientation session with the children, youth and parent who experienced violence. During the orientation session it is important to:

- Meet in a comfortable and welcoming space.
- Provide an overview of services and do a tour of the agency.

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- Provide any resources and information you have on the program such as program participant rights, program overview and in regards to privacy and confidentiality.
- Discuss the role of PEACE Program, and differentiate between group and individual session support services:
  - Provide examples of topics explored and methods of psycho-education;
  - Explain that individual sessions preferably occur after the child has participated in a group. However some children (e.g., older children, when no group is available, or for children who may not be a good fit for group) can access individual 1:1 sessions prior to, or without attending a group.
- Explain the PEACE Program waitlist and current wait. If relevant and possible, invite the parent who experienced violence or the guardian to bring their child during school hours to get an appointment sooner.

## FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form B: Orientation

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 2.8 Meeting with Parents Who Experienced and are Survivors of Domestic Violence

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is dedicated to supporting children and youth who experienced domestic violence and to communicate with and support parents who experienced and are survivors of violence and/or guardians. Agency XYZ provides PEACE Program support services based on the contract description in Agency XYZ's "Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence" with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) and reflect the PEACE Program mandate. According to the MPSSG contract, when providing these support services, the Program will consider as a primary principle, the safety and support of the children and youth who have experienced violence and the parents who have experienced violence.

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## POLICY

In compliance with Agency XYZ's "Schedule A", the Agency supports parents who are survivors or who have experienced violence or guardians by providing information about the services and where resources permit, by providing the parents with support groups and individual support sessions about the impact that the experience of domestic violence has on children and youth and how to support them.

## PROCEDURE

PEACE Program Counsellors will meet with the parents who have experienced violence or the guardian to provide information about the PEACE Program support services, expectations and outcomes. If a child/youth is a mature minor then decisions on whether to meet with the parent will be discussed and a decision by the program will be made on a case by case basis.

When meeting with parents and guardians the Program will:

- Meet in a comfortable and welcoming space.
- Listen carefully to their voices and bodies.
- Listen to and respect their boundaries.
- Respect and honour their culture.
- Be responsive to questions posed at the meeting or afterwards.

For children or youth not able to attend or receive services, Schedule A of the PEACE Program Section 5. c. x. allows as part of the PEACE Program support services, if resources permit and at the Agency's and PEACE Program's discretion, the PEACE Program Counsellor to provide consultation to women with dependent children and youth who are unable to attend or receive services as typically provided.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
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## 2.9 Meeting with the Child/Youth

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is dedicated to supporting children and youth who experience domestic violence and to communicate with and support parents who are survivors of violence or guardians when resources permit. According to the Agency XYZ MPSSG contract, when providing these



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support services, the Program will consider as a primary principle, the safety and support of the children and youth who have experienced violence and the parents who have experienced violence along with their individual situation, perspective and needs. This is inclusive of ensuring that potential program participants understand the nature of the voluntary PEACE Program psycho-educational support services.

### **POLICY**

PEACE Program Counsellors will meet with the children and youth individually or with the parent depending on the child's age, comfort level and wishes. The purpose of this first meeting is to primarily set the foundation for the Counsellors' relationship with the program participant. This will be done prior to starting PEACE Program support services.

### **PROCEDURE**

The following steps may be taken to build rapport and trust with the child/youth before participating in the PEACE Program.

- Create a welcoming and safe environment for the child to settle into.
- Listen carefully to their voices and bodies.
- Listen to and respect their boundaries.
- Do not push or rush conversation or activities.
- Ask permission.
- Begin to create structure, predictability and rituals.
- Respect and honour culture.
- Ask the child or youth how they feel about coming to see you.
- Do they have any concerns about talking to you?
- Would they feel comfortable telling you that you've had enough and that you would like to stop?
- Tell the child about yourself, what your role is, what you hope to achieve in working together.
- Ask the child what they hope to get out of coming to the PEACE program.
- Discuss consent and confidentiality.

By the end of the meeting, you should be able to assess:

- How ready the child/youth is to talk about his/her family situation.
- How comfortable the child/youth may be in a group setting.
- If the child/youth is able to trust an adult.
- If the child's/youth's behaviour will be in harmony with the group process.
- Any impacts of violence.

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## FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form B: Orientation
- Sample Form E: Interview with Parent/Guardian
- Sample Form H: Interview Assessment with a Child
- Sample Form HH: Interview Assessment with Youth

POLICY CREATED DATE	
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## 2.10 Developing a Safety Plan

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ provides PEACE Program psycho-educational support services based on a contract with MPSSSG which provides that the safety and support of the children and youth who have experienced violence and the parents who have experienced violence are primary principles of the PEACE Program. A safety plan is a strategy which involves exploring and identifying the steps to maintain and increase safety. A safety plan helps to prepare for the possibility of further violence and provides guidelines to follow if safety is put at risk.

### POLICY

Through initial contact, PEACE Program Counsellors may be able to determine if immediate safety planning sessions should be scheduled as a priority. If for any reason safety has been determined to be priority before children or youth participate in the PEACE Program, PEACE Counsellors will engage in safety planning with the children or youth and the parents experiencing violence and/or their guardian.

### PROCEDURE

- Based on initial contact information and assessment, determine if safety planning sessions should be scheduled considering current need and urgency.
- Work with children and youth and parents experiencing violence and/or their guardians to develop a safety plan.



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- Provide children and youth and parents experiencing violence and/or their guardians with emergency contact numbers and resources. See [PEACE Program Toolkit](#), Section 3, Safety Planning for resources at pages 57 -65.
- Schedule follow-up safety planning check-ins.

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### 3. CONFIDENTIALITY

#### 3.1 Explaining Confidentiality and Informed Consent

##### **RATIONALE**

Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all PEACE Program participants. PEACE Programs are voluntary programs that collect personally identifying information of the program participants. PEACE Programs must abide by federal and provincial legislation including all relevant privacy legislation as detailed in the Agency XYZ contract with MPSSG.

##### **POLICY**

In compliance with applicable privacy legislation, PEACE Program Counsellors must clearly explain Agency XYZ's informed consent and confidentiality policy as to any information collected regarding the children, youth and parents who have experienced violence and guardians and ensure that the Agency's records management and privacy policies are in compliance with the applicable privacy legislation.

##### **PROCEDURE**

For parents who have experienced or are survivors of violence:

Ensure that the parents who experienced violence or the guardians understand that the PEACE Program services are voluntary services that the participants must consent to by providing the Program informed consent.

Ensure that the parents/guardians understand that any information provided or collected about themselves and on behalf of the child or youth is confidential except in certain legal circumstances. The release of any information regarding parents/guardians and children or youth involvement with the PEACE Program may occur only with written and signed consent to release subject to certain legal exceptions listed below. Parents/Guardians can revoke their authorization to release personal information at any time.

As part of the informed consent process, Agency XYZ informs the parents/guardians that there are legal exceptions where a PEACE Program can release personally identifiable information without consent which are:

- If PEACE Program staff have reason to believe that a child needs protection under section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act, they are obligated (as are the general public) to inform the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

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- If PEACE Program staff have reason to believe that a parent or child is likely to cause serious physical harm to themselves or another, they are obligated to inform the appropriate authorities.
- If PEACE Program staff are required by a Judge in a Court Order to disclose specific records or to attend court to testify.

For Children or Youth who have experienced violence:

The PEACE Program mandate requires that psycho-educational support services are provided in an age appropriate manner. Depending on a child's age, confidentiality and informed consent can be hard concepts to understand. It can be helpful to:

- Explain what confidentiality means and that what a child tells a PEACE program Counsellor is private. Ask if they understand what this means.
  - Clarify that what they share is their story and that you won't tell their story to anyone else except in a few situations.
  - Explain that there may be situations when you will need to share something with their parent/guardian. Assure the children or youth that you will let them know if a situation like this arises.
- Explain the difference between a secret and confidentiality.
- Keep in mind that there may be things a child only wants to talk about with their parent/guardian in the room and perhaps when they are not in the room. Always keep this as an option.
- Be repetitive. Be sure to revisit confidentiality and what it means regularly.
- In group settings ensure that confidentiality is introduced to children or youth when defining group guidelines.

### FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template and Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form F: Consent to Provide PEACE Program Support to Minors
- Sample Form G: Parent/Guardian Confidentiality Agreement for Minor Child
- Sample Form GG: Mature Minor Confidentiality Agreement

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	



## 3.2 Confidentiality in the Community

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all program participants. PEACE Programs must abide by all federal and provincial legislation including all relevant privacy legislation as detailed in the contract with MPSSG. The privacy of all Program participants extends to the public sphere.

### POLICY

PEACE Program Counsellors and program staff at Agency XYZ have a responsibility to protect the identity and privacy of program participants and their personally identifiable information within the Agency and outside that setting.

### PROCEDURE

- As part of the orientation with program participants, Agency XYZ will discuss what the parents/guardians, children and youth would like PEACE Program Counsellor's to do if by chance there is contact in a public setting outside of the PEACE Program.
- Options to consider are whether they would like to be acknowledged with a hello or not acknowledged.
- If the parents'/guardians preference is that the PEACE Program Counsellor not acknowledge them in a public setting ensure that they recognize this can be hard for some children and youth to understand, particularly at a young age, and that the child might wonder why they would need to pretend they don't know the Counsellor in some places and not in other settings.
- After having a conversation with the parents, guardians, children and youth, once the decision is made, assure them, that the PEACE Program Counsellor will respect their decision.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
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## 3.3 Confidentiality within the Agency

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all program participants. PEACE Programs must abide by all federal and provincial legislation including all



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relevant privacy legislation as detailed in the contract with MPSSG. Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy of all program participants. PEACE Counsellors must make every effort to uphold the privacy of the program participants and maintaining this confidentiality can be difficult when the PEACE Program is housed in a large social service agency that administers a variety of programs whose mandate may fall under different federal and provincial ministries and laws.

### **POLICY**

Only staff who work in Agency XYZ's PEACE Program will have access to the program participants' personally identifiable information. Information about program participants and their family will not be discussed outside of counselling supervision and on a case by case basis with the PEACE Program supervisor.

### **PROCEDURE**

- The MPSSG contract requires that Agency XYZ's operational policies include a confidentiality agreement, in a form and content satisfactory to the Province, with signatures from each board member, employee, sub-contractor, service provider, volunteer, student, trainee or work placement. Agency XYZ will provide a copy of this confidentiality agreement to the Province upon request.
- Review Agency XYZ's operational policies regarding informed consent, the privacy of records and records management guidelines.
- Identify Agency XYZ's privacy officer and determine how best to contact the privacy officer.
- Ensure participants' records are kept in a secure file cabinet or a locked room.
- If names and case notes are part of an online database, ensure the database is password protected and files are not accessible to staff and volunteers not working within the PEACE Program. Ensure that the data is encrypted and the database is on a secured network.
- Ensure children, youth and parents/guardians are made aware that their information may be shared with a counselling supervisor and program supervisor in order to provide them with the best possible support service.
- Work in accordance with the appropriate professional association standards and professional accreditation organizations where applicable. (e.g., B.C. Association of Counsellors, Council of Accreditation for Child and Family Services –CARF, Council on Accreditation – COA).
- Review sections relating to confidentiality and privacy of program participants' personally identifiable information in the funding agreements or contracts that Agency XYZ has with funders.
- Review the sections relating to confidentiality and privacy of program participants' personally identifiable information in the contracts that Agency XYZ has with online

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database providers, IT providers, and any other commercial providers who in the course of providing services to the Agency have access to program participants' information.

- Note that parents, guardians, children and youth receiving PEACE program services do not have to provide their legal names to receive PEACE Program services.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 3.4 Sharing Information between Agencies

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all program participants. PEACE Programs must abide by federal and provincial legislation including applicable privacy legislation as detailed in the Agency XYZ contract with MPSSG. Sharing of personally identifiable information of program participants is allowed but only in specific circumstances.

### POLICY

In compliance with relevant federal and provincial legislation, PEACE Program Counsellors will not share personally identifiable information and records of program participants with other social service agencies or government entities unless there is a signed consent to release information or a legal duty to provide the information. This privacy policy includes and is not limited to community coordinated committees, Ministry of Children and Family Development staff and accreditation bodies. Regarding sharing of information with counselling and program supervisors, the Program's confidentiality agreement details that the records may be shared to provide professional consultation but all identifying information will be removed before the consultation will occur.

### PROCEDURE

- Inform the children, youth and/or parent/guardian that there is a request for their information and from whom.
- Explain the legalities and risks of sharing and not sharing information.
- If children, youth and/or parents/guardians agree to share the personally identifiable information, have them sign a Release of Information form which is time limited.
- Inform the children, youth and/or parents/guardians that the consent to release information can be revoked at any time.

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## FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form M: Parent/Guardian Release of Information
- Sample Form MM: Release of Information for Mature Minor
- Sample Form N: Revocation of Release of Information for a Minor Child
- Sample Form NN: Revocation of Release of Information for a Mature Minor

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
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## 3.5 Staff Confidentiality Agreement

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all program participants. PEACE Programs must abide by all federal and provincial legislation including applicable privacy legislation as detailed in the Agency XYZ contract with MPSSG.

### POLICY

In compliance with federal and provincial laws and the Agency XYZ MPSSG contract, it is the policy of Agency XYZ that board members, employees, sub-contractors, service providers, volunteers, students, trainees or work placement will not disclose confidential information belonging to, or obtained through their affiliation with the PEACE Program to any person, including their relatives, friends, and business and professional associates, unless the program participant has authorized disclosure. This policy is not intended to prevent disclosure where disclosure is required by law.

### PROCEDURE

The MPSSG contract requires that Agency XYZ's operational policies include a confidentiality agreement, in a form and content satisfactory to the Province, for each board member, employee, sub-contractor, service provider, volunteer, student, trainee or work placement. Agency XYZ will provide a copy of this confidentiality agreement to the Province upon request. Each PEACE program board member, employee, sub-contractor, service provider, volunteer, student, trainee and work placement will sign Agency XYZ's confidentiality agreement prior to



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beginning their work with PEACE Program. The original form will be kept in Agency XYZ personnel files and a copy will be given to the signee.

## FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and can be found in the BCSTH Legal Toolkit.

- Sample Form P: Sample Confidentiality Form

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 3.6 Referrals

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all program participants. PEACE Programs must abide by federal and provincial legislation including applicable privacy legislation as detailed in the Agency XYZ contract with MPSSG.

### POLICY

In compliance with relevant federal and provincial laws, Agency XYZ will not provide personally identifiable information of program participants to both Agency XYZ and external programs without the signed release of information form. When referring program participants to any external programs the same privacy protections must be followed to allow for the sharing of personally identifiable information.

### PROCEDURE

When filling out referral forms for other programs, obtain informed consent and complete a release of information form with the program participant before sending the referral. When asking external programs to submit a referral of potential PEACE Program participants, do not ask for and collect unnecessary personally identifiable information that is not necessary to provide the psycho-educational support services consented to.

### FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

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- Sample Form M: Parent/Guardian Release of Information
- Sample Form MM: Release of Information for Mature Minor
- Sample Form N: Revocation of Release of Information for a Minor Child
- Sample Form NN: Revocation of Release of Information for a Mature Minor

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
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### 4. INFORMED CONSENT

#### 4.1 Informed Consent

##### **RATIONALE**

Agency XYZ is committed to ensuring that all potential program participants of the PEACE Program are fully informed of the mandate and services of the program. Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all PEACE program participants in the voluntary program. PEACE Programs must abide by federal and provincial legislation including all relevant privacy legislation as detailed in the contract with MPSSG.

##### **POLICY**

PEACE Programs are voluntary and children, youth and parents who access these services choose to do so. The program participants must consent or agree to participate in these services and that consent must be informed and meaningful.

##### **PROCEDURE**

For informed consent, children, youth and parents who experienced violence, must be advised regarding what services they are consenting to and they must have the legal capacity to provide consent. PEACE Program Counsellors are required to ensure that both of these elements are present.

As part of the intake process, PEACE Program Counsellors will document that the program participants have provided informed consent which assures:

- Being informed of information and services that enable them to explore options.
- The program participants being central to planning and decision making by being informed.
- Being advised of PEACE program policies that have a direct impact on the children, youth and parents such as:
  - How the program intends to use and disclose any collected information;
  - The legal exceptions to confidentiality; and
  - The program's privacy policy and records management policy.

Consent forms vary based on the age and development of the child. The PEACE Program will use the appropriate consent form (e.g., mature minor) and obtain informed consent from the parent or guardian in the case of minors.

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## FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are the same forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form Q: Sample Informed Consent Form

POLICY CREATED DATE	
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POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 4.2 Parental Consent for a Minor

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is committed to ensuring that all potential program participants of the PEACE Program are fully informed of the mandate and services of the program. Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all program participants in the voluntary program. PEACE Programs must abide by federal and provincial legislation including all relevant privacy legislation as detailed in the contract with MPSSG.

### POLICY

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program employees will abide by federal and provincial laws in regards to parental consent of a minor choosing to participate in the PEACE program. The BC Family Law Act (FLA) provides the framework to analyze who needs to consent to allow a minor child (under 19) to access PEACE Program support services. Section 39 of the FLA, specifies that if parents are living together or living separately, each parent is a guardian of that child. As a guardian, a parent has parental responsibilities towards the child to be exercised in the child's best interest. Section 41 discusses the parental responsibility to give, refuse or withdraw consent to medical, dental and other health related treatments subject to the child's ability to give their own informed consent under the BC Infants Act.<sup>3</sup>

Section 40 of the FLA requires the parent or guardian who wishes to register a child in a PEACE program to consult with the other parent unless it would be unreasonable or inappropriate. This decision would depend on the circumstances of the case. Consultation may be unreasonable or inappropriate if there is a safety risk, allegations of abuse or the other party is unavailable. Importantly, an obligation to consult is not the same as requiring the other

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<sup>3</sup> Informed consent for minors without a parents/guardians consent is discussed below.

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parent's consent. If the parent or guardian determines that it is the best interest of the child to access PEACE Program and that consultation with the other parent is unreasonable or inappropriate, the FLA does not require consultation.

A minor's participation in Agency XYZ's PEACE Program would fall under these laws as well as any court order or agreement currently in place regarding the allocation of parental responsibilities.

## PROCEDURE

- During initial screening and then again during the intake and the eligibility assessment, determine who can give informed consent on behalf of the child or youth to participate in the PEACE Program.
- If there are questions on whether a parent or one parent can provide consent to PEACE program on behalf of their child, consult with:
  - The [BCSTH Legal Toolkit](#) at Section 10: Parental Consent and Counselling.
  - The [Ministry of Justice Information Bulletin \(August 2015\)](#) that discusses the application of the Family Law Act and parental consent for services.
- If a PEACE Program Counsellor is unsure, consult with the program supervisor.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 4.3 Parent Consent on Minor's Behalf

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is committed to ensuring that all potential program participants of the PEACE Program are fully informed of the mandate and services of the program. PEACE Programs must abide by federal and provincial legislation including all relevant privacy legislation as detailed in the contract with MPSSG. Minor children and youth are often not able to provide informed consent so parents provide it on their behalf pursuant to the Family Law Act (FLA) and any relevant court agreements or orders.

### POLICY

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program will review the information referred to in Section 4.2 above and if appropriate obtain consent for a minor child or youth to participate in PEACE Program from a parent or guardian if the child or youth is not a mature minor.

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## PROCEDURE

- Provide information about the PEACE Program to the parents/guardians.
- Ensure that parents/guardians specify what programs they are permitting the child or youth to participate in.
- Ensure that parents/guardians know that they can withdraw their child or youth from the PEACE Program at any time.
- Have parents/guardians sign a consent to program participation form.

## FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are the same forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form F: Consent to Provide PEACE Program Support to Minors
- Sample Form G: Parent/Guardian Confidentiality Agreement for Minor Child

POLICY CREATED DATE	
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## 4.4 Mature Minors

### RATIONALE

If a minor meets the mature minor criteria under the BC laws, children and youth can participate in the PEACE Program without a parents'/guardians' knowledge or consent. If deemed a mature minor they act and are treated as adult participants.

### POLICY

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program will assess whether the child or youth wanting to participate in the PEACE Program without a parent's consent or knowledge would be considered a 'mature minor' and have the capacity to provide informed consent on their own.

### PROCEDURE

A minor child is a person under the age of 19 as established by the Age of Majority Act. A minor child can give informed consent for the PEACE Program without a parent's or guardian's knowledge or consent and in BC the informed consent analysis considers the maturity of the child and is not based on a certain age. The mature minor analysis and resulting mature minor informed consent practice focuses on the maturity of the child rather than a particular age.

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The intellectual and emotional development of the child should be considered along with an appreciation of the nature, consequences, risks and benefits associated with the services.

The services that the PEACE Program provides guides the Program's informed consent practice. If the PEACE Program falls under the health care provisions of the BC Infants Act, that statute identifies the informed consent steps for a mature minor to be taken and if the PEACE Program does not fall under these health care provisions then common law practices regarding a mature minor's capacity to consent apply.

- For guidance, Agencies should review the [BCSTH Legal Toolkit](#) at Section 10: Informed Consent for Minors.

The Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA) assumes throughout the Act that if a child is under 12 that the child lacks capacity to consent unless the child's developmental level and maturity indicate that the child has the capacity to consent. PEACE Programs can look to the Act for guidance and consider 12 as the age that requires parental consent but under the CFCSA even children under 12 can provide informed consent to the PEACE Program. According to the CFCSA anyone under 19, even someone as young as 10 years of age, can consent to participate in PEACE programming provided they:

- Have the developmental maturity;
- Understand the nature and consequences of service ;
- Understand the associated benefits and risks of service; and
- The care is in their best interests.

The PEACE Counsellor will consult with their program supervisor if they are unsure if a child is a 'mature minor.'

## FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form FF: Consent to Receive PEACE Program Support Services: Mature Minors
- Sample Form GG: Mature Minor Confidentiality Agreement
- Sample Form JJ: Service Plan with Mature Minor
- Sample Form MM: Release of Information for a Mature Minor
- Sample Form NN: Revocation of Release of Information for a Mature Minor

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## 4.5 Consent to Release Information

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all program participants in the voluntary confidential PEACE program. PEACE Programs must abide by federal and provincial legislation including all applicable privacy legislation as detailed in the contract with MPSSG.

### POLICY

In compliance with federal and provincial legislation, the PEACE Program Counsellor will inform the program participants if there are any third party requests for the program participants' personally identifiable information or records. This includes is but not limited to, referral forms from other programs, requests from community coordination committees and Ministry of Children and Family Development staff and subpoenas or requests for information or records related to a court matter.

Before releasing any information about a program participant, the PEACE Program Counsellor will meet with the program participant/s and discuss the request and the possible responses and legal options available regarding the request.

If the program participant has asked for the release of information, before releasing any information about a program participant, the PEACE Program Counsellor will meet with the participant/s and discuss the request and have the program participants sign a Release of Information.

### PROCEDURE

- After receiving a request of information, including referral forms for other programs, the PEACE Program Counsellor will inform the program participant of the potential risks and benefits of personal identifiable information being shared.
- If the program participant and/or referring parent willingly consents to the PEACE Program Counsellor sharing the information, the PEACE Program Counsellor will ask the program participant/and or referring parent to sign a "Release of Information Form" and discuss the additional "Revocation of Release Form".



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- If the program participants decline to release the third party requested information, the possible responses and legal options should be discussed with the participants and the program should consult with the [BCSTH Legal Toolkit](#) and the [PEACE Program Toolkit](#) and consider consulting with legal counsel. A list of legal resources is in the BCSTH Legal Toolkit in Section 2.

### FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form M: Parent/Guardian Release of Information
- Sample Form MM: Release of Information for a Mature Minor
- Sample Form N: Revocation of Release of Information for Minor Child
- Sample Form NN: Revocation of Release of Information for a Mature Minor

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### 5. RIGHTS OF THE PARTICIPANT

#### 5.1 Rights of the Program Participant

##### **RATIONALE**

Agency XYZ respects the rights and dignity of the people it serves especially children and youth. Agency XYZ acknowledges the individual situation, perspective and needs of that the children, youth and parents who have experienced domestic violence. Agency XYZ recognizes the power imbalance in our society that lead to children, youth experiencing violence, threats of violence and violence against women. Agency XYZ recognize the impact of the dynamics of violence and violence against women. Agency XYZ is committed to empowering children, youth and parents who have experienced domestic violence and providing them with the support, resources and time they need in a safe and non-judgmental, non-coercive environment. Working from an anti-oppression framework, Agency XYZ is committed to providing responsive services to ensure that no person faces discrimination. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all program participants accessing Agency XYZ's PEACE Program support services are aware of their rights.

##### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Agency XYZ recognizes the rights of children, youth and women as defined in current governmental laws and regulations, including the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *the Canadian Human Rights Act*, *the BC Human Rights Act* and *Employment Standards*, and as defined by the service principles or expectations outlined by the relevant funding body/MPSSG.

Agency XYZ provides information on rights and responsibilities to children, youth and parents accessing services in ways that are clear and understandable when women and her children first come in contact with services.

Agency XYZ acts in accordance with and recognizes that each individual child, youth and parent accessing programs has the right to:

- Be free from abuse, neglect, retaliation, humiliation, financial or any form of exploitation.
- Be considered for accommodation and services based on fair policies.
- Safety and support.
- Physical security and well-being.
- Emotional support.
- Assistance during a crisis or to prevent a crisis.
- Voluntary participation, which includes their right to:

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- Progress through programs at their own level of comfort, including making their own decisions and choices without coercion or undue influence.
- Informed consent and choice, which includes their right to:
  - Be informed about the policies of Agency XYZ that have a direct impact on them.
  - Access information and opportunities that enable them to explore options and understand the potential implications of any choices.
  - Be central to any planning or decision-making processes. and
  - Be informed and included in the decisions made about them.
- Confidentiality and privacy in accordance with federal and provincial laws including the maintenance of records.
- Respect and dignity including to be treated without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, social condition, and physical or mental disability or ability.
- Be informed of their human, legal and civil rights and to speak up and be heard when program participants feel their rights have been violated.
- Access legal representation when required.
- Make a complaint or appeal a decision.
- Independence from the religious, political and social beliefs or affiliations of the Agency's employees and volunteers.

### Agency XYZ:

- Is committed to participant rights being consistently maintained throughout all programs.
- Will redress any violation of participant rights.

### PROCEDURE

- The participant's Rights policy will be posted in high visibility locations throughout Agency XYZ.
- Participants will be informed of their rights during orientation and intake sessions as well as revisited throughout their participation in the program.

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The header features a teal background with a large, stylized, distressed white word 'PEACE' in the top right corner. On the left, there are faint, overlapping circular patterns in shades of teal and white.

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### **ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED SECTION 5 POLICIES**

There are additional PEACE Program policies that cover specific practice issues at Agency XYZ that could be included in this section. BCSTH recommends you add these policies based on your Agency's policies.

Some additional suggestions that might apply to your Agency are:

- Agency use of technology policy
- Online database policy



## 6. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

This Rationale will apply for all the Sections of the 6.0 Section Records Management.

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all program participants and their records in the voluntary PEACE Program. PEACE Programs must abide by federal and provincial legislation including all applicable privacy legislation as detailed in the contract with MPSSG. Agency XYZ's PEACE Program maintains participant records both print and electronic versions that contain personally identifiable information about the participants. Any record that is generated by the PEACE Program could potentially be requested by a third party or subject to a subpoena or request for records in a court proceeding.

### 6.1 Participant Records

#### POLICY

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program Counsellors will keep accurate and up-to-date program participant records that are necessary for the services provided to program participants.

#### PROCEDURE

- All program participants, whether they are receiving services in person or on the telephone, will be informed of Agency XYZ's record-keeping practices and the legal exceptions to confidentiality. These legal exceptions are:
  - If program staff have reason to believe that a child needs protection under Section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act they are obligated to inform the Ministry of Children and Family Development;
  - If program staff have reason to believe that the program participant is likely to cause serious physical harm to herself or another they are obligated to inform the appropriate authorities;
  - If program staff are required by court order to disclose specific records or to attend court and testify and
  - If the program participant expressly consents to the release of records.
- PEACE Program Counsellors are to collect the minimal amount of information required to provide services required.
- PEACE program Counsellors will open a record or file when a child or youth is ready to begin service, not when the child or youth is on the waitlist for service. The exception to this is when the program participant is involved in legal proceedings or when the PEACE Program Counsellor has reason to believe that there is a higher than usual risk to safety

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in relation to a particular program participant and the Counsellor provides crisis support.

- The PEACE Program participant record should follow a standard format.
- Emails and other electronic records stored on agency computers should be treated in the same manner as paper records for the purposes of confidentiality and record keeping.
- The content of program participant records or files and other written documentation should be limited to information that is required for statistical and funding purposes and documenting the need for and delivery of PEACE Program services.
- All entries in a PEACE Program participant file must be legible and must use language familiar to program participants.

Program participant records can include:

- Intake forms and demographic data.
- Initial contact/phone assessment:
  - Telephone logs should use only the first name or initials of program participants whenever reasonable.
- Interview with parent form.
- Interview with child/minor form.
- Informed consent form.
- Confidentiality form.
- Release of Information forms (including releases to and from third parties).
- Revocation of Release of Information forms (including releases to and from third parties).
- Assessments completed by the program.
- Emergency medical form.
- Service plans, both individual and group.
- Case Notes.
- Session summary.
- Only necessary third party reports that will not be harmful during a discovery process.
- Correspondence regarding program participant.
- Court and legal documents regarding program participant.
- Referrals to other services documentation.
- Mandatory reporting referrals.
- Safety Plans.
- File closure.
- Summarizing documents obtained from other sources would not be an appropriate practice.

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## 6.2 Case Notes

### POLICY

Agency XYZ will keep keep accurate and up-to-date PEACE Program participant case notes that are brief, fact based and without judgement or opinion. The PEACE Program Counsellor will ensure that only the information that is essential to providing the necessary services will be documented.

### PROCEDURE

On-going session notes and service plans should:

- Be kept up-to-date and recorded as soon as possible after every session and initialed and dated by the author.
- Reflect notes about the session not historical or legal facts.
- Record information needed to provide service and what is needed for colleagues to provide service.
- Be brief and note major topics and themes and keep details to a minimum.
- Avoid documenting verbatim accounts.
- Document methodologies used.
- Be objective and not include subjective comments.
- Be fact based and avoid speculation.
- Avoid information about people other than the program participant except when necessary.
- Be in a common format.
- Be legible.
- Indicate if information is from a third party.
- Be kept in ink with corrections made by crossing out deleted material so that it can still be read.
- If applicable, reflect that the program participant has read the file and whether any information has been recorded or changed at their request.

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## 6.3 Security of Records

### POLICY

Agency XYZ is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all program participants and their records in the voluntary PEACE Program. PEACE Programs must abide by federal and provincial legislation including all applicable privacy legislation as detailed in the contract with MPSSG.

### PROCEDURE

- Agency XYZ staff will ensure that PEACE Program paper files are stored in a lock cabinet in Agency XYZ's XXX location.
- Only PEACE Program employees will have access to these files.
- The identity of the program participants will not be disclosed to anyone unless that person has the program participant's permission (and/or the permission of the referring parent, as appropriate) or is a member of the Agency XYZ staff who is providing service to the program participant. This includes non-disclosure to employees, board members, subcontractors, volunteers service providers, volunteers, students, trainees or work placements except as required to provide service.
- The MPSSG service guidelines in Section (i)(iii) requires that Agency XYZ's operational policies include confidentiality agreements in a form satisfactory to the Province with each board member, employee, subcontractor, service provider, volunteer, student, trainee or work placement,
- If participant files and/or case notes are kept on an electronic database, Agency XYZ ensures that:
  - Transmission of information is encrypted and stored on a secure server.
  - The database is password protected and only information necessary to provide PEACE program services will be stored on this database.
  - Only PEACE Program staff have access to PEACE participant records on the electronic database.
  - When a PEACE Program Counsellor is finished with a child's file, they will immediately return the file to a locked cabinet.
  - When accessing a participant's file on an online database, the PEACE Program Counsellor will save the file and exit the database.

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### 6.4 Length of Record Retention

#### POLICY

Agency XYZ's PEACE Programs will keep program participant records in compliance with federal and provincial legislation. BC legislation states that the personal information of program participants must be kept for a minimum of one year but the same legislation does not identify the maximum time frame for record keeping. Seven years has been identified as the general timeframe that may meet some of these requirements with exceptions as discussed below. Under this general rule, adult program participant records should be kept for a minimum of seven years while the records of a child program participant should be kept seven years after they reach age 19.

#### PROCEDURE

- After PEACE Program participant's file has been closed, store the file in Agency XYZ's file storage location located at XXXXXXXX.
- File the PEACE Program participant's record by XXXXX.

In determining what records to keep, the PEACE Program will consider the following elements and potential exceptions to the general rule:

- Governing legislation and potential legal implications.
- Evidential value to demonstrate that certain steps were taken.
- Contractual obligations.
- Professional association obligations.
- Agency XYZ professional certification obligations.
- Historical value to record how a policy or process has changed with time.
- Financial records to document required financial transactions.

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## 6.5 Destruction of Records

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program maintains program participant records. Agency XYZ is committed to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of all PEACE Program participants.

### POLICY

All files should be maintained and destroyed as contractually and legally required.

A privacy officer or the Executive Director, should supervise the destruction of program participant files and program logs. **Under no circumstances is a file, or any part thereof, to be destroyed to avoid a subpoena.**

### PROCEDURE

- A records schedule which is a timetable describing the lifespan of the PEACE Program participant's records should be kept indefinitely along with a closing report.
- A sample Records Summary form will be kept by the Agency XYZ.
- The PEACE Program participants will sign statements acknowledging that they have been notified of the retention and destruction procedures regarding agency files.
- Paper PEACE Program records being destroyed should not be placed in recycling or garbage bins but should be shredded.
- PEACE Program computer discs or hard drives containing program participant information should be wiped clean and any other computer records must be rendered unreadable through appropriate and effective measures.
- Refer to Agency XYZ's operational policy on the destruction of PEACE Program participant's records.

For additional guidance see Section 6 of the [BCSTH Legal Toolkit](#).

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## 6.6 Request to View Records

### RATIONALE

PEACE Program participants have a right to view their file as it is their own personal information that has been collected.

### POLICY

PEACE Program staff have a duty to help individuals with their requests to view their files and to respond within 30 days except where precluded by law (for example, if the file is part of a child protection matter). PEACE Program staff can extend the response time in certain circumstances and in some circumstances are authorized to refuse access. If the program participant is dissatisfied, the participant may ask the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) for a review.

### PROCEDURE

- Support PEACE program participant's access to their files by providing them with a photocopy of the file.
- If a request is from a parent or guardian to view a child's or youth's file, they must obtain a release of information from a mature minor in order to access their file.
- The file should be reviewed in presence of a PEACE Program staff.
- PEACE Program participants can request that information be corrected if they think the information is inaccurate or incomplete.
- If the PEACE Program participant is dissatisfied, she may ask the Office of the Information and privacy Commissioner (OIPC) for a review.
- Requests by any third party should not be honored without the PEACE program participant's informed written consent.

For additional guidance see Section 6 of the [BCSTH Legal Toolkit](#).

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## 6.7 Program Participants and their Records

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program Counsellors maintain participant records. Agency XYZ is committed to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of all PEACE Program participants. When there is a request to store or keep participant's personal property or records or materials created by them these items would become part of the participant's Agency XYZ record.

### POLICY

The term record is defined broadly to include all recorded information regardless of physical format so it includes books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, video or audio tape, letters, vouchers, papers and any item on which information is stored or recorded whether graphic or electronic. Emails are records and need to be managed in the same manner as paper records. PEACE Program Counsellors will only keep items necessary to provide support services to Program participants. The PEACE Program Counsellor will inform program participants of the potential risks of keeping additional items in the Agency XYZ record.

### PROCEDURE

- PEACE Program Counsellors will only include additional documents in a Program participant's record if it is necessary to provide support services.
- If PEACE Program participants ask PEACE Counsellors to keep additional documents as discussed above in Agency XYZ records, the PEACE Program Counsellor will inform the participants of the potential risks of disclosure of Agency XYZ records if there are third party requests, subpoenas or records requests from court proceedings, including electronic interception and/or breeches of online records or databases.

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### ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED SECTION 6 POLICIES

There are additional PEACE program specific policies that could be included in this section. BCSTH recommends you add these policies based on your agency's policies.

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Some suggestions are:

- Responding to subpoenas and records requests.
- Online databases

For guidance see,

- [BCSTH Legal Toolkit](#)
- [PEACE Program Toolkit](#)
- [Safety Net Project Resources](#)

## 7. SERVICE DELIVERY

### 7.1 Intake/First Meeting

#### **RATIONALE**

An intake with a PEACE Program participant and the parent who experienced violence or the guardian will take place once the child or youth is taken off the waitlist and ready to begin service. A child's or youth's situation can change during the wait list time and to comply with federal and provincial privacy legislation, PEACE Programs should not be collecting personally identifiable information of potential program participants.

#### **POLICY**

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program Counsellors will complete an intake session once program participants are moved off the waitlist and ready to fully participate in the PEACE Program.

#### **PROCEDURE**

- Depending on the age of the child or youth, the PEACE Program Counsellor can decide whether to meet with the parent who has experienced violence and child or youth individually or together.
- For younger children, a recommendation is that the PEACE Program Counsellor meet them together until the child is comfortable with the parent not being present for the session. This can help in the process of establishing safety and increase the comfort level of the child working with the PEACE Program Counsellor.
- During this session, program participants and the parents/guardians or mature minors will complete all forms associated with intake such as the forms listed below.

#### **FORMS**

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form D: Parent/Guardian Intake for Child's Group or Individual Support Services
- Sample Form AA: Mature Minor Intake for Child's Group or Individual Support Services
- Sample Form F: Consent to Provide PEACE Program Support to Minors
- Sample Form FF: Consent to Provide PEACE program Support Services to Mature Minors
- Sample Form G: Parent/Guardian Parent/Guardian Confidentiality Agreement for Minor Child
- Sample Form GG: Mature Minor Confidentiality Agreement
- Sample Form H; Interview Assessment with Child
- Sample Form HH: Interview Assessment with Youth

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- Sample Form E: Interview with Parent/Guardian
- Sample Form I: Emergency Medical Form
- Sample Form M: Parent/Guardian Release of Information for Minor Child
- Sample Form MM: Release of Information for a Mature Minor

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## 7.2 Service Plans

### RATIONALE

A properly documented service plan outlining how the PEACE Program psycho- educational support services will be provided assists the PEACE Program Counsellor, the program participant and the parent who experienced violence and the guardian.

### POLICY

The PEACE Program Counsellor will within the first three to four scheduled appointments, in consultation with the children, youth and parent/guardian, establish goals and create steps to monitor the PEACE Program participant's progress towards the identified psycho-educational goals. The PEACE Program Counsellor will develop a written service plan for each individual or group served. Service plans as well as significant changes to them should be signed by the program participants and the parents/guardians as appropriate.

### PROCEDURE

- After meeting with the PEACE Program participant and the parent/guardian upon assessing their safety and support needs, PEACE Program Counsellors will begin to develop a participant's service plan.
- Service plans are normally developed with the participation of the children, youth and the parent/guardian.
- Goals will be specific, measurable and will identify the psycho-educational methods and techniques to be used to achieve the objectives and outcomes outlined in Agency XYZ's Contract with MPSSG.
- Each participant's service plan will include a standard goal (for example "Personal Safety") which is intended to accommodate the on-going assessment of the

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participant's safety risks and provide information regarding next steps. Goal progress will be updated a minimum of once per month.

- A copy of the service plan will be provided to the PEACE Program participant and parent/guardian when appropriate.
- The PEACE Program Counsellor will also keep summaries of individual and group sessions to assist with meeting the psycho-educational methods identified in the Service Plan.

## FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form J: Service Plan
- Sample Form JJ: Service Plan for Mature Minor
- Sample Form K: Group Session Summary
- Sample Form L: Individual Session Summary

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## 7.3 Length of Program Service

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ provides PEACE Program counselling from a psycho-educational mandate that has a unified approach to the number of service sessions provided and a recommended program length.

### POLICY

Agency XYZ follows the BCSTH recommendation that in general, PEACE program Counsellors should, in addition to the orientation, intake and final appointments, spend 8-12 sessions per child or youth and/or 8-12 sessions per group.

### PROCEDURE

- Within a 7.5-8 hour workday, PEACE Program Counsellors have a maximum of 4 in person sessions per day unless immediate concerns with additional children or youth



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are necessary. This allows PEACE Program Counsellors sufficient time to connect with new program participants, prepare for and clean up after sessions, record any case notes, communicate with their objective counselling supervisor and program supervisor and complete other necessary paperwork.

- Explain to the program participants and the parents/guardians that in a psycho-educational program each program participant typically completes 8-12 sessions of support services.
- Part of the informed consent process is to explain the parameters of the PEACE Program's psycho-educational mandate and practice which includes 8-12 group or individual PEACE program support sessions.
- When working with program participants to develop a service plan, the PEACE program Counsellor will plan 8-12 sessions around (but not limited to) common themes that are typically addressed in the PEACE psycho-educational support services including:
  - Breaking the silence about the violence.
  - Learning about safety planning in case the violence recurs.
  - Learning that they were not at fault for the violence experienced.
  - Processing the traumatic memories in a safe, nurturing environment.
  - Assistance with coping strategies around trauma responses, such as irritability, avoidance of situations that remind them of the violence, anger outbursts, withdrawal, fearfulness, tension, and intrusive memories.
  - Learning that there are alternatives to domestic violence, and that violence is not acceptable (e.g., sibling violence, child physical assault, child sexual assault, verbal abuse, dating violence, peer-to-peer violence).
  - Learning about equality in relationships and dispelling myths about violence against women.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Suderman and Jaffe (1999, p. 27)



## 7.4 Program Participant Outcomes Based on Contract

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ is dedicated to supporting children and youth who experience domestic violence in their families and most commonly male violence perpetrated against women. Agency XYZ provides PEACE Program support services based on an agreement with MPSSSG.

### POLICY

Agency XYZ's PEACE Program Counsellors will plan 8-12 sessions, both group and individual, that will meet the majority of PEACE Program service outcomes in compliance with Agency XYZ Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence.

### PROCEDURE

- PEACE Counsellors will familiarize themselves with the PEACE Program Services and Services Principles and Guidelines provided in Agency XYZ's Schedule A- PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
- PEACE Counsellors will plan for 8-12 sessions with participants that help them reach PEACE Program outcomes as detailed in Agency XYZ Schedule A.

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### ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED SECTION 7 POLICIES

There are additional PEACE Program policies that could be included in this section. BCSTH recommends the PEACE program consider adoption of the following policies:

- Assignment of Program participant to caseload
- Attendance
- Return to PEACE Program support services
- Supporting mothers
- Providing consultation to women
- Outreach, Education and Prevention Activities (Violence Is Preventable Program - VIP- and the BELIEVE project.)



## 8. POST SERVICE

### 8.1 Request for Extension of Service

#### **RATIONALE**

Agency XYZ recognizes that circumstances sometimes make it difficult for children and youth to meet the PEACE Program's outcomes in 8-12 sessions. In these circumstances, children and youth need to be accommodated and supported within reasonable timeframes to achieve the psycho-educational goals, and ensure their safety and wellbeing.

#### **POLICY**

The PEACE Program Counsellor will support the program participants to complete the Program in 8-12 sessions. However, if the PEACE Program Counsellor and program participant conclude that the program services, outcomes and service plan goals have not been met within 12 sessions, a Request to Extend Support Services form should be completed and submitted to the Program supervisor who will make the final determination depending on the length of the waitlist and the individual situation, perspective and needs of the child or youth.

#### **PROCEDURE**

- The PEACE Program Counsellor will monitor the child's or youth's progress through the duration of PEACE psycho-educational support services.
- If the PEACE Program Counsellor determines that it will be beneficial for the child or youth to continue participating in the PEACE Program past the 12 sessions in to order to meet the goals outlined in their service plan and the program's outcomes, the PEACE Program Counsellor will discuss the possibility of an extension with their Program supervisor.
- If the Program supervisor agrees that an extension of psycho-educational support services would be in the best interest of the child, the PEACE Program Counsellor will discuss this with the children or youth and the parent/guardian.
- If the children or youth and the parent/guardian agrees, a Request to Extend Support Services Form will be filled out and signed by the Program supervisor.
- The PEACE Program Counsellor will revisit the program participant's service plan and make adjustments accordingly.

#### **FORMS**

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form J: Service Plan
- Sample Form JJ: Service Plan for Mature Minor



- Sample Form S: Request to Extend Peace Program Support Services

## 8.2 Final Appointment

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ recognizes the importance of providing PEACE Program participants an opportunity to reflect and celebrate their progress and accomplishments experienced through participating in the PEACE Program.

### POLICY

Once a Program participant has completed their final 8-12 sessions in the PEACE Program, the PEACE Program Counsellor will schedule a final appointment with the children and youth and parent/guardian.

### PROCEDURE

- Make a final appointment for the children and youth and parents/guardians a few weeks before the end of 8-12 sessions.
- Advise the children and youth and parents/guardians of the purpose and description of the final appointment.
- Celebrate the accomplishments of the children, youth and non-offending parents/guardians at the final appointment.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 8.3 Withdrawing from the PEACE Program

### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ acknowledges that the PEACE Program will not meet the needs of all children or youth nor will every child or youth be ready to complete the PEACE Program. In the event of an involuntary departure Agency XYZ is committed to respectfully end support services and promote a safe, supportive environment for all parties involved.

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## POLICY

Agency XYZ is committed to ensuring that when participation in the PEACE Program is terminated, either voluntarily or involuntarily, that PEACE Counsellors follow a clear respectful process.

## PROCEDURE

- If children or youth withdraw from participating in the PEACE Program voluntarily, the PEACE Program Counsellor will provide them with assistance connecting them to additional resources and safety planning if they desire.
- The PEACE Program Counsellor will ensure they know that they are free to re-connect with the Program in the future if circumstances change.
- When children or youth leave the PEACE Program involuntarily, in the rare event that a program participant is asked to leave Agency XYZ's PEACE Program, the PEACE Program supervisor must sign off on the decision to end services.
- PEACE Program Counsellors and their supervisors will advise the children and youth and the parent/guardian the program reasons why they are ending services and remain supportive in their approach.
- The PEACE Program will consider in this determination whether the children or youth would perhaps benefit from the PEACE Program at a different time or perhaps after other support services have been accessed.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
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## 8.4 Program Evaluation/Feedback

### RATIONALE

Good quality service provision depends on the ongoing development and evaluation of services. It is important for PEACE Programs to continually look for ways to improve their services and to prioritize the need for ongoing program evaluation. As discussed above, outcomes provide one way of measuring the impact that a program is having on program participants. Outcome measures could include program effectiveness, efficiency and accessibility of services.

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## POLICY

Before the conclusion of services, the PEACE Program Counsellor will provide the children and youth and the parent/guardian with an opportunity to evaluate the PEACE program and provide feedback.

## PROCEDURE

- During the final appointment, the PEACE Counsellor will give the children, youth and parent/guardian the opportunity to fill out the PEACE Program evaluation form.
- The PEACE Program Counsellor will give each program participant the evaluation form and give them time to complete it in private.
- Accommodations will be made to address any barriers to completing the form.
- The PEACE Program Counsellor will review the evaluation form with their supervisor and discuss any potential Agency XYZ or PEACE Program changes based on the program participants' feedback.

## FORMS

There are sample evaluation tools at pages 381-392 in the [PEACE Program Toolkit](#) and they have also been attached in the Appendix and include:

- PEACE Program Evaluation for Parents/Guardians of Program Participants
- PEACE Program Parent Support Evaluation form for the Non-offending parent
- PEACE Program Evaluation for Children and Youth.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
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## 8.5 Referrals Following Participation in the PEACE Program

### RATIONALE

Upon completion of the PEACE Program, children and youth may benefit from participating in an additional support program.

### POLICY

Determine whether the children or youth are suitable for a subsequent support programs based on the assessment at the completion of the PEACE Program. If there are concerns

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about whether a program participant requires outside subsequent referrals, the PEACE Program Counsellor should seek guidance from the Program or objective counselling supervisor.

## PROCEDURE

- In preparation for the final appointment, determine whether the children or youth are suitable for a subsequent support program.
- Discuss the possible program options and resources with the children and youth and the parent who experienced violence and/or guardian if relevant.
- If the program participants consent to the referral to additional programming, provide them the information about this additional service and have them complete the relevant release of information forms.

## FORMS

Sample Forms are provided in the Policy Template & Guide Appendix and are similar to the forms found in the PEACE Program Toolkit.

- Sample Form M: Parent/Guardian Release of Information
- Sample Form MM: Release of Information for Mature Minor

POLICY CREATED DATE	
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## 8.6 Responding to Complaints

### RATIONALE

When Agency XYZ is contacted by program participants asking for assistance addressing a complaint or issue that relates to the practice, services or staff of a PEACE Program they will respond in a timely diligent manner.

### POLICY

When the Agency XYZ is asked for assistance addressing a complaint or issue that relates to the practice, services or staff of the Agency XYZ's PEACE Program or the PEACE Counsellor, the PEACE Program Counsellor will discuss the complaint with the PEACE Program supervisor and

## PEACE Program Policy Template & Guide



if necessary, either the PEACE Program supervisor or the PEACE Program Counsellor will respond to the complaint within 5 business days.

### PROCEDURE

- The PEACE program Counsellor will acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant.
- The PEACE program Counsellor will review the complaint with the Program supervisor of the PEACE Program.
- After a response has been decided on, the supervisor of the PEACE Program or PEACE Counsellor will respond to the complaint within 5 business days.
- The Agency XYZ's internal complaint process or chain of authority at the Agency is followed which may include being directed to a more senior member of staff and the Board of Directors.
- If Agency XYZ's process has been exhausted or unsatisfactory, the person can be referred to the relevant government ministries or entities which contract with the programs in order to discuss their concerns. This referral can be the contact information for a specific Director, Community Programs Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, for example and/or information about the complaint process available at other pertinent government ministries or entities.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
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### 9. CLINICAL SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

#### 9.1 Clinical Supervision

##### **RATIONALE**

As detailed in Schedule A – PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence in Agency XYZ’s MPSSG contract, Agency XYZ is committed to ensuring that PEACE Program Counsellors are competent, adequately trained, fully instructed and supervised including having access to an objective counselling supervisor to assist them in their work.

##### **POLICY**

The PEACE Program Counsellors have access to an objective counselling supervisor who is preferably separate from their supervisor or employer who will possess the following qualifications: knowledgeable and skilled in feminist counselling, psycho-educational support services and counselling supervision practices; and experienced in counselling and/or supporting children and youth who have experienced domestic violence and their parents who have also experienced domestic violence.

##### **PROCEDURE**

- PEACE Program Counsellors will preferably select or be provided an objective counselling supervisor who is knowledgeable and skilled in feminist counselling, psycho-educational support services and counselling supervision practices; and experienced in counselling and/or supporting children and youth who have experienced domestic violence and their parents who have also experienced domestic violence.
- A PEACE Program Counsellor will meet with an objective counselling clinical supervisor when beginning their position as a PEACE Program Counsellor in Agency XYZ.
- The objective counselling supervisor understands the importance of protecting a program participant’s personally identifiable information and agrees that sharing that information is not needed to support the PEACE Program Counsellor.
- In compliance with relevant privacy laws, the PEACE Program Counsellors will protect the identity and privacy of PEACE Program participants while participating in counselling supervision sessions unless they have informed consent from the program participant to release this information.
- The objective counselling supervisor and the PEACE Program Counsellor will outline an annual clinical supervision plan from April 1- March 31st of each fiscal contract calendar year.
- The objective counselling supervisor will sign Agency XYZ’s confidentiality agreement.
- PEACE Program Counsellors will schedule and participate in regular opportunities to discuss their work and the impacts of the work in a safe environment (either in person

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or via phone or video chat) without fear of stigmatization or job performance consequences.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
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## 9.2 PEACE Program Counsellor Support Plan

### RATIONALE

As detailed in Schedule A – PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence in Agency XYZ’s MPSSG contract, Agency XYZ is committed to ensuring that PEACE Program Counsellors are competent, adequately trained, fully instructed and supervised including having access to objective counselling supervision to assist them in their work.

### POLICY

The PEACE Program Counsellor Support Plan (the "Plan") identifies the support mechanisms provided by Agency XYZ for the PEACE Program Counsellors.

### PROCEDURE

- The PEACE Program Counsellor Support Plan (the "Plan") must include, but is not limited to, peer support, debriefing, counselling supervision, case consultation and access to an objective counselling supervisor as discussed above.
- Agency XYZ will develop, implement and maintain the Plan in accordance with the MPSSG contract’s service principles and guidelines, and any PEACE Program Counsellor Support Plan criteria established by the Province and provided by the Province to Agency XYZ.
- Where changes in staff occur or other relevant changes to the Plan are required, Agency XYZ will revise the Plan through a collaborative process with PEACE Program Counsellors involved in the provision of the Services and re-submit the Plan to MPSSG.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
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## 9.3 Training and Professional Development

### RATIONALE

Per Schedule A – PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence in Agency XYZ’s the MPSSG contract, Agency XYZ is committed to ensuring that PEACE program Counsellors are competent to perform the support services by being adequately trained, fully instructed and supervised.

### POLICY

Agency XYZ acknowledges the importance of PEACE Program Counsellors having the information and skills to effectively and safely do their jobs and to make time and funds available for these purposes.

### PROCEDURE

- PEACE Program Counsellors are entitled to participate in professional development opportunities when and where appropriate and as resources permit.
- PEACE Program Counsellors will receive orientation and training regarding:
  - Agency XYZ’s written policies and procedures, including program, personnel, health and safety, safety and security and emergency procedures.
  - Agency XYZ’s work environment, its layout, and available facilities.
  - Crisis intervention, de-escalation and non-violent conflict resolution.
- PEACE Program Counsellors may participate in external professional development opportunities. When opportunities arise, the PEACE program Counsellor will make the request to their supervisor. After reviewing the PEACE program’s professional development budget, the Program supervisor will discuss with the PEACE Program Counsellor if the request is approved.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
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## 10. DUTY TO REPORT

### RATIONALE

In British Columbia, under Section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA), anyone who “has reason to believe a child needs protection” must “promptly” make a report to a child protection authority. The experience of domestic violence in and of itself is not a reason to make a report and other factors should be taken into consideration. To respond appropriately to concerns about a child or youth’s safety or well-being often requires a collaborative Agency XYZ and PEACE Program response.

### POLICY

The PEACE Program Counsellor will seek support from their Program supervisor if they believe there are circumstances that require additional action to protect the child or youth. After consultation, in compliance with CFCSA, the PEACE Program Counsellor will take the appropriate measures to make a report to a child protection authority when the PEACE Program Counsellor believes that a report to should be made.

### PROCEDURE

- Each PEACE Program will have its own procedures for making this report, and most require consultation, before or afterwards, with a supervisor.
- It is important to remember that the PEACE Program Counsellor is not legally mandated to determine whether a child or youth was abused or neglected. Reports must be made based on a PEACE Program Counsellor’s reason to believe that a child needs protection, and a Ministry worker will make the decision regarding whether to investigate.
- If, after consulting with a supervisor, a report to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) needs to be made, it is recommended that the PEACE Program Counsellors inform the program participant and parent or guardian, if relevant.
- Speak to the program participant about why Agency XYZ and the PEACE Program need to share the information the child or youth has shared with you. Remind them of limits to confidentiality discussed as part of the informed consent to service.
- Explain Agency XYZ’s and the PEACE Program’s concerns to the parent or guardian prior to making the call.
- If relevant and appropriate, PEACE Program Counsellors can support the parent or guardian to report the circumstances to MCFD instead of the Agency/PEACE Program or in concert with the Agency/PEACE Program.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	



## 11. HEALTH AND SAFETY

### 11.1 PEACE Program Health and Safety

#### RATIONALE

The Workers' Compensation Board (WorkSafeBC) requires that employers have a policy that ensures the safety of anyone who is required to work alone or in isolation. This applies to PEACE Program Counsellors who regularly work alone in the office, for example, seeing program participants in the evening or on weekends. It also applies to PEACE Program Counsellors who see program participants outside of the office, for example, meeting them in their homes or driving program participants to and from sessions.

#### POLICY

In addition to working-alone policies, PEACE Program Counsellors should consider ways to promote their safety both in the office and away from the office. This includes phone check-ins as appropriate and direction regarding assessing the danger of a situation, such as driving a child home and finding that the offending parent is there. Programs should also consider providing specific training to PEACE Program Counsellors, perhaps collaboratively with transition house staff, regarding assessing, managing and responding to safety concerns.

#### PROCEDURE

Enter Agency XYZ's working alone or isolation policy here.

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

#### ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED SECTION 11 POLICIES

There are additional PEACE Program specific policies that could be included in this section. BCSTH recommends you consider adding these policies based on your Agency's needs and current policies.

- Toy Cleaning
- Accidents with children
- Driving participants and insurance
- Working with the offending parent: Regarding working with the offending parent, the [PEACE Program Toolkit](#) provides guidance at pages 270- 272.
- Critical incident reporting



## 12. MINISTRY REPORTING

### 12.1 Monthly Reporting and Online Data Entry System Reporting

#### RATIONALE

Agency XYZ provides PEACE Program support services based on the MPSSG contract and the PEACE program mandate. As per Agency's XYZ service contract with MPSSG, the PEACE Program submits monthly and quarterly statistics.

#### POLICY

In compliance with Agency XYZ's contract with MPSSG, the PEACE Program will submit monthly statistics on the monthly data collection form no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> of the following the month that is being reported and quarterly statistics to MPSSG via the Stopping the Violence Data Entry System (STV-DES) online portal.

#### PROCEDURE

- Monthly:
  - The monthly data collection form is the "Report Template" and the form is specified by the Province.
  - The form must be postmarked or submitted no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month following the month that is being reported
- Quarterly:
  - Go to the BCeID Online Services Directory Website
  - Scroll down and select the STV-DES option
  - Create a BCeID ID for a new user if the PEACE Counsellor does not already have one
  - Fill in the following sections for quarterly activities:
    - Section A. Referral Information
    - Section B. Women/Children not served
    - Section C. New Client Information
    - Section D. End of Service
    - Section E. General Program Service
  - Submit the data that you have entered
  - Log out of the system

POLICY CREATED DATE	
POLICY REVIEW DATE	
POLICY DESIGNATE/OVERSEEN BY	

## 13. REFERENCES

- Alexander, M. (2008). 'An Integrated Anti-Oppression Framework for Reviewing and Developing Policy: A Toolkit for Community Service Organizations.' Springtide Resources, Toronto: ON. <http://www.oaith.ca/assets/files/Publications/Intersectionality/integrated-tool-for-policy.pdf>
- Burnaby Family Life. (2014). Children Who Witness Abuse Program Manual.
- Canadian Mental Health Association Kootenays. (2004). Youth Services: Children Who Witness Abuse Program Policies and Procedures.
- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-15.html>
- The Canadian Human Rights Act. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/>
- The Child, Family and Community Service Act. [http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00\\_96046\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_96046_01)
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- Emergency Shelter Program: Sample Policies and Procedures for Emergency Shelters. (2013). [http://www.bchousing.org/resources/Partner\\_Resources/Program\\_Resources/Emergency\\_Shelter\\_Program/ESP\\_Sample\\_Policies\\_Procedures.pdf](http://www.bchousing.org/resources/Partner_Resources/Program_Resources/Emergency_Shelter_Program/ESP_Sample_Policies_Procedures.pdf)
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- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). [http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/96165\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/96165_01)
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- Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA). [http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00\\_03063\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_03063_01)
- Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry Society. (2007). Children Who Witness Abuse Counselling Program Handbook.
- The Safety Net Project, National Network to End Domestic Violence. <https://www.techsafety.org/resources>

### 14. APPENDIX OF SAMPLE FORMS

The Sample Forms referenced in the PEACE Program Policy Template & Guide and attached here are for you to review and revise to suit your program's needs. They are compiled from the PEACE Program Toolkit, the BCSTH Legal Toolkit and from sample policies that were generously provided by member programs.