



Abuse Policy

Approved: 2026-01-20

Motioned by Commissioner Van Kroonenburg

"I move that Village of Bible Hill revoke the Abuse Policy and adopt the amended Abuse Policy."

Seconded by Commissioner Pitcher

Motion carried

Purpose

1. A safe and respectful environment is important for everyone. Everyone has a role in making that happen. Abuse will not be tolerated. This policy explains what abuse is, how to report it, and how complaints are handled.
2. To outline standards that:
 - a. Maintain an environment that is free from abuse;
 - b. Identify the behaviours that are unacceptable; and
 - c. Establish mechanisms for receiving and dealing with complaints.

Definitions

3. In this policy,
 - a. "Abuse" means to do something to bad effect or for a bad purpose including any one or more of discrimination, harassment, or sexual harassment, as well as emotional, physical, psychological, sexual, or verbal abuse.
 - b. "Discrimination" means where a person makes a distinction, whether intentional or not, based on characteristics, or perceived characteristics, referred to in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act that has the effect of imposing burdens, obligations, or disadvantages on an individual or a class of individuals not imposed upon others or which withholds or limits access to opportunities, benefits, and advantages available to other individuals or classes of individuals in society.
 - c. "Emotional abuse" means a chronic attack on an individual's self-esteem, which may include name calling, threatening, ridiculing, berating, intimidating, isolating, hazing, habitual scapegoat, blaming, but is not limited to this description.
 - d. "Harassment" means engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome, offensive, intimidating, hostile, or inappropriate, or based on the prohibited grounds set out in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.
 - i. Such comments or conduct may occur in various types of communication including face to face exchanges, email, written correspondence, or social media.
 - ii. Difference of attitude or culture and misinterpretation of social signals mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another.

- iii. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to: written or verbal insults; unwelcome remarks, jokes, or innuendoes; displaying offensive material; inappropriate requests; intimidation, bullying, verbal abuse, or threats; practical jokes which cause awkwardness, embarrassment, or endanger safety; behavior that undermines or sabotages an employee's job performance; actions intended to belittle, demean, or undermine an individual's self-respect or cause emotional or psychological suffering; horseplay, roughhousing, inappropriate touching, or physical assault; or behavior, conduct, comments or activities not directed specifically at an individual, but which nonetheless create a degrading, offensive, or poisoned work environment.
- iv. Examples that are not harassment include, but are not limited to: Legitimate, reasonable management actions that are part of the normal work function including appropriate direction, delegation, performance management, counselling, or discipline administered by a supervisor; professional debate; attendance management; relationships of mutual consent; stressful events encountered in the performance of legitimate job duties; or occasional disagreements or personality conflicts.
- e. "Neglect" means any behaviour that leads to a failure to provide services which are necessary such as withdrawing basic necessities as forms of punishment, failing to assess and respond to changes in health status and refusing or withdrawing physical or emotional support.
- f. "Physical abuse" means the use of intentional force that can result in physical harm or injury to an individual in the form of slapping, hitting, punching, shaking, pulling, throwing, kicking, biting, choking, strangling, or the abusive use of restraints, but is not limited to this description.
- g. "Psychological abuse" means communication of an abusive nature, such as sarcasm, exploitive behaviour, intimidation, manipulation, and insensitivity to race, sexual preference, or family dynamics, but is not limited to this description.
- h. "Sexual abuse" means unwanted touching, fondling, observations for sexual gratification, actual or attempted penetration, verbal or written propositions or innuendoes, exhibitionism or exploitation including pornography, but is not limited to this description.
- i. "Verbal abuse" means humiliating remarks, name calling, swearing at, taunting, teasing, continual put downs, but is not limited to this description.

Principles Supporting Policy

4. Village of Bible Hill is committed to being a healthy, safe, and supportive public service body, workplace, and Commission that values diversity where all persons are treated with dignity and respect.
5. A safe and welcoming environment is essential for the health and wellbeing of employees, volunteers, elected officials, and the public.
6. Statements outlining standards of non-tolerance for acts of abuse provides employees, volunteers, elected officials, and the public with information necessary to understand expectations from the Village.
7. All persons engaging with or being engaged by the Village are entitled to do so in a way free from abuse, including discrimination, harassment, or sexual harassment based on the prohibited grounds under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.

Terms of Policy

Supporting Actions

8. As a condition of employment, the Village will require all employees and volunteers submit to a Criminal Records Check by a local police authority and, where applicable, submit to a Nova Scotia Child Abuse Registry Check. The results shall be satisfactory to the Village, in its sole discretion. The checks shall be undertaken prior to the person's employment or volunteer service with the Village, unless there is an immediate need to maintain service to the public, but such checks shall be undertaken expeditiously and remain a condition of employment.
9. The checks referred to in 7 shall be updated from time-to-time as appropriate for the position, no later than once every three years.

Policy application and statement of non-tolerance

10. This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, elected officials, and the public when employed, volunteering, serving a term of office, engaged as a vendor, receiving a service of, or otherwise interacting with the Village when in the context of the person's relationship with the Village.

11. The Village prohibits and will not tolerate abuse in any way in the conduct of its operations, including but not limited to employment, volunteering, serving a term of office, serving the public, or providing or receiving goods or services.
12. The Village will take necessary and reasonable steps to ensure all interactions with the Village are free of abuse.

Complaint and Resolution Processes

13. On occasion, some instances of abuse can be dealt with directly and informally through communication with the person engaging in the inappropriate behavior. If a person feels comfortable doing so, they should communicate a clear message that the conduct or comments constitutes abuse and is unwelcome. However, the Village recognizes that there are circumstances where direct communication is not appropriate. Although informal resolution is encouraged where possible, it is not a prerequisite to making a formal report of abuse.
14. Where a person does not wish to bring the matter directly to the attention of the person engaging in the abuse, or where such an approach is attempted and does not produce a satisfactory result, the person should report the abuse as outlined below.
 - a. Abuse should be reported as soon as possible after experiencing or witnessing the behavior. This allows the incident to be addressed in a timely manner.
 - b. Persons are encouraged to report any incident(s) of abuse to their supervisor, unless the supervisor is the person engaging in the abuse or if the person prefers not to report the incident directly to their supervisor. In all other cases, persons should report the incident(s) to the Clerk and Treasurer, unless the Clerk and Treasurer is the person engaging in the abuse, in which case person should report the incident(s) to the Personnel Committee (Chair, Deputy Chair).
 - c. Persons may report incidents verbally or in writing. When reporting verbally, the person receiving the report will document the report in writing.

The report should include the following information:

 - i. name(s) of the person(s) who had allegedly experienced abuse;
 - ii. name(s) of the person alleged to have engaged in the abuse;
 - iii. name(s) of any witnesses or other persons with relevant information about the incident and contact information (if known);
 - iv. details of what happened including date(s), frequency, and location(s) of the incident(s); and

- v. any supporting document that the person making the report has which is relevant to the matter.
 - d. All reports of abuse shall be kept confidential except to the extent necessary to protect the person, investigate the complaint, take corrective action, or otherwise as required by law.
- 15. The Clerk and Treasurer will ensure that an investigation appropriate to the circumstances is conducted when a report of abuse is made. Reports will be investigated in a fair, respectful, and timely manner.
- 16. The Clerk and Treasurer will determine who will conduct the investigation. Depending on the allegations and the people involved, the investigation may be referred to law enforcement, an external investigator, or may be investigated internally. In cases where the allegation of abuse is made against the Clerk and Treasurer, the Village's Personnel Committee may investigate, or refer to law enforcement or an external investigator. Any investigation may engage with the Village's Solicitor.
- 17. Investigations are highly sensitive, and it is critical to maintain the utmost confidentiality throughout the process. This protects the privacy of the parties but also the integrity of the investigation.
- 18. The person(s) investigating will meet and discuss the matter with the complainant, shall conduct such investigation as may be appropriate, shall meet and discuss the matter with the respondent and shall aim to complete the investigation and provide a written response to all parties within thirty (30) days of receiving the complaint, or as soon as reasonably possible given the complexity of the case.
- 19. During the investigation and resolution of complaints, all information must remain confidential except where sharing information is required by law. Any person who is aware of or participates in an investigation must maintain confidentiality regarding:
 - a. the fact that a complaint was filed;
 - b. the fact that they are being interviewed and the questions they were asked;
 - c. the issues discussed with the investigator during their interview;
 - d. their opinion on the validity or nature of the reported incident; and
 - e. whether, and what other, individuals might also be participating in the investigation.

20. Outcome of Investigation

- a. After the investigation is concluded, both the person making the report and the person alleged to have engaged in abuse will be informed of the findings.
- b. If the person(s) investigating concludes that there was no violation of this policy, no further action will be taken, and no documentation concerning the report will be placed on the file of the person(s) alleged to have engaged in abuse.
- c. If the person(s) investigating concludes that there was a violation of this policy, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure the safety of the complainant, which may include recommendations, where appropriate, to prevent recurrence of the violation and to mitigate its impact on affected employee(s), and the persons(s) who violated the policy will be disciplined, up to and including termination. A record of the violation of this policy and any disciplinary action taken will be added to the person's personnel file. The complainant does not have a right to know what discipline was assigned.
- d. If, after conclusion of the investigation, the findings are not satisfactory to either the complainant or the respondent, the dissatisfied party may make an appeal to the investigating person(s) within one (1) week from receiving a report of the findings.
- e. An appeal must:
 - i. be in writing;
 - ii. reference the date and nature of the original formal complaint;
 - iii. include a copy of the findings, if any; and
 - iv. state the reasons for appeal.
- f. The person(s) investigating shall make a good faith effort to consider the appeal using the investigation and outcome steps outlined in the preceding paragraphs.

21. Any recommendations arising from an investigation are non-binding and advisory. Decisions regarding corrective or remedial action remain the responsibility of the Employer, subject to applicable legislation and collective agreements.

22. Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted as guaranteeing a specific outcome, remedy, or form of redress to any party.

23. Recommendations shall be limited to matters reasonably related to the findings of the investigation.

24. A person who makes a report with a conscious effort to mislead or deceive, or with a malicious or fraudulent intent will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their relationship with the Village.

Support

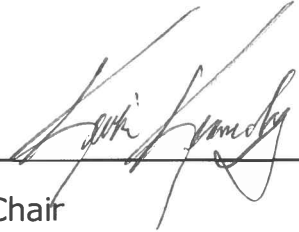
25. Regardless of the outcome of a report made in good faith, the employee making the report as well as anyone providing information during an investigation will be protected from retaliation.
26. The Village will make reasonable efforts to provide support resources in the form of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for those affected by abuse under this policy.
27. All persons have external options to report abuse. A person may contact the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission to make a complaint of harassment, sexual harassment, or discrimination, or may contact the police if they believe that criminal activity is involved.
28. Any person contemplating or involved in a complaint under this policy should familiarize themselves with legislation which may be applicable in cases of abuse, including but not limited to:
 - a. Human Rights Act, RSNS 1989, c214;
 - b. Criminal Code of Canada, RSC 1985, c C-46; and
 - c. Municipal Government Act, SNS 1998, c18.
29. This policy should not be construed as legal advice. All persons are encouraged to seek their own independent legal advice.
30. Nothing in this policy shall be read to supersede terms of the collective agreement in place between the Village and Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 734-01.

Policy Document Attestation

Date of notice to Village Commission of intent to consider: 2026-01-13

Date of adoption: 2026-01-20

I certify that this Policy was adopted by Village Commission as documented above:



Chair

03-02-2026

Date



Clerk and Treasurer

2026-02-03.

Date