



Date: October 1, 2001

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: MARS - 2001 RESOURCE GUIDE

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board endorse the following statutory requirements and City policies as a component of the Board's "Make All Recreation Safe" initiatives:

1. *All employees and volunteers of the Vancouver Park Board and affiliated partners will report incidents of abuse or neglect of children and youth to the provincial Ministry responsible for Children as per the Family, Child and Community Services Act of B.C.*
2. *All employees and volunteers of the Vancouver Park Board and affiliated partners will report incidents of abuse, neglect and self-neglect of vulnerable adults and seniors to the Vancouver Police Department.*
3. *A Criminal Record Check will be conducted on new Park Board and affiliated partners, staff and volunteers who will work/volunteer in a position of trust with children/youth and vulnerable adults and seniors.*
4. *All Park Board and affiliated partner employees and volunteers have the right to work/volunteer in an environment that is protected from violence or the threat of violence from the public they serve as per the Workers' Compensation Act of the Province of B.C.*
5. *The Vancouver Park Board is committed to the eradication of harassment from its workplaces, and to the maintenance of a work environment free of sexual harassment.*

BACKGROUND

In the late 1990's, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association spearheaded a national initiative designed to ensure that all recreation and leisure activities are free from any form of harassment or abuse - Make All Recreation Safe (MARS). This initiative is to be accomplished by creating safe, nurturing environments in which all individuals, especially children and youth, can participate.

In May 1999, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation passed the following recommendations:

THAT the Park Board work to ensure that all recreation is safe and occurs within a nurturing and supportive environment, and accept the following five MARS principles as the foundation for key strategies in making recreation safe from abuse and harassment in Vancouver:

- Working together with our partners and affiliates;
- Maximizing existing resources;
- Focusing on the individual and the community to effect change at the local level;
- Staying the course through a long term commitment;
- Keeping score through continual assessment and evaluation.

THAT the Park Board continue to develop and implement policies, procedures, training and best practices toward the goal of making all recreation safe from abuse and harassment.

DISCUSSION

A staff committee - Make All Recreation Safe (MARS) has been struck to implement these recommendations. The committee addressed the concerns of vicarious liability; updated guidelines and practices around staff and volunteer hiring; and developed a training program which would protect staff, volunteers and patrons from abuse and harassment. Janna Taylor and Associates were hired to assist the committee in developing a staff procedural manual - Make All Recreation Safe - 2001 Resource Guide as well as in developing an ongoing training program.

The Resource Guide is designed to provide Vancouver Park Board staff with practical information on building a welcoming recreation environment where all participants, volunteers and employees are safe. The Guide is not a legal document and does not override legal statutes, legislation or agencies that regulate specific programs or specific employees. The policies in the Guide represent a compilation of existing City and Park Board policies and legislative statute requirements.

A summary of the Resource Guide was presented to the Community Centre Association Presidents' meeting in June, 2001. Upon endorsement from the Board, the Association Presidents will also be asked to endorse the statutory requirements and City policies at future meeting.

To date, three workshops have been organized for supervisory staff working in community centres, pools and rinks. The initial staff training sessions will be completed later this fall. An ongoing training program will then be implemented.

CONCLUSION

The Resource Guide and subsequent ongoing training program ensures that the Vancouver Park Board implements policies, procedures and training to make all recreation safe from abuse and harassment.

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