Introduction

At The Hospital for Sick Children ("SickKids"), we are entrusted with responsibility for providing the highest quality healthcare, teaching, research and advocacy on behalf of the children and families we serve locally, nationally and internationally. We must ensure that the uppermost standards of business and ethical conduct, integrity and professionalism are practiced in fulfilling these responsibilities. As such, SickKids promotes a culture of transparent, open and honest communication and fosters a respectful work environment that is free from violence, harassment, discrimination and retaliation.

SickKids has a number of policies (Code of Conduct, Respect in the Workplace Policy, and Prevention of Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy) in place that apply to all staff employed by or associated with the hospital. These policies provide explicit guidance on the ethical standards and obligations set for the hospital community and are reinforced by robust mechanisms for reporting, investigating and resolving breaches. SickKids practices rigorous recruitment screening that includes references checks and background checks with relevant law enforcement organizations and professional organizations. Any member of the hospital community who is aware of, or suspects, a breach of a hospital code or related policy, or a potential violation of a law, is responsible for reporting the breach or other concern as soon as possible. The hospital will accept such reports on an anonymous or confidential basis to the extent possible within the confines of the law and the conduct of an effective investigation.

As an organization that engages in international activities outside of Canada we recognize that sexual abuse and exploitation anywhere cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. We are in complete agreement with The Whistler Declaration on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in International Assistance that “these malign practices amount to a flagrant abuse of trust and power and undermine the efforts and legitimacy of international assistance and cooperation and can also violate human rights.” We also recognize that such abuse undermines our efforts to address gender inequalities and to empower women and girls to reach their full potential. We have zero tolerance for any individual who might sexually exploit or abuse in any other way the very people they are tasked with helping. We stand united with the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General and the G7 in believing that everyone working in international assistance has the responsibility to address these issues by adopting international best practices.

Defining sexual exploitation and abuse

According to the UN Secretary-General’s bulletin on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse:

- **Sexual exploitation** refers to any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
• **Sexual abuse** refers to an actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

• Sexual activity with children is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Not knowing or mistaking the age of a child is not a defense.

**The Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

SickKids Centre for Global Child Health (C-GCH) strives to create an environment free of sexual exploitation and abuse in all settings, by integrating the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse into the protection and assistance functions of all staff or individuals associated with SickKids. C-GCH recognizes that it has a duty of care to the partners and communities it supports, including a responsibility to ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect. C-GCH also recognizes that certain minimum standards of behaviour must be observed by SickKids staff and other representatives at all times. In order to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, C-GCH adheres to the strategies from the IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Agency, which are consistent with SickKids’ Code of Conduct policy:

• Sexual exploitation and abuse by SickKids employees constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.

• Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.

• Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.

• Sexual relationships between SickKids employees and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of international development activities and humanitarian work.

• Where a SickKids staff develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established SickKids reporting mechanisms.

SickKids staff are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.