

## **Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy**

### **Purpose**

The City of Diamondhead is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all individuals, including minors and vulnerable adults, who interact with City employees, board members, and volunteers in the workplace or at any activity sponsored by or related to the City. This policy outlines the City's zero-tolerance stance on sexual abuse and establishes procedures for prevention, reporting, and response in accordance with Mississippi law.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all City of Diamondhead employees, board members, contractors, and volunteers participating in city-sponsored programs, services, or activities.

### **Definition of Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse includes any sexual contact, interaction, or exploitation—whether physical or non-physical—intended for the gratification of the perpetrator, particularly when the perpetrator is in a position of trust or caregiving. This includes:

- Sexual assault
- Molestation
- Sexual exploitation
- Injury to sexual organs

### **Recognizing Signs of Abuse**

#### Physical Indicators

- Sexually transmitted infections
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Torn, stained, or bloody undergarments
- Genital pain, itching, or unexplained injuries

#### Behavioral Indicators

- Fear or avoidance of specific individuals
- Flinching or recoiling from touch
- Wearing excessive or inappropriate clothing
- Anxiety when sexual topics are mentioned
- Nightmares or fear of darkness

### **Mandatory Reporting Requirements**

Under Miss. Code § 43-21-353, any person who suspects that a child is being abused must report it immediately. This includes City personnel acting in a professional or volunteer capacity.

### **Reporting Channels**

All suspected or known sexual abuse must be reported to:

- The employee's department head
- The City Manager (the "designee") or the City Clerk in the absence of the City Manager
- The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (CPS) or Adult Protective Services (APS), if the victim is a minor or vulnerable adult

**How to Report**

- Immediately by phone or in person
- Followed by a written report as soon as possible
- Failure to report may result in criminal penalties under Mississippi law.

**Investigation and Response**

The City will promptly and impartially investigate all allegations of sexual abuse. Investigations may be conducted internally or referred to law enforcement.

**Interim Measures**

- Administrative leave for the accused
- Reassignment to non-contact duties
- Confidentiality protections for all parties, as permitted by law

**Disciplinary Action**

If an allegation is substantiated, disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including termination of employment or removal from volunteer service.

**Retaliation Prohibited**

Retaliation against any individual who reports sexual abuse in good faith, participates in an investigation, or raises concerns is strictly prohibited. Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who retaliates or knowingly makes false or malicious accusations.

**Prevention and Training**

To reduce the risk of abuse, the City will:

- Require regular training on abuse prevention and reporting
- Conduct background checks for all personnel
- Maintain a Code of Conduct outlining behavioral expectations
- Securely document all allegations and outcomes in accordance with legal standards

**Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as needed to reflect changes in law, best practices, and City of Diamondhead procedures.