

Child Protection Policy

Ashraya Initiative for Children



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INTRODUCTION

Ashraya Initiative for Children (AIC) recognises the rights of all children within our care to be protected from harm and injury in accordance with the Indian Constitution, Integrated Child Protection Policy and the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to which India is a signatory.

The organisation takes its duty of care very seriously, and undertakes to create an organisation that is safe for children where all efforts are made to prevent abuse. It sees the best interests of the child as paramount to all work done with children.

Endeavouring to be a child safe organisation, we will work to secure an open and aware culture where all participants feel responsible for the protection of the children we are in contact with directly and indirectly.

We will work towards a **Zero Tolerance** policy and practice towards our children and we will make every effort to ensure the same for those who live with their families and attend our day care and educational programmes. This is because we believe that there is no excuse for child abuse of any kind.

The Management of AIC headed by its operational head will be responsible for implementing this policy.

Signed

Name _____

Date :

Pune

Child Protection Policy

1. Purpose of Policy

AIC works with socially and economically disadvantaged children, who owing to their circumstances could be vulnerable to all forms of abuse. More importantly, most often neither the children nor their families are aware of their vulnerability, or the different forms of abuse, or even how to protect themselves from abuse.

As an organisation working with children directly, we believe that we have a moral and legal responsibility as well as a duty to protect children within our care from any kind of harm or injury. For this, it is essential for all staff to be aware of this policy and to adhere to it.

2. Definitions

Who is a Child?

Every human being under the age of 18 years is a child. This is in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Constitution of India.

What is Child Protection?

Child protection is about protecting children from intentional and unintentional harm within organisations intended for their benefit.

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse, according to WHO, is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child that can result in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship, responsibility or power.

Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent children from being harmed. Child abuse includes anything that individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, that can harm children or damage their safe and healthy development into adulthood.

There are FOUR forms of child sexual abuse:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional or Mental or Psychological Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

Details of signs and symptoms of abuse and the impact of these on children in the short and long term can be found in **Annex 1**.

Corporal Punishment Guidelines in India:

Ashraya Initiative for Children is committed to follow the guidelines for “Eliminating Corporal Punishment” by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), India.

3. Scope of this policy

Who does it apply to?

This policy applies equally to **ALL** staff of AIC, partners, donors, sponsors, volunteers, visitors and vendors to ensure that they protect the dignity, protection and safety of all children

4. Implementation

To implement the Child Protection Policy, we will undertake the following steps:

- Ensure that Child Protection is stated in all its advertisements for recruitment as a statement of intent as well as in all organizational publications
- Train all existing staff so that they understand the Policy
- Ensure all staff sign a statement stating that they will adhere to the Child Protection Policy. See **Annex II**
- Include Child Protection training during induction of new staff so that they are aware of their responsibilities towards the children with whom they work and also that they report any allegations of abuse
- Legal action against those whom any allegations have proven to be true
- The framework within which any action is taken should be the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which has been ratified by the Government of India as well as the country’s National Children’s Policy and Acts on issues such as Child Labour, Trafficking
- Since child labour is a major issue in India, all staff working and associated with us including the governing body members should make a commitment **NOT** to employ children as domestic help at home. They should also sign the form entitled Statement of Commitment for Staff Against Child Labour. See **Annex III**
- A staff member who has been informed of abuse or who has witnessed abuse must immediately complete a reporting format (**see Annex IV**) and submit it to the Child Protection Officer, or in the absence of the CPO, to the Director.
- An important aspect of implementation of the policy is dealing with disclosure, i.e. when a child reports abuse. It is very important that staff learn or have the skills to handle the child otherwise the child will feel threatened and not give all the information required for us to take necessary action. Please see **Annex IV** on this.
- A document entitled Appropriate Behaviour of staff, consultants, interns, volunteers and visitors towards children and young people is attached at **Annex V**. This is a guide that will help understand how those associated with the organisation should conduct themselves when they are with children
- The management team will review the Child Protection Policy at regular intervals to ensure that it is being upheld and practiced.
- We will translate the Policy into Marathi so that it is fully understood by all staff at all levels.

5. Reporting procedures

In order to ensure that structures are in place for the policy to be implemented, we will appoint a senior member of staff as Child Protection Officer (CPO) who will be the first point of contact as and when any allegations of child abuse are reported. The CPO will look into the matter immediately and together with the Director, decide what course of action to take. However, all staff should understand that it is important that abuse is reported, in writing, and that such reports will be treated with utmost confidence.

The person reporting the incident should complete the form entitled Reporting Format which is attached at **Annex IV**.

The following procedures need to be taken when any allegations are proved to be true:

In respect of allegations of **verbal and emotional abuse**, the staff member will receive a warning in writing. A second warning can also be issued if another incident is reported. The third occurrence could result in the termination of the services of that staff member.

For allegations of **physical abuse**, if proven the staff member will not receive any warning and any such incident will result in the termination of the services of that staff member.

In terms of **sexual abuse**, the staff member should be immediately suspended to protect the victim from the alleged abuser and an enquiry should be conducted immediately. If the allegation is proved to be true or if there is even a benefit of doubt, it should be remembered that the 'best interest of the child' should be the guiding philosophy as this is fundamental to the organization's work. Any staff member found guilty of sexual abuse must be dismissed immediately and the organisation should take legal action against the individual as per the JJ Act or the appropriate IPC Code as required by the law of the country. This might mean filing an FIR at the nearest police station but in the best interest of the child, this action will be appropriate.

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SIGNS, SYMPTOMS AND IMPACT OF CHILD ABUSE

PHYSICAL ABUSE		
Examples of Physical Abuse	Signs	Impact
Beating with a stick, ruler, belt or any other object	Scars on the body	Fear of adults (including parents, older siblings neighbours, teachers, police)
Slapping	Burn marks on hands or body	Aggression or depression
Pushing	Regular bruises on face or any other part of the body	Aloofness, withdrawn
Suffocating	Discomfort in walking or sitting	Substance abuse
Throwing	Absenteeism from school	Running away from home
Pinching	Aggression	Not wanting to return home or school, depending on where the abuser might be
Biting	Bullying or beating other children	
Aiding and abetting attempted suicide and/or death	Unable to explain causes of injuries	
Child labour at home or in a production unit, and especially in hazardous industries		
Cigarette or other burns		
Making a child carry heavy items disproportionate to their age or weight		
Tying or chaining up		
Drowning		
Choking		
Pulling hair		
Assault		
SEXUAL ABUSE		
Examples of Sexual Abuse	Signs	Impact
An adult exposing his or her genitals to a child or persuading a child to do the same	Depression, anxiety, withdrawal	Unwanted pregnancy
An adult touching a child's genitals or making the child touch the adult's genitalia	Bedwetting	Sexually transmitted infections
An adult involving a child in pornography which includes	Continuous loose motions or passing stools in bed	Other medical problems
	Hysteria	HIV and AIDS
	Aggression and temper tantrums	Drug use
	Avoiding contact with certain adults	Alcoholism
	Running away from home	Unable to have a normal sexual relationship with
	Not concentrating in school or failing	

<p>showing a child pornographic material</p> <p>An adult having oral, vaginal or anal intercourse with a child</p> <p>Any verbal or other sexual suggestion made to a child by an adult</p> <p>Forcing a child to witness sex between adults</p> <p>An adult forcing two or more children to engage in sexual activity among themselves</p> <p>An adult inserting foreign objects into a child's body for the adult's sexual gratification</p> <p>Sexual abuse also includes children being lured into being trafficked either on the pretext of marriage, offer of jobs or prostitution</p>	<p>examinations</p> <p>Attempting to inflict self-injury</p> <p>Discomfort in sitting in certain positions</p> <p>Blood stained underwear</p> <p>Focusing on his or her genitals</p> <p>Sexual exploration and abuse of other children</p> <p>Regular rubbing of body parts against objects</p> <p>Precocious sexual behaviour</p> <p>Masturbation</p> <p>Itchiness in the genital area</p> <p>Fear of sleeping at night or disturbed sleeping patterns</p> <p>Inability to eat certain foods that resemble the male organ or semen</p> <p>Use of sexual words including slang language</p> <p>Recurrent abdominal pain</p> <p>Sexually transmitted diseases</p> <p>Genital, urethral or anal trauma</p> <p>Pregnancy</p>	<p>members of the opposite sex when the child grows up due to fear of sexual contact</p> <p>Suicide attempts</p> <p>Some children are known to have killed their abusers</p> <p>Lack of trust in adults</p> <p>Psychological trauma</p> <p>Physical trauma during sexual abuse resulting in inability of a girl to have children when she is an adult</p> <p>Abortions</p>
EMOTIONAL ABUSE		
Examples of Emotional Abuse	Signs of Emotional abuse	Impact of Emotional

<p>When there is discrimination in the family e.g. boys get more food than girls</p> <p>When children do not have time for play or leisure activities</p> <p>When children are punished by being kept outside the front door, locked in a dark room or threatened</p> <p>When a child is constantly teased about his/her height, weight, physical appearance</p> <p>When children are ignored by their parents</p> <p>When children do not get love and affection from their parents</p> <p>When a child is left alone for long periods without adult care</p> <p>When parents do not spend time with their children</p> <p>When children are humiliated and told they are stupid</p> <p>When children are verbally abused by parents or older siblings or teachers or yelled at and called names</p> <p>When children are forced into early marriage and pregnancy</p> <p>When parents force children to take sides in an adult dispute or to choose one parent over the other</p>	<p>Children are withdrawn or unfriendly</p> <p>Children bully other children or siblings</p> <p>Attention seeking behavior</p> <p>Eating disorders</p> <p>Over- or under-dress</p> <p>Emotional attached to older students or teachers</p>	<p>Low self esteem and low self worth</p> <p>Drug and alcohol abuse</p> <p>Bullying or abusive behaviour towards younger children</p> <p>Mental health problems</p> <p>Poor long term health</p> <p>Poor educational achievement</p> <p>Poor outcomes for emotional and social development</p>
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NEGLECT

Examples of Neglect	Signs of neglect	Impact of Neglect
<p>Poor hygiene</p> <p>They do not get sufficient food</p> <p>They are ill and their parents or caregivers do not seek medical assistance for them</p> <p>They are not given immunizations against</p>	<p>Children are not bathed regularly</p> <p>Their hair is not combed, they have lice, scabies, body odour</p> <p>Constant hunger, tiredness</p> <p>Begging or stealing for food and clothes</p> <p>Regular/chronic ill health</p>	<p>Poor long term health</p> <p>Poor educational achievement</p> <p>Poor outcomes for emotional and social development</p>

<p>childhood infections and diseases Their basic needs are not met When parents do not care about where their children are, whether or not they have eaten, or done their homework</p>	<p>Absenteeism from school and children's leisure activities Unable to complete homework or other school assignments Their physical development is not appropriate for their age Delayed speech development</p>	
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STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

(FOR STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, INTERNS, VISITORS, DONORS AND SUPPORTERS)

I, Mr/Mrs/Ms _____ (NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)

have read and understood AIC's Child Protection Policy. I confirm that I will abide by the responsibilities contained therein to protect all children involved with the organization's programmes, projects and activities while I work, intern, volunteer or visit the children.

Signature (in full) _____

Staff/volunteer/visitor/intern/donor/supporter (please put a tick ✓ mark)

Date :

**STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT FOR STAFF AGAINST
CHILD LABOUR**

(FOR STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, INTERNS, VISITORS, DONORS AND SUPPORTERS)

I, Mr/Mrs/Ms _____ (NAME IN BLOCK

LETTERS), have read and understood AIC's Child Protection Policy. I confirm that I will NOT employ child labour in my own home as children have a right to go to school and enjoy their childhood.

Signature (in full) _____

Date :

REPORTING FORMAT
This is a confidential document

1. The incident has been reported by _____
(child/staff/community member (please tick as appropriate

2. Details of the child

Name of the child _____

Male/Female _____ Age (approx)_____

3. Details of incident:

a. Date, time and place of incident _____

b. Date when the incident came to my notice _____

c. Name of the alleged abuser _____

d. Is s/he staff, partner NGO staff, donor, volunteer, supporter, vendor, supplier, contractor
(please tick)

e. Nature of allegation

Personal observations of the person completing the report:

What did you see?

Injuries, child upset, other – please specify

5. Were other people or children involved? Yes No

6. Is there any other information you wish to provide?

Signature of person reporting incident _____

Signature of Line Manager _____

Date _____

Signature of CP Focal Point _____

Date _____

Action taken by CP Focal Point in chronological order with dates

(Use extra sheets of paper if necessary)

Dealing with disclosure by a child:

CONFIDENTIALITY: Because of the stigma associated with abuse, particularly sexual abuse, what is very important is maintaining confidentiality and protecting the child. The child must not be asked to repeat the incident(s) several times and to several people.

It is also important to remember that abuse is often not reported, especially if the abuser is a family member or a close relative/friend. Therefore when it is reported, the person to whom the abuse has been reported, must have the following skills and knowledge to deal with disclosure.

- Right Attitude
- Good Interaction skills
- Prompt Action

Attitude

- Let the child know that s/he has done the right thing by telling someone
- Listen actively and avoid thinking about your next questions before you have both 'heard' and 'understood' what the child is saying
- Accept the information as the truth
- Avoid showing revulsion or displeasure
- Do not promise confidentiality because you have a duty to refer a child, who is at risk, to another professional
- Support the child by helping him/her realize that s/he is not to blame and that abuse happens to many people

Interaction

- Do not promise what cannot be delivered eg "I'll sort this all out for you' or 'everything is going to be OK.'
- Avoid leading questions such as 'Did your uncle touch you'?
- Use the child's words to confirm that you have understood certain things eg "So you are telling me that you feel frightened of your father..."
- Do not make judgmental statements eg : 'why didn't you tell me before?', 'You should have screamed for help', "He should not have done that to you"...

Taking Action

- Keep detailed records *after* any disclosure, eg, date, time, place and non-verbal behaviour, exact language used by the child
- Consider how much information you need from the child in your professional role. For example, a teacher in the centre will need only sufficient information to take a decision on where and to whom to refer the child
- Limit the number of people that the child has to talk to
- Inform the child of the steps you will take
- Consider the level of continuing support and contact that the child might require in consultation with the Child Protection Officer and/or counsellor

Appropriate behavior of staff, interns, visitors and volunteers towards children:

- Respect each child
- Consider each child as a unique individual with specific characteristics and needs and thus accept each child with his or her positive and negative characteristics
- Observe attitude of children with patience and understand them within the local context in which they live
- Be empathetic rather sympathetic towards children
- Views of children to be heard, valued and taken seriously with objectivity
- Encourage children to express their feelings as well as to participate in decisions which affect them at the same time confidentiality
- Work with children in ways that enhance their inherent capacities and capabilities and develop their potential
- Act on children’s concerns and problems immediately
- Appreciate their good efforts and performances since it would be rewarding and reinforcing for further development
- As far as possible, work with children in a place within the view of others
- Equal attention to be given to all children irrespective of gender with no favouritism
- Never engage, encourage, neglect or support abuse under any circumstances
- Never stigmatize and humiliate children any case
- Recognize the child with her or his name and never use any derogatory name or nickname
- Never use corporal punishment, and follow anti corporal punishment guidelines
- Never behave in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Do not use slang words or abusive language in the presence of children in or outside AIC premises
- Staff and volunteers must wear clothes that are modest and acceptable to the communities that we work with so as to be respected and trusted
- Girls and boys will be given the choice of working with a male or female staff/volunteer where gender may be a consideration such as counseling, medical check-up, etc
- Permission of children and concerned authority to be taken before taking their images or case studies/life stories
- Images/photographs of children are only to be taken when they are properly clothed in keeping with local culture
- Never give any information regarding any child to media over telephone or in person. Senior management to be informed regarding any coverage by media and have written records on the same from the media with the objective of the coverage.
- Be clear about purpose and inform and guide children prior to media coverage
- Management must ensure orientation of visitors, donors, interns and volunteers on the organizational Child Protection Policy
- Visitors and volunteers to not give gifts directly to children. Staff will distribute these equally among all the children
- One cannot have a personal relationship with any child in the centre.
