

1. Introduction

2

2. SAHARA Group Child Protection Policy

2

3. Policy aims

3

4. Policy implementation

3

I. Staff recruitment, support and training

3

II. Staff Conduct

4

III. Child Protection Procedures

5

5. Code of Behavior - for All Staff and Volunteers

5

6. Responding to suspicions of abuse

6

7. Confidentiality

6

SAHARA Group

Child Protection Policy

Name of Regulation:	Child Protection Policy
Purpose of Regulation:	To inform SAHARA Group staff about their responsibilities when working with children
Approval for this regulation given by:	Executive Board
Regulation applies to:	SAHARA Group staff, Board members & volunteers
Date of Approval:	
Proposed Date of Review:	

1. Introduction

SAHARA Group is committed to protect children from any type of harm. Staff members and volunteers in this organization recognize and accept their responsibility to develop awareness of the issues that may cause harm to children. This policy is intended to promote and enhance the safety and welfare of children.

Throughout this document:

- '*abuse*' refers to all aspects of inappropriate behaviour in relation to children (eg, neglect, physical, emotional and sexual offenses)
- 'child' refers to a person under the age of 18.
- 'staff' refers to all persons employed in SAHARA Group on some form of contract.
- 'board members' refers to executive members of SAHARA Group.
- 'volunteers' refers to those who work in SAHARA Group with no expectation of a salary.

2. SAHARA Group Child Protection Policy

This policy is based upon the following principles:

- The safety of children is paramount.
- Children are among the most vulnerable group in society.
- All children, regardless of their age, culture, physical abilities, gender, language, ethnicity, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from any abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will have to be taken seriously to respond to the situation promptly and appropriately.

- Participation of children will be encouraged in designing and implementing the programme.

3. Policy objective

The objective of this Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice in:

- Providing children with appropriate safety and protection when they visit or are in the care of the SAHARA Group.
- Enabling all staff /volunteers/board members to take informed decisions on specific child protection issues.

4. Policy Implementation

SAHARA Group Child Protection Policy will be implemented after the approval by the executive board. The entire staff of SAHARA Group must comply with this Policy in conjunction with the SAHARA Group's Code of Conduct. The guidelines cover three main areas:

- **Staff recruitment, support and training**
- **Staff behaviour**
- **Child protection procedures**

I. Staff recruitment, support and training

A. All staff at SAHARA Group will receive orientation on how to work safely and positively with children:

- Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified upon recruitment, and for periodic refreshers.
- Staff members, volunteers and board members sign up to the SAHARA Group's Child Protection Policy.
- All staff, volunteers and board members will undergo training so that they are aware of the behaviour and physical indicators that suggest the possibility of abuse.
- All staff, volunteers and board members will be aware of the procedures to follow in cases of suspected abuse.

B. Protection Policy

- Where staff will take significant responsibility for safeguarding children during SAHARA Group activities, they are selected on the basis of their suitability for the job and responsibilities and also their ability to demonstrate that they can work safely with children.
- All appropriate staff will receive a copy of the SAHARA Group Child Protection Policy from their administration.
- Awareness of child protection issues will continue to be addressed through on-going training.
- Child Protection Policy will be placed in the offices of SAHARA Group, at Children's homes and at other working places.

- Seminars, interaction programs, workshops and meetings to make people aware about the Child Protection Policy will be organized at least annually.

II. Staff behaviour

All staff should demonstrate exemplary behavior in order to protect children from harm and themselves from allegations of misconduct. Staff should maintain their standards of behavior, therefore acting as role models.

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Never make unnecessary physical contact with a child. However, house parents must consider that they are the primary source of love and affection to the child. They should not engage in physical contact, e.g. tickling, if the child objects in any way.
- Treat all children with respect and dignity.
- Staff should ensure that children are protected from discrimination on any grounds, including ability and they should challenge discriminating comments and behavior.
- Always refer any problems to the child protection lead member of staff.
- Children's inappropriate use of language and/or behavior, especially when targeted at other children, should be challenged.
- It may sometimes be necessary for staff to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust that empowers children to share in the decision-making process. Such trust must never be broken.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Never use physical punishment.

Accommodation

- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with children (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them during residential activities).
- The authorized staff will accompany any child when they are under SAHARA Group's protection.
- If a parent wishes to accompany and stay overnight with their child then SAHARA Group will respect their wish.
- No adults other than authorized staff or parents of the children are allowed to stay overnight in a SAHARA Group children's home.

Transportation

- When children are being transported on behalf of SAHARA Group, they should be accompanied by a parent, guardian or SAHARA Group staff.
- Children should always wear helmets on motorbikes.
- Adequate adult supervision must be maintained on trips to ensure the safety of the children.

III. Child Protection Procedures

SAHARA Group will:

- Ensure we have staff who have received appropriate training and support.
- Ensure all staff understand their responsibilities in terms of being alert to the signs of abuse and for referring any concerns to the lead staff member. However, staff should remember that they are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.
- Develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters, including attendance at case conferences.
- Keep written records of concerns about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately. Ensure all records are kept securely locked.
- Follow procedures under the staff disciplinary policy where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer.
- Adopt a procedure for dealing with concerns about any possible abuse.

5. Code of Behavior - for All Staff, Board Members and Volunteers

You must not:

1. Staff, board members and volunteers **should not** spend unnecessary amounts of time alone with children, away from others. Meetings with individual children should be avoided or take place within sight of others. If privacy is needed, the door should remain open and other staff members or volunteers should be aware of the meeting.
2. Staff and volunteers are **advised not to** make unnecessary physical contact with children. However, **there may be occasions when physical contact is unavoidable**, such as providing comfort at times of distress, or physical support in sports or a something similar. In all such cases contact should only take place with the consent of the child.
3. Staff and volunteers **should not** meet children outside of organized activities.
4. Staff and volunteers should **never** (even in fun) –
 - a. Initiate or engage in sexually provocative conversations or activity.
 - b. Allow the use of inappropriate language to go unchallenged.
 - c. Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves.
 - d. Make promises to keep any disclosure confidential from relevant authorities.
5. Staff or volunteers **should not** show favoritism to any one child, nor should they issue or threaten any form of physical punishment.

You must:

6. Staff and volunteers **must respect** children's rights to privacy and encourage children and adults to feel comfortable enough to report attitudes or behaviors they do not like.
7. Staff and volunteers **must refrain** from consuming alcohol and smoking in the presence of children.

8. All staff and volunteers **should be aware** of the procedures for reporting concerns or incidents, and should familiarize themselves with the contact details of the designated persons.
9. If a member of staff or volunteer finds himself or herself the subject of inappropriate affection or attention from a child, **they should** make others aware of this.
10. If a member of staff or volunteer has any concerns relating to the welfare of a child in their care, be it concerns about actions/behaviours of another staff member or volunteer or concerns based on any conversation with the child, particularly where the child makes an allegation, **they should** report this to a designated person.

6. Responding to suspicions of abuse

- Abuse of children can take different forms – physical, emotional, or sexual.
- When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse this may be demonstrated through changes in their behaviour or in their play.
- We will allow investigation to be carried out with sensitivity.
- Where a child shows signs and symptoms of neglect, we make the appropriate referrals.
- If staff and volunteers are come under suspicion of abuse, disciplinary action will be taken under the SAHARA Group Disciplinary Procedure.

7. Confidentiality

- All allegations and investigations will be kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know.
- Staff members or volunteers under investigation will not be allowed to have any contact with children under SAHARA Group's protection.
- Any piece information will be shared only under the guidance of the Child Protection Team.