



MENTAL
HEALTH
PERSPECTIVES

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MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE'S SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

This policy has been developed by Mental Health Perspectives (PSP) as a sign of our commitment to ensuring that best interests of children and vulnerable adults are always taken into consideration, to detail the procedures necessary to prevent and facilitate the reporting of a child or vulnerable adults protection issues and to ensure that all recognised issues are dealt with promptly and effectively.

Our mission is to establish a human rights-based approach to mental health with empathy, respect and person-centred services being at the core of it. Subsequently, our organisation acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, complies with best practices, government, and international guidance.

This policy is based on the following principles:

- the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is the primary concern;
- all children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual orientation or gender identity have the right to protection from all forms of harm and abuse;
- child and vulnerable adults' protection is everyone's responsibility;
- children and vulnerable adults have the right to express views on all matters which affect them, should they wish to do so;
- the organisation shall work in partnership together with children and parents/carers or vulnerable adults and their carers to promote the welfare, health and development of respective groups.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Child – according to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child means every human being below the age of 18 unless under the law applicable to the child, maturity is attained earlier.

Child Protection – according to the Child Welfare State Policy Concept of the Parliament of The Republic of Lithuania, the right to grow up in a family and receive professional help, as well as the right to be protected from social and individual violence.

Harm – intentional physical, mental, sexual, economic, or other effects on a person through action or inaction, which causes the person to suffer physical, material or other damage.

Personal data – any information about an identified or identifiable natural person (data subject) whose identity can be determined directly or indirectly, by an identifier such as a name, a personal identification number, or mental, economic, cultural or social identity.

Sensitive information – data that can be used to identify an individual and that, if made public, could cause that individual harm. For example, biometric information, medical data, national origin, ethnic data, disability status, age, criminal offence data, immigration status, family status.

Violence Against Children – as per the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Protection of Child Rights, direct or indirect intentional physical, psychological, or sexual impact on a child by action or inaction, if as a result, the child died, their health, usual development was disturbed, pain or danger to life, health, usual development was caused to him, or the child's honour and (or) dignity were humiliated. Child neglect is also considered violence against a child.

Vulnerable Adult – human being above the age of 18 unless applicable law says otherwise, with vulnerability additional to the usual vulnerability of all adults that may result from an environmental or individual circumstances or behaviour indicating that there may be a risk to that person. Additional factors to increased vulnerability may include mental health conditions, disability, age, or illness.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy document follows and corresponds to the following legal base used in Lithuania:

- [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#);

- [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;](#)
- [The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;](#)
- [The European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 General Data Protection Regulation;](#)
- [Labour code of the Republic of Lithuania;](#)
- [Child Welfare State Policy Concept of the Parliament of The Republic of Lithuania;](#)
- [The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Protection of Child Rights;](#)
- [The Law of The Republic of Lithuania on Protection Against Domestic Violence;](#)
- [The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Protection of Minors from the Negative Effects of Public Information;](#)
- [The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Legal Protection of Personal Data.](#)

4. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Our values:

- Respect for human rights;
- Inclusion and diversity;
- Openness and cooperation;
- Self-reflection and constant improvement.

As part of our safeguarding policy, we will:

- promote and prioritise the safety and well-being of children and adults;
- ensure appropriate safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation;
- adopt best practices through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers;
- ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and vulnerable adults;
- follow the safeguarding policies and procedures at all times;
- ensure children and vulnerable adult (or their advocate) is involved in decisions about them;
- remain alert to the possibility of abuse, neglect and self-neglect;
- recognise the impact that diversity, beliefs and values of people who participate in the organisation's activities can have;
- address the failure to comply with the policy and procedures without delay;
- promote the health and welfare of children and vulnerable adults by providing opportunities for them to take part in research activities safely;
- respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of children and vulnerable adults.

5. CODE OF CONDUCT

In all interactions with children and vulnerable adults, all employees, consultants, contractors, volunteers, and associates of PSP are expected to uphold the highest levels of professionalism and ethics.

All staff members must:

- have full regard for the fundamental values outlined in Section 4;
- maintain the greatest levels of professionalism and consideration for all children and vulnerable adults they come into contact with;
- communicate with the child or vulnerable adult in their native language and preferred style of communication;
- when communicating with the child or vulnerable adult, choose age-appropriate language and manners, but do not act patronising,
- before the interview obtain consent from the child/vulnerable adult and their parent or legal guardian,
- immediately record and report any concerns about children and vulnerable adults to their supervisor as per Section 7;
- seek the direct involvement of children and vulnerable adults in all decisions that affect them, giving due weight to their will and preferences;
- never ignore a situation in which a child or vulnerable adult is suffering from or is in danger of suffering serious injury;
- never commit any act of abuse or violence against a child or vulnerable adult that will cause harm;
- do not spend lengthy periods of time alone with a child or vulnerable adult, do not ignore their basic needs, put them in danger, or engage in inappropriate connections or activities with children or vulnerable adults;
- never make promises to the child or vulnerable adult that cannot be carried out;
- do not conceal, deny, or cover up indications of abuse, neglect, or complaints from children themselves.

The person shall be subject to a disciplinary procedure and immediately suspended from their responsibilities pending the resolution of the disciplinary action for failing to adhere to these standards or for any other major issues impacting the welfare of children or vulnerable adults.

6. RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

This policy applies to anyone who is employed by the organisation or who has a contractual relationship with the organisation.

PSP reserves the right to require all prospective staff, consultants, contractors, volunteers and other associates to undergo standard and enhanced background checks to assess their suitability for working with or coming into contact with children and (or) vulnerable adults.

PSP is committed to educating staff and others on the child and vulnerable adults protection best practices, how to reduce risks and create safe environments. As part of its child and vulnerable adults' protection training, PSP will:

- provide a copy of this policy to all new staff and partners;
- incorporate information on the company's policies in the briefing procedures for new staff;
- provide child protection training for staff assigned to projects where they will work directly with children.

7. RESPONDING TO SUSPICION OR ALLEGATION OF ABUSE AGAINST A CHILD OR A VULNERABLE ADULT

PSP will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff and the communities we work with. The organisation will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.

All employees, consultants, contractors, volunteers, and associates of PSP have a duty to observe the situation and treatment of children and vulnerable adults to act where a child or vulnerable adult safeguarding concerns are raised.

If they have cause for concern, they must speak with the Director of the organisation right away and take immediate action if they learn that a child or vulnerable adult has encountered or has already suffered harm. If other children or vulnerable adults are at risk, that needs to be considered.

Personnel working on the projects are expected to exercise their professional judgment and, when in doubt, seek counsel from other staff members.

In accordance with domestic legal regulations, the individual involved must notify the appropriate national authorities right away if they believe that a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger of suffering harm. For example, notify the police and social services by dialling 112.

How to report a safeguarding concern?

Staff members or external sources who have a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to the Director of the organisation through the most suitable communication channel and provide clear information about the incident.

PSP will follow up on safeguarding reports and concerns according to policy and procedure, and legal and statutory obligations. The organisation will apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found in breach of policy.

Roles and responsibilities

PSP Director is the main point of contact for the personnel and is responsible for:

- the implementation of this policy throughout the organisation;
- keeping a confidential log of all child and vulnerable adults' protection matters across the organization;
- providing advice, guidance, and instructions to the project managers regarding all child and vulnerable adults protection matters;
- conducting an investigation into the complaints raised.

PSP Project Managers are required to:

- inform everyone within the projects and activities they coordinate about the current policy;
- immediately report and note any child and vulnerable adults' protection concerns or issues to the Director;
- coordinate the work of the team when visiting children or vulnerable adult institutions.

8. DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality must be maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need-to-know basis only.

All personal data and sensitive information will be kept confidential, in compliance with national and European data protection standards and other relevant laws and policies.

9. POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or in the following circumstances:

- changes in legislation and (or) government guidance,
- as required by the project partnership,
- as a result of any other significant change or event.