

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



About AHIMSA

The **AHIMSA values** young people and children as being a vital part of our organization and desires to see them grow, mature and be challenged in a healthy and safe environment.

Purposes

The purpose of **AHIMSA** children and young people's programmed is to offer the children a safe and welcoming environment with fun activities where the children can grow and learn. Whether this be through activities or through other independent groups working in partnership with our organization.

Aims

To provide activities for children and young people to help them develop from childhood into adulthood and to provide support for them.

- To enable the children to express themselves.
- To assist the children in integrating into the community.
- To help children/young people appreciate the diversity of their cultures.

The policy provides clear guidelines for identifying and responding to abuse, including staff training and supervision protocols. By raising awareness, fostering accountability, and supporting victims, it builds trust and ensures continuous improvement in child protection measures.

AHIMSA Child Protection Policy aims to provide a safe and healthy environment for children. **AHIMSA** values young people and children as a vital part of society and desires to see them grow, mature and be challenged in a healthy and safe environment. **AHIMSA** adheres to the principles of United Nations Convention on the rights of children and The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012 (POSCO) and other Acts of India which safeguard children from all sorts of abuses.

Organization (AHIMSA CPP)

Each child and young person should be formally registered within the group. The information includes an information/consent form which their parent/guardian

must complete. These forms have vital information about health and emergency contacts and should be kept securely and brought to each session. (See Appendix B)

Attendance register: a register should be kept for each session.

For activities for under 8s, which run for more than two hours in any one day, OR if you run a holiday camp for six or more days a year, you must register the activity.

Child Protection Representative

The **AHIMSA CPP** has appointed a child protection representative, whose name is displayed within the minutes dated/name and contact details to be given or on the notice board area. If any worker has any child safety concerns, they should discuss them with him/her.

He/she will take on the following responsibilities:

- Ensuring that the policy is being put into practice.
- Being the first point of contact for child protection issues.
- Keeping a record of any concerns expressed about child protection issues.
- Bringing any child protection concerns to the notice of the Management Committee and contacting the Local Authority if appropriate.
- Ensuring that paid staff and volunteers are given appropriate supervision.
- Ensuring that everyone involved with the organization is aware of the identity of the Child Protection Representative.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is meeting its aims.

Trips/Outings

When organizing a trip/outing make sure a trip/outing slip is completed. This includes details about the trip and a section for parents to give their consent. These slips must be returned before the event takes place and must be brought on the trip with the completed group information/consent forms.

Personal/Personnel Safety

A group of children or young people under sixteen should not be left unattended at any time.

Avoid being alone with an individual child or young person for a long time. If there is a need to be alone with a child or young person (e.g., first aid or he/she is distressed) make sure that another worker knows where you are and why.

- At no time should a volunteer or worker from any external organization arrange to meet a young person away from the activity without someone else being there.
- As such meetings should be planned and have the approval of a member of the Committee (this must be someone other than the organizer themselves).
- Teenage assistants should always be supervised.

Child Safety

Make sure that the area you are using for activities is fit for the purpose, e.g., remove furniture, which could cause injury in energetic games.

- Make sure that all workers and assistants know.
- Where the emergency phone is and how to operate it
- Where the first aid kit is
- Who is responsible for First Aid and how to record accidents or injuries in the incident book
- What to do in the event of a fire or other emergency
- Once a year there should be a fire practice
- Do not let children go home without an adult unless the parent has specifically said they may do so. Never let a child go with another adult unless the parent has informed you that this will happen.

- If private cars are used for an outing, the driver's details must be noted and senior person should approve and should have clean licenses. There should always be at least one other responsible person (16 or over) in each vehicle.
- Under normal circumstances, workers should only give a lift home to a young person from group activities if the parents of the young person have specifically asked for them to do so. (If workers are asked to give a young person or child a lift home, they are not obliged to do so, it is left to their discretion).
- In the case of trips or outings, it should be made clear if workers' cars will be used and where the children or young people will be returned to.

New Workers

Workers and assistants are by far the most valuable resource the group has for working with young people. When recruiting and selecting paid workers and volunteers the following steps will be taken:

- Completion of an application form;
- An interview by three people from the Committee, who will take the final decision;
- Identifying reasons for gaps in employment, and other inconsistencies in the application;
- Checking of the applicants' identity (passport, driving license, etc.);
- Taking up references prior to the person starting work;
- Ensuring criminal record checks have been carried out through relevant local agencies approved by the Criminal Records Bureau;
- Taking appropriate advice before employing someone with a criminal record;
- Allowing no unaccompanied access to children until all of the above have been completed;
- A probationary period of 3 months for new paid workers and volunteers;

- On-going supervision of paid workers and volunteers;
- Ensuring good practice is followed in working with children and young people by providing appropriate training and guidance;
- A nominated child Protection representative on the Management Committee.

Training

It is a great benefit if workers undertake regular training for this type of work. The committee should keep workers informed of relevant courses.

What is child protection?

Child protection is the response to the different ways in which a young person's or child's physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health are damaged by the actions of another person.

What you should do

- Listen to the child/young person
- Look at them directly and do not promise to keep any secrets before you know what they are, but always let the child/young person know if, and why, you are going to tell anyone
- Look at them directly and do not promise to keep any secrets before you know what they are, but always let the child/young person know if, and why, you are going to tell anyone
- Take whatever is said to you seriously and help the child/young person to trust his/her own feelings. Take notes of exactly what is said to you avoiding assumptions and conjecture.
- It is not the role of the worker to investigate any allegations (this would contaminate evidence if a situation went to court). Any disclosure by a child/young person must be reported to the named child protection officer.

- Speak immediately to the Local Authority or NSPCC for further advice and guidance.

What you should *not* do

- Project workers/volunteers should not begin investigating the matter themselves.
- Do not discuss the matter with anyone except the correct people in authority.
- Do not form your own opinions and decide to do nothing.

Things to say or do:

- ‘What you are telling me is very important’
- This is not your fault’
- ‘I am sorry that this has happened/is happening’
- ‘You were right to tell someone’
- What you are telling me should not be happening to you and I will find out the best way to help you’
- Make notes soon after the event. Try to write down exactly what the young person or child said. Avoid assumptions or conjecture.

Things *not* to say or do:

- Do not ask leading questions – Why? How? What?
- Do not say ‘Are you sure?’
- Do not show your own emotions e.g., shock/disbelief.
- Do not make false promises.

Scope of AHIMSA CPP Policy

AHIMSA believes that every child has the right to safety and the opportunity to reach their full potential. The organization is dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children. To fulfill this commitment, **AHIMSA** has adopted a child protection policy that establishes standards, mechanisms, and practices aimed at ensuring the safety and development of children

Applicability/ Coverage:

This policy applies to all staff, consultants, interns, volunteers, Board Members, advisory members, and visitors of the **AHIMSA**. It also extends to all partners, vendors, and any other stakeholders who will come into contact with the **AHIMSA** through its programs and interactions.

Definition of Child: -

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 1) a child is every human being below the age of 18 years.

Definition of Child Protection: -

Child protection is a broad term to describe philosophies, policies, systems, and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm

A. What is child abuse?

‘Child abuse’ or ‘maltreatment’ constitutes ‘all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.’ (WHO: 1999)

B. Definition of abuse

1). Sexual Abuse.

All sexual/ uncomfortable touching between an adult and a child is sexual abuse. Sexual touching between children can also be sexual abuse when there is a significant age difference between the children or if the children are very different developmentally or size-wise. Using a child for sexual gratification or to satisfy the needs of the other person. Inducement of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity Use of a child in prostitution The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials, etc. If you think a child may have been abused, it's important to report it.

2). Physical Abuse.

Physical abuse of a child that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or a person in a possession of responsibility, power or trust. There may be a single or repeated incidents.

3). Emotional Abuse.

Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including availability of a primary attachment figure, so that child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competences commensurate with a or his/her personnel potential and in the contact of the society in which the child dwells.

There may also be may act towards the child that cause or have a high probability of coercing harm to the child's health or physical , mental, spiritual , moral or social development. These acts must be reasonable within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Any Acts that includes restriction of movement's patterns of belittling, denigration, scape-goating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other none' physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment are ways of abuse.

4). Neglect Abuse.

Neglect is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all its spheres, health, education, emotional development, and nutrition, safe leaving conditions in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or care

taker and process or has a probability of causing harm to the child health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as feasible.

Procedures and Guidelines

1. Recruitment:

All staff and volunteers of **AHIMSA** will undergo a thorough and standardized recruitment and interview process. Background checks will be conducted for all staff and volunteers before they commence their work.

2. Induction and training:

Induction and training are integral components of our organization's commitment to protecting children. We provide opportunities for staff and volunteers to develop and maintain the necessary skills and understanding in this regard. All new recruits undergo a full-day orientation on child protection issues within one month of joining, accompanied by a copy of the policy for reference.

Annual half-day refresher training sessions are conducted to remind staff and volunteers of procedures and updates on new developments, facilitated by professional organizations specializing in such training.

3. Behavior Protocols:

These protocols will ensure that the management, staff, volunteers, and visitors of AHIMSA understand and abide by behavior conducive to creating a child-safe environment where children's physical and mental integrity, space, and privacy are respected.

A. Appropriate behavior of the staff towards children:

- Respect the dignity of each child.
- Consider each child as a unique individual with specific characteristics and needs, thus accepting each child with all his/her unique personality and character.

- Observe the attitudes of children with patience and understand them within the local context in which they live.
- Be empathetic rather than sympathetic towards children.
- Encourage children to express their feelings as well as participate in decisions that affect them, while ensuring confidentiality.
- Work with children in a place within the view of others as far as possible.
- Never stigmatize or humiliate children.

Never develop a sexual relationship with any child.

- Never behave in a manner that is inappropriate or sexually proactive.
- Never sleep alone with any individual child.
- Never use slang words or abusive language in the presence of children.
- Never provoke children towards any malpractice or addiction.
- Give girls and boys the choice of working with a male or female staff where gender may be a consideration, such as counseling or health/medical checkups.
- Never try to force the decisions or opinions of the individual on the child/children when they find it difficult to follow.
- Take permission from children and the concerned authority before taking their unrecognizable images or sharing case studies in print or e-media.
 - In the case of case studies, neither the name of the child nor any personal information that could identify the child can be given.
- Never give information regarding any child-sensitive incident or work to the media over the telephone.
- Always follow the line of communication in reporting a confidential matter regarding a child.
- Inform children about the purpose and guide them prior to medical care.
 - Never take children out of their surroundings without consent from the child protection officer and without informing him/her of the purpose.
 - Link and network with governmental departments for child development and follow their behavior protocols in response to abuse, violence, and threats to the life of any child. Ensure that it is done in the 'best interest of the child.'

- Sensitively handle abuse cases reported by the child and let the child know that sexual abuse is not his/her fault.
- Maintain the confidentiality of status as well as the confidentiality of things discussed with the staff.

B. Appropriate behavior of children:

Share information and learning with other children.

- Never physically assault or sexually abuse another child.
- Never tease another child or call them nicknames.
- Never threaten or intimidate another child.
- Never spread rumors about another child.
- Never force another child to give away his/her personal belongings.
- Never use others' things without their permission.
- Never use slang or abusive language.

Never wander with strangers out of the visibility of the staff.

- Treat all children, including themselves, as unique and precious human beings.
- Use common facilities of communication with the permission of the in-charges.
- Going out of the campus for shopping or any reason is allowed only with the staff of the institution or with parents with the prior permission of the in-charges.
- Never take anything from strangers without the permission of the staff.

C. Appropriate behavior of visitors:

Obtain prior written permission from the concerned authority regarding the purpose of the visit before interacting with children.

- Empathize with children rather than sympathize.
- Be cautious of physical contact; such contact with children must be appropriate to their age and circumstances and should be initiated by the child rather than the adult.

- Avoid asking children personal questions, questions about their status, or questions that embarrass them.
- Do not carry children.
- Interact with children only in the presence of relevant staff who will facilitate and monitor the process, with permission and according to the child's convenience.
- Obtain informed consent from children and the concerned authority before taking and using information from them.
- Do not give gifts directly to any child.
- Refrain from using offensive or slang language in the vicinity of children.
- Wear clothes that are appropriate, considering the local context in which the children live.
- Do not take photographs of children.
- Do not visit the places where they stay without being accompanied by staff

4. Program Planning:

1. Incorporates into its project design activities that focus on Child protection in the framework of United Nations convention on the rights of the child (UN CRC).
2. Intentionally design the Programs in projects to move from child welfare approach to Child Rights approach and engage children (age appropriate) in program Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation.
3. Plan programs to reduce risks facing vulnerable children and to address particularly the needs of children who are in situations of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Design programs addressing the causes of abuse such as threats/vulnerabilities/existing violations and promote responses that support family and community responsible for the wellbeing of children and the prevention of child abuse, exploitation and neglect.

5. Communication and Photographs Protocol:

These protocols are designed to control confidential information regarding children and prevent the presentation of degrading images of children through publications.

- Obtain informed consent from the concerned authority and children before capturing their non-recognizable images.
- In the case of case studies, neither the name of the child nor any personal information that could identify the child should be disclosed.
- Use the exact words of children in child abuse reporting.
- Ensure accurate representation of the statements made by the staff and children.
- The media will only interact with the organization/unit head or designated staff deputed by the head.
- ensure that all communication material on children in the form of pictures/captions are decent, dignified and respectful, and will not present children as victims, nor will exaggerate/glamorize poverty at the cost of the child
- ensures should not use scanned images of children without formal permission of the AHIMSA office responsible for the project and the parents/guardians of the child. Written permission should be obtained.

6. Agreements: All Contracts of AHIMSA will always have a clause on CPP.

Appendix B

7. Child Protection Committee:

AHIMSA Child Protection Committee will have a minimum of 4 members

1. One Board Member
2. Two Children's from NGO
3. Anganwadi workers
4. One Internal Member

Roles and Responsibilities of CPC

- Meet at least three times annually.
- Appoint one member as Chair.

Handle complaints, facilitate communication with the victim, conduct investigations into reported incidents, and recommend appropriate actions.

- Address reported issues within the specified timeframe.
- Continuously enhance the organization's child protection policy and practices.
- Raise awareness among **AHIMSA** staff, consultants, interns, external stakeholders, board members, advisory committee members, partners, and visitors.
- Maintain minutes of committee meetings in a designated Minutes Book, documenting all meeting agendas and discussions.
- Ensure confidentiality of relevant documents.
- Advocate externally for the improvement of child protection.
- If a committee member, including external resources, misses three consecutive meetings, recommend their replacement to management.
- Formation of the Child Protection Committee (CPC) with a minimum of four members.
- If absence persists, the chairman will inquire about their interest in the position. If no response, recommend their removal to management.

Steps to be followed by the committee during any child abuse Incident

- One of the nominated Committee members to acknowledge receipt of formal complaint by the Partner/Child/Fellow staff/ Victim.
- Ensure the safety of the victim from future risk.
- Respond to the complaint within 8 hours with further notice.
- Validate the complaint, if the nature of complaint requires an enquiry and if so, summon both parties separately within 24 hours.
- If the preliminary enquiry proves the faultiness of the AHIMSA representative, recommend for suspension until the enquiry ends.

- Provide enough time for both parties to explain from their end. Seek for evidence and ensure fairness without any bias.
- Close the full enquiry process within the maximum limit of 30 days and recommend the next steps to the management based on the findings of the enquiry Committee to treat each incident seriously and recommend further steps to curb repetition of such incidents in the organization.
- Seek assistance from external Experts, Police Department (wherever required) for probing of cases that require serious investigation, legal interventions.
- Any unfortunate incident happening within the purview of this policy will be dealt sensibly with utmost care protecting the rights and dignity of the abused child.
- Committee shall also protect all the individual details or incidents from the outside world. Any information collected or heard will be only used for the purpose of enquiry only.

Tenure of CPP Committee and Chairman/ Chairperson

- The Chairmanship will be for a one-year term.
- The Chair can be re-elected after a one-year gap.
- All committee members will rotate annually for the role of Chair, except for the HR representative.
- The committee will have a tenure of three years from its inception, renewable with either the re-election of existing members or induction of new members.
- A one-month notice period is required if a committee member decides to resign. In case of resignation, the Chair has the authority to replace them with a suitable new member within 30 days.
- If any incident is reported against a committee member, the same grievance management rules will apply to them.

If any incident is reported against the committee chairman, the AHIMSA board will intervene to take appropriate actions or decisions.

Compliant Email Id: - ahimsa2k@gmail.com

Conclusion:

AHIMSA is dedicated to fostering a safe and nurturing environment for children through the implementation of its Child Protection Policy. To achieve this goal, the organization will establish a committee tasked with operationalizing the policy's guidelines and procedures. **AHIMSA** is committed to upholding the principles of the Child Protection Policy, which include practicing unconditional acceptance of every child, advocating for their rights, ensuring their best interests are prioritized without conditions, and supporting a child protection ethos that empowers all stakeholders involved. By steadfastly adhering to these commitments, **AHIMSA** strives to create a protective and supportive environment where every child can thrive and flourish.

Scrutinized & approved by:

I.VICTOR,

General Secretary,

