

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

SPOC ASSOCIATION
"Sustainability of progressive and open communication"

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I. Introduction

This document constitutes the Child Protection Policy governing the activities of the Association “Sustainability of progressive and open communication” (SPOC). It is imperative that all team members, including employees, consultants, and interns, adhere to this policy. Furthermore, the Association's SPOC Chairperson, Albena Drobachka, is responsible for promoting this policy.

The Child Protection Policy applies universally to all staff members involved in activities involving child participation within Association SPOC. Recognising the heightened vulnerability of children and young adults to abuse, whether by adults or peers, the Chairperson and team members acknowledge the necessity for special measures to ensure their protection and support.

The primary objective of this Child Protection Policy is to ensure that the conduct of all adults engaged in Association SPOC 's activities remains transparent and prioritizes the wellbeing of children. It is the duty of the Chairperson to oversee Association SPOC 's activities with a focus on the best interests of the child and to ensure that all team members adhere to the policies outlined herein.

II.Main goal

The main objective of the organization is to ensure that all children enjoy safe childhood and are treated with respect for their dignity and empowerment.

In the process of executing our mission we:

- teach children how to avoid violence and abuse;
- educate adults on how to treat children/ what they can do to protect children against harm;
- Informs adults how to appropriately report and respond to suspected child abuse

Proactively promotes child inclusion, equality, and participation

III.The Aim of the Child Protection Policy

Child Protection Policy of Association “Sustainability of progressive and open communication” constitutes a framework of rules, standards and guidelines intended to:

- define the scope of responsibility of specific individuals for the safety of children in the care of the SPOC Association;

- Ensure timely and appropriate intervention in cases of suspected abuse or threats to a child's health or life;
- Specify educational, preventative, and response activities that promote child safeguarding
- Establish a safeguarding culture within the organization based on children's rights and ongoing learning

Being familiar with Child Protection Policy and implementing it in practice are moral and professional obligations of all employees and collaborators of the SPOC Association.

IV.A glossary of basic terms

Child is any person younger than 18-years-of-age

Legal intervention means notifying the Police or the Prosecutor's Office about suspected crimes againstchildren, or notifying Family and Minors' Division of the relevant regional court that child's interest may beat risk.

Child Safeguarding Focal Point – A designated staff member responsible for receiving and responding to child safeguarding concerns.

Client of the Association is any individual using the services provided by SPOC Association as part of its core activity, in particular: clients of direct and indirect support, including primarily children and their parents /caregivers, professionals working with children and participants of group events organized by the Association. Both a child and an adult can be clients.

Direct contact with a child encompasses all core activities of the Association "Sustainability of progressive and open communication" addressed directly to children.Direct contact would include: direct support to the child, education and play.

Indirect contact with a child is understood as contacting children by means of electronic communication, phone or post.

Caregiver of a child – parent / parents enjoying full scope of parental rights or a legal guardian authorized to represent the child.

Caregiver - parent(s) with full parental rights or authorized legal guardian

Employee of the Association is a person employed in the Association "Sustainability of progressive and open communication" on the basis of an employment contract.

Collaborator of the Association is an individual employed on the basis of a civil law contract or performing voluntary work for the Association "Sustainability of progressive and open communication" free of charge, under an internship program regulated by an internship contract or under a voluntary work contract, fellowship contract or other contract of collaboration.

Caregiver's consent refers to granting consent by a person entitled to represent a child, in particular by their statutory representative (parent, legal guardian) or other individual authorized to represent the childby virtue of special regulation or court order.

Parental consent is understood as the consent of one parent.

In case of disagreement between parents, the case is settled by the court.

V.Principles of providing support

All employees and collaborators of SPOC:

- Treat all children equally, regardless of origin, appearance, or beliefs
- Respect children's differences, views, and experiences
- Listen to children attentively and treat their statements with respect
- Use child-friendly, respectful, and developmentally appropriate language
- Create a culture of openness and mutual responsibility

These principles form the foundation of SPOC's safeguarding culture.

VI.Witholding support

An employee may decide to withhold help in situations when:

- Supporting the client contradicts the child's best interest
- The client disrespects the Association's rules or staff
- There is a threat to the safety of the staff member
- There is a conflict of interest (e.g., close relationship)
- The child is better supported by a different service (e.g., medical or legal)
- The child is already under the care of another appropriate professional

VII.Releasing information

Parents/caregivers are entitled to receive information about the child's support unless it risks the child's wellbeing.

All SPOC staff and collaborators:

- Must maintain confidentiality regarding all information obtained during service delivery
- Must only share information when required by law or to protect a child from harm

VIII. Rules for a safe relationship between an employee/collaborator and a child

In their contact with children, it is unacceptable for employees and collaborators of SPOC Association to do any of the following:

- embarrass, humiliate, belittle or demean children or display any behavior bearing signs of emotional, physical or sexual abuse;
- come into inappropriate physical contact with the child, violating the child's dignity; permissible physical contact is naturally associated with play, hygienic assistance, ensuring safety, or the need to soothe the child;
- serve children alcohol, medications or other psychoactive substances;
- condone or participate in illegal activities involving a child;
- establish sexual relations with children;
- exhibit sexually provoking behavior;
- host the child in their own private home;
- maintain private relationship with the child, outside the framework of work and support;
- accompany the child during travel in the absence of a caregiver;
- sleep in the same room with children during summer camps, trips;
- be alone in the room with the child, when providing in-home support.

Any and all suspicions regarding proper conduct of the employees and collaborators are investigated and clarified without delay.

IX. Protection of image rights and personal information of the child and the caregivers

Support provided to child and family is documented. SPOC Association abides by the laws regulating data protection, sensitive data in particular, by:

- obtaining written consent from clients regarding personal data processing;
- appointing an individual responsible for data protection;
- training employees;
- securing documentation, both electronic and in hard copy;
- defining clear rules for releasing information from documentation to third parties (courts, Prosecutor's Office, interdisciplinary teams).

Association "Sustainability of progressive and open communication" does not release client information to the media, nor does it use client images in its information and educational materials without prior client consent, or in the case of children, without the consent of a caregiver.

X.Interventions in cases of suspected child abuse

All employees and collaborators of SPOC act for the purpose of protecting children against abuse. In our work, we comply with the Bulgarian legal regulations. Every suspected case of child abuse is treated seriously and investigated, whether reported by a child, caregiver or professional and no matter if suspected abuse was perpetrated by another child, caregiver, professional or employee/collaborator of SPOC.

In the case of suspected crime or threat to the child's interests, SPOC employees immediately undertake legal intervention. The decision to intervene is made by a team made up of: the reporting employee, Child Safeguarding Focal Point, the coordinator of the relevant program, expert in protecting children against abuse appointed by the coordinator. The decision to intervene by informing the Prosecutor's Office is authorised by the Association "Sustainability of progressive and open communication" Management Board. Other forms of intervention are only communicated to the Board. At the same time, SPOC employees offer help and support to the child and non-offending caregivers. If the child's health or life is in imminent danger, an employee learning of the situation intervenes without delay, by immediately informing the proper Police unit by phone and by fax about the direct threat or damage to the health and life of a child. All activities undertaken in the course of the intervention are documented.

All SPOC staff and collaborators:

- Must act immediately when abuse is suspected or disclosed
- Must report cases to the designated Child Safeguarding Focal Point
- Must follow national child protection laws and procedures

In case of risk to life or health:

- SPOC staff must contact the police or child protection services immediately
- All actions taken must be documented and reviewed internally

Investigations will be conducted promptly and impartially, prioritizing the child's safety and well-being.

XI. Policy Implementation and Monitoring

This policy becomes active upon publication and dissemination.

To ensure accountability:

- All staff, volunteers, and partners receive mandatory child safeguarding training
- Roles and responsibilities are defined in job descriptions
- A Child Safeguarding Focal Point is appointed for each project and partner organization

- Periodic refresher training and practical tools are provided
- All subcontractors must sign written agreements to uphold this policy

Monitoring and Review:

- The safeguarding policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if needed
- Feedback from staff, children, and families will inform policy updates
- Internal audits and risk assessments will track compliance and effectiveness