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# Context

Child abuse is a global phenomenon. It occurs in all countries and in all societies. It involves the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect of children and adolescents. It is almost always preventable. Koshish Charitable Trust belives that children are the future of a family, society and country. Hence they should be given full protection and all kind of support for their all round development.

# Introducing Child Protection

**Definitions**

According to the United Nation Convention on the Right, 1989 of the Child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years. Children are the most vulnerable members of the society so institutions, society and the government all should work together in protection of the child.

**Child Abuse** is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be falling in action to prevent harm.

**Child protection** entails safeguarding of the child from physical, structural, social and economic risks and exploitation.

**Child safeguarding** refers to the responsibility of organisation and its stakeholders working with / in contact with / impacting children, to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children are minimized. Child Protection is part of safeguarding and refers to activities undertaken to protect specific groups of children who are being or are at risk of being abused.

# Necessary Foundation

The organizational principles are framed in the light of the ‘Right to Life’ and other constitutional values and UNCRC. Koshish is implementing effectively all measures given in the Child Protection Policy.

**Developing a child protection policy and procedures**

Different section of the Child Protection Policy was framed on the basis of UNCRC, Fundamental Right, POCSO Act, JJ Act through consultative process.

# Child Protection Committee

Child Protection Committee (CPC) has been constituted by Koshish Charitable Trust to receive and effectively deal with child abuse complaints.

The CPC is composed of: CPC Chairperson – Executive Director

* Child Protection Officer
* A senior staff member – Programs Director
* External NGO member committed towards the cause of children’s rights and empowerment.
* A panel of three (3) members is required to be present for the proceedings to take place. The panel shall include the CPC Chairperson and at least two (2) members.

Further, Koshish designates the Human Resources Manager – Ritwij Kumar (koshish.office@gmail.com) as the Child Protection Officer (CPO) to look into overall implementation of the policy.

# Responsibilities

**Staff**

All employees of Koshish Charitable Trust are required to understand and practice: Situations, Plan and organize the work to minimize risks, visibility while working with children, create and maintain a non-defensive attitude, an open culture to discuss any issues, develop a culture where children can talk about any problem with staff openly, respect each child’s limitations and help them to develop their own sense of their rights and solve problems.

Koshish has zero tolerance for the staff and others associated with Koshish who is indulge in any activity such as taking children to their home, overnight stay, sleeping on the same bed with the child, physical assault or physical abuse.

Any staff and other associate who visits and interact with children on behalf of Koshish is accused of humiliating, belittling, degrading, holding, kissing, cuddling, touching a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way will be punished as per the policy of the Koshish in line with the child related acts.

**Responsibilities of CPC**

Receive complaints/ suggestions on child safety violations/abuse and not on any administrative issues.

Discuss the concerns, record the same and give appropriate recommendations to the organisation’s management for further action and ensure the concerns are redressed and within a specified time.

* Maintain all registers, files and folders and documents related to child safety and protection.
* Seek external expert help as and when required.
* Convene as soon as an incident is reported with periodic follow-up until closure of case.
* Cooperate with the police, judiciary and local administration in investigation of the reported incident, to the extent applicable by law, while keeping in mind the safety, security, right to privacy and confidentiality in the best interest of the child.

**Responsibilities of CPO**

* Assist the CPC Chairperson during case proceedings.
* Receive all complaints of child safety violation including child abuse, whether verbal or written and ensure confidentiality and record it in a register.
* Maintain case files and records pertaining to the complaints/incident.
* Follow mandatory reporting in case of safety violation including child abuse wherever legally mandated and coordinate with the police and local authorities and ensure that there is no attempt to cover up the incident, or influence the child’s parents/guardian or other authorities.
* Follow procedures where there are allegations of child safety violations or child abuse including against the Head of the institution/Chairperson of CPC.

# Communications regarding Children

Koshish should ensure that it uses images that are decent and respectful and which do not present children as victims. In all communications, children should be always adequately clothed and poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive are unacceptable.

* Websites and other promotional materials of Koshish should not use images of children without obtaining verbal permission from the child and the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child.

# Implementing the policy and procedures

**Procedures**

This section is to ensure what steps should be taken if it is believed that the Child Protection Policy is being violated.

i. **Reporting**

Koshish Employees, Associates and Consultants should report their concerns to the CPO within 24 hours of observing a breach of the Child Protection Policy. All concerns or allegations should be submitted in writing.

**The reporting should focus on**

* Evidence that the Child Protection policy has been violated with relevant dates
* Potential / Actual Risks to the child/children
* Measures to safeguard children and minimize risk

**ii. Ensure the safety of the concerned child:**

The CPO will ensure that the child is not further questioned or interrogated. The CPO will liaise with the partner NGO to reassure the child that the problem will be attended to and he/she is safe and protected.

**iii. The CPO will within three days of receiving the complaint:**

* Conduct a risk assessment of the reported concerns and inform the relevant authorities as appropriate who will ensure that child is provided care and protection.
* Put together all the evidence submitted
* Prepare and communicate an appropriate response e.g. disciplinary process or urgent action if consequences of breach of Code are severe.

**iv. Medical Intervention:**

The CPO will liaise with the partner NGO to ensure that the child is provided with the appropriate medical assistance as required. The CPO will liaise with the partner NGO on the medico-legal papers which will be referred to during the case proceedings.

**v. Informing parents / guardians:**

The CPO will liaise with the partner NGO to ensure that the parents / guardians are informed about

* The complaint.
* The internal inquiry procedures that will be followed to address the complaint.
* The confidentiality that will be maintained.
* The relevant local authorities that will be informed about the case details.

**vi. Internal Inquiries and Suspension:**

* The CPO in consultation with the Chairperson shall convene the CPC meeting within 24 hours of reporting of the incident to take further action and inform the partner NGO accordingly.
* The CPO will meet with the person who has reported the concern to ensure that facts, opinions, observations are recorded accurately and prepare an investigation report.
* The CPC will decide whether the person responding to the complaint should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.
* If the person responding to the complaint is at an outstation location, the CPC will decide on whether they should be asked to return to the main office.
* Based on the outcome of the internal inquiry, the CPC will refer to the Disciplinary policy to assess the appropriate disciplinary outcome that will be implemented.

# Dealing with obstacles and challenges

* Social, local and administrative obstacles shall be tackled by Child Protection Committee.

# Monitoring and Evaluating Child Protection Policy and Procedures

* All cases registered and redressed during a timeframe shall be documented and evaluated by the governing body.
* Evaluation report shall be published annually.