

SAFETY GUIDELINES

for the Resident Girls of Naunihal



➤ INTRODUCTION TO THE SYSTEM

As per Section 2(19) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015¹ (hereinafter referred to as the “Act”), Children’s Homes are established in a district or group of districts to provide short-term or long-term care to children² in need of care and protection (hereinafter referred to as the “CNCP”), and facilitate their rehabilitation and reintegration into the society. These Children’s Homes fall under the jurisdiction of the respective Child Welfare Committee (hereinafter referred to as “CWC”) of that particular district. The CWCs exercise their powers and discharge their duties conferred on them through the Act in relation to the CNCP.

➤ WHAT IS NAUNIHAL?

Naunihal Children’s Home for Girls is a Children’s Home run by Prerana to provide shelter to girl children³ in need of care and protection. It is registered as per the mandate of the Act and observes the regulations stated in the Act and its Rules⁴. It is located in the Raigad district of Maharashtra, India and thus falls under the jurisdiction of the CWC, Raigad.

➤ WHO ARE THE ULTIMATE BENEFICIARIES OF THIS NOTE?

Primarily, the resident girls living in Naunihal (and such other similar Shelter/Children’s Homes) are the ultimate beneficiaries of this note.

➤ WHO ARE THE PRIMARY AND DIRECT USERS OF THIS NOTE?

The Superintendents of such Children’s Homes, Counsellors, Social Case Workers, Probation Officers, Child Welfare Officers are expected to be the primary users of this note.

➤ WHEN IS THIS NOTE TO BE USED?

This note is not for one-time use. It is to be used on a variety of occasions, to list a few - during the intake orientation of individual resident girls, after a mock safety or a tabletop safety drill, during individual counseling and psycho-education sessions, group life-skill education sessions, etc.

¹ It is the Act that consolidates the law relating to children by catering to their basic needs through proper care, protection, development, treatment, social re-integration, by adopting a child-friendly approach in the adjudication and disposal of matters in the best interest of children and for their rehabilitation through processes provided, and institutions and bodies established.

² Under Section 2(12) of the Act, a ‘child’ means a person who has not completed eighteen years of age.

³ Children from the age of 8 to 18 years can be placed at Naunihal by the CWC. Keeping in mind the definition stated in 2(12) above, the word ‘child’ is used for every resident girl who falls under this age bracket, regardless of the age difference.

⁴ Maharashtra State Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Rules, 2018 – created by Government of Maharashtra in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-sections(1) and (2) of section 110 of the Act.

➤ WHY IS SAFETY IMPORTANT?

Girls in need of care and protection are placed in Naunihal through the directions of the CWC, Raigad. The children are referred to Naunihal for safe custody, and the staff at Naunihal must look after their safety and security. Ensuring the child's safety is not limited to her⁵ well-being and security within the premises of Naunihal but also extends to the child's safety when she steps out of Naunihal temporarily. Since the child has already come from a vulnerable situation, it is expected that every effort must be taken to ensure that the child does not become vulnerable again. The child's reintegration into society is not possible until she develops independent living skills. It is thus the responsibility of the staff at Naunihal to inculcate independent living skills in the child. Understanding the importance of safety and implementing the same is a part of the above said independent living skills, and the caregivers⁶ at Naunihal are expected to assist the children in acquiring them.

➤ BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS:

Reintegration into society works in tandem with inclusivity, and thus the girls living in Naunihal are often enrolled in a regular college or attend vocational training programs with the approval of the CWC, Raigad. For the same, routinely the child steps out of Naunihal to attend her study classes and/or vocational training program and comes back to Naunihal. Only children who are over the age of 15 attend such educational and/or vocational courses unaccompanied by caregivers from Naunihal. It is to be assumed that a CNCP attends any educational and/or vocational training program after approval has been obtained from the concerned CWC.

➤ WHO CAN USE THIS DOCUMENT?

This document has evolved some safety tips or guidelines for the children who are stepping outside of Naunihal for any educational and/or vocational purposes. The caregivers at Naunihal can use these guidelines in orienting the child before she starts stepping out of Naunihal on her own. Orienting the child with these safety tips is not to curb the child's right to freedom, but to equip the child in becoming self-reliant, and thus truly, free. This information is to be shared with the child by any of the following functionaries: Counselor, Superintendent, Child Welfare Officer or Caseworker, or the Probation Officer.

**Note: This document can be further reviewed and used by caregivers of other such Homes for CNCP to suit to their procedures and protocols.*

⁵ Since Naunihal is established for girls, the document makes use of the usual gender pronouns 'she' and 'her' that are generally attributed to girls.

⁶ The term is inclusive of duty bearers in the Home like the Superintendent/ Child Welfare Officer/ Case Worker/ Counsellors as mentioned in the Act.

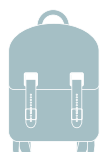
The caregivers are expected to understand the pointers below and ensure that the child also understands and observes the same through regular discussions and reinforcements.



➤ The prior approval obtained from the CWC is only for the child to attend her college and/or vocational training program, and return to Naunihal. Ensure the child understands this too.

➤ Inform the child that if there is any other outing she is required to or wishes to attend; she should inform the Superintendent or Case Worker at Naunihal in advance. The necessary permission for the same will then be sought from the respective CWC. The child going for any such outing without explicit approval from the CWC is not permitted.

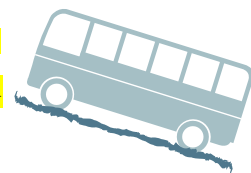
➤ Ensure that the child is aware of the practice of reporting to the staff before leaving and after returning to Naunihal.



➤ Inculcate in the child, a habit of checking her belongings before leaving Naunihal. One shouldn't leave Naunihal without emergency money, sanitary napkins, meal box, water bottle, personal medicines, if any, etc.

➤ Inform the child that if she is likely to return later than her usual time, she should contact the Superintendent or any staff of Naunihal and share the reason for the delay from her college/training center. Explore possible situations with the child, like if she faces any obstacles like a traffic jam, etc., she should take the help of a fellow passenger to call and inform the staff at Naunihal the reason for the delay. Discuss with the child that how these measures are to ensure the staff at Naunihal is informed that the child is safe, and the reasons for the delay – and they do not report the matter to authorities fearing a breach of the child's safety.











➤ The child should be well informed that if she feels unwell while traveling, she should call Naunihal or request someone to call Naunihal so that a staff member could reach out to her to pick her up.



➤ Ensure that the child is well-versed with the route which is to be taken by the child and discuss the same in detail with the child. Go over the route multiple times, accompany the child, till she understands it thoroughly.

⁷ Since safe custody of the child is entrusted to Naunihal, any unusual situation with regard to the child must be reported to child protection and law enforcement authorities like the CWC and police officials for further investigation.

▶ There are certain tips for the child to keep in mind while she is traveling on her own. The caregivers are expected to inform the child of the same. Some of them are listed as follows:

-  Inform the child not to get into a crowded bus/train as it is unsafe and risky. Wait for the next bus to arrive.
-  Inform the child to always carry the correct railway pass/ticket.
-  The child should be asked to not travel on the footboard, lean out of a running train, or cross the railway tracks. Always use the footbridge to change platforms.
-  In trains, the child should preferably travel by compartments reserved for women. On buses, she should make use of seats reserved for ladies. While using facilities in public spaces like bathrooms, etc. – the child should avoid common facilities and use those reserved for females only. The concept of reservation for her safety and convenience should be discussed with the child.
-  Educate the child about road traffic safety. The child should follow the traffic rules and road safety regulations. She should check the traffic signals before crossing the street, look out for any approaching vehicles, and use the zebra crossing wherever available.
-  Brief the child to follow the route discussed with the Nauniyal staff. The child should make use of the usual path. The child should be informed to take a busy and well-lit road, and the dangers of taking short-cuts and unknown routes should be discussed with the child.
-  Prepare the child to be attentive to her surroundings, her belongings and the people around her.
-  Inform the child to be aware of anyone in a car/taxi/ auto rickshaw/vehicle who stops to talk to her or ask her for directions if she is walking down the street, even if it is a familiar neighborhood. Discuss instances like maintaining distance from the car and never getting into the car – even if the stranger is going in the same direction that the child is headed, or the stranger says there is an emergency or a disaster along the way.
-  Explain to the child that while getting into a taxi, she should ensure that the child lock of the doors isn't activated.
-  Instruct the child to cross the street if she feels like she is being followed, and notice if the person following her does the same. If this happens, the child should start running immediately. Develop an understanding in the child that there is no harm in running, and there is no need to wait till the person is very close to take action.

▶▶ Inform the child that any incidents of being followed, being teased or troubled should be reported to Naunihal staff immediately, even if it is a hunch. Discuss with the child that it is never her fault if any such situation arises.

▶▶ Under any circumstances, no form of sexual maltreatment is ever alright. Have regular conversations with children with regard to personal safety.

▶▶ Explain to the child that if someone makes an attempt to grab her purse or bag, then at that moment, it is advisable to let it go. Fighting in order to resist it could result in the risk of getting hurt. Money and other possessions likely to be lost in such situations can be later recovered or replaced. The harm caused to the child may be irreversible. Inform the child that she must run away raise an alarm and seek help. She should not refrain from asking for help if there is a feeling of being in trouble or danger.

▶▶ Help can always be sought at the nearest police station. Discuss police stations falling in the child's route with the child if there are any. Educate the child about the Railway Protection Force and the possibility of seeking help from them at railway stations. Make the child aware that she can also approach a store in a nearby mall, a supermarket, or a well-lit, family restaurant.

▶▶ Ensure that the child memorizes some important toll-free and such other emergency phone /helpline numbers e.g. of Naunihal, the police, Childline Helpline number, etc.



SHOUT OUT

▶▶ Discuss with the child the benefit of yelling when in trouble, as it is a good way to seek attention from passers-by.

▶▶ Cultivate an understanding in the child that it is unsafe to leave food and drinks unattended at any point. The child should not accept anything to eat or drink from a stranger. Discuss with children how consuming unattended/already opened food and beverages is harmful as the food or drink can be spiked with drugs causing intoxication, etc.

▶▶ Inform the child that she should not trust a stranger who follows her around and won't leave her alone sometimes despite telling him to. This also amounts to stalking. The child should be made aware that if anyone hastens the child to immediately leave with him or her on the grounds of a disaster like fire, earthquake, etc. she should not leave with the said person – but call Naunihal immediately and take their advice.

- ▶ Initiate a discussion with the child on the importance of trusting an individual after obtaining information about the person and the situation. The child must understand that not all strangers are rude or forceful right away. It is important to be aware of strangers, both men and women, who seem nice – the ones who make conversation easily and get important information without the person realizing it.
- ▶ Educate the child that she is not obligated to share any personal information with any person. If a stranger or a nominally familiar person discloses his or her personal information, it doesn't mean the child is obligated to share similar information about herself with him/her.
- ▶ Discuss with the child about consent. Inform her that there is nothing wrong with sounding 'rude' and saying NO if the person continues to pressurize or bother her. Saying NO is the child's right, and it is a complete sentence without requiring any further elaboration or justification.

References:

- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/keeping-young-children-and-teens-safe-while-out-and-about>
- <http://shine365.marshfieldclinic.org/kids-health/independent-teens-safety-tips/>

*Note:

This document does not contain tips on practicing safety in the digital space, especially with mobile phones – as children below 18 years who are living in Naunihal are not given personal cell phones. The Act and the subsequent Rules created by the Government of Maharashtra are ambiguous about providing cell phones to children for their safety.

The idea is not for the child to be afraid every time she leaves Naunihal. But it is important that the child understands the importance of her safety and take some measures for the same. The child should trust her instincts, pay attention to the surroundings, and protect herself. Remember, the child practicing safety will not take away any fun, but instead, it will ensure that she continues to experience fun!

*Acknowledgements

The first version of this document was created in 2010. Since then, it has been revised regularly in 2012, 2014, 2016 and December 2018 in consultation with the team members.

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