



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY (CPP)

INTRODUCTION

Gramin Samaj Kalyan Samiti (GRASS) is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of every child. Our organisation is dedicated to fostering an environment that is free from violence, harassment, abuse, and neglect, where children are respected and their rights are upheld. We prioritise the welfare of children above all else and believe that safeguarding their protection is a collective responsibility.

In line with India's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, our Child Protection Policy (CPP) demonstrates our commitment to protecting children from harm and abuse. This comprehensive policy establishes guidelines to ensure a safe and supportive environment for children and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved.

At GRASS, we are dedicated to shielding children from all forms of harm, abuse, and exploitation. We are proactive in implementing measures to prevent or minimise risks to children who interact with our organisation. Every stakeholder has a duty of care to ensure the safety and protection of children, both in their professional roles and in any personal interactions with them.

Our approach to working with children is rooted in understanding their individual contexts, fostering trust and respect, and enhancing their abilities and potential. We are committed to treating children with the utmost respect and acknowledging their specific needs and rights. We value their perspectives and are devoted to maintaining a safe environment with minimised risks.

This policy has been endorsed by the governing body of GRASS, and the leadership team is responsible for its effective implementation and continuous oversight.

SCOPE OF CPP

The Child Protection Policy (CPP) adopts a 'zero tolerance' stance towards all forms of violence, bullying, sexual abuse, and related offences within the Organisation's premises, including buses and other extended environments. This policy addresses abuse, harassment, and misconduct that may occur on our campus or in facilities under our control, as well as in related environments such as transportation used by the Organisation.

The CPP outlines key elements for managing conduct and practices related to the Organisation, including the prevention of abuse, complaint mechanisms, response procedures, recruitment practices, disciplinary actions for misconduct, and monitoring and review processes.

The guidelines apply to GRASS in all contexts and interactions involving children, encompassing:

- All engagement hours within the Organisation's premises or those of associated partner NGOs, including both direct and indirect activities.
- Before and after regular working hours, on holidays, and during work-related travel or events.
- Areas such as parking lots and outings.

These guidelines are applicable to all individuals who have direct or indirect contact with children in the aforementioned contexts. This includes:

- Members of the board and management of GRASS.
- Permanent, temporary, and contract employees.
- Volunteers, consultants, experts, outsourced agency workers, and service providers.
- Vendors supplying services or goods to the Organisation.
- Visitors and anyone with authority or access to children through their association with the Organisation.

The CPP also extends to any other individuals who may fall under its scope based on their interactions with children within the Organisation's sphere of influence.

APPLICABILITY

The Child Protection Policy (CPP) applies to all individuals who have direct or indirect contact with children in any context related to the Organisation. This includes:

- Board members and management of the Organisation.

- Permanent, temporary, and contract employees.
- Volunteers, consultants, experts, and workers from outsourced agencies.
- Service providers and vendors supplying goods or services to the Organisation.
- Visitors and any person whose association with the Organisation grants them authority over or access to children.
- Any other individuals covered by these guidelines based on their interactions with children within the Organisation's sphere of influence.

CONFORMITY WITH LAWS

This Child Protection Policy (CPP) is aligned with the legal frameworks for child protection in India and the international conventions ratified by India. The CPP complies with all relevant Indian laws, including:

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.
- The Indian Penal Code, 1860.
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.
- The Information Technology Act, 2000.
- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.

It also encompasses any subordinate or delegated legislation that may be enacted over time.

If any provision of this CPP is found to be in conflict with existing laws, that provision will be deemed null and void. In cases where the CPP does not address specific legal compliance requirements related to child protection, the Organisation will adhere to those requirements. Amendments or changes to the relevant laws will be incorporated into this CPP, and the Organisation is obligated to comply with these updates.

Terms not defined in this CPP will be interpreted according to their meanings under the applicable laws.

Definitions

- **"Child"**: Refers to a student who is admitted and enrolled in the Organisation, regardless of its location within India.
- **"Child Abuse"**: Encompasses intentional behaviours or actions that cause actual or potential harm to a child's health, development, or dignity, endangering their safety. Child abuse is categorised into four types:
 - **a) Physical Abuse**: Refers to actual or potential physical harm resulting from actions or inactions by someone in a position of responsibility, power, or trust.
 - **b) Sexual Abuse**: Involves engaging a child in sexual activities they do not fully understand, cannot consent to, or which breach societal norms and laws. This includes any activity between a child and an adult or another child in a position of trust or authority, intended to gratify the other person's needs. It encompasses inducement or coercion to engage in unlawful sexual activity, exploitation in prostitution, use in pornographic performances or materials, and online enticement or participation in virtual sex.
 - **c) Neglect and Negligent Treatment**: Refers to a caregiver's failure to provide adequate health care, education, emotional support, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, resulting in or likely to result in harm to the child's health or overall development.
 - **d) Emotional Abuse**: Involves failure to provide a supportive environment for the child's development, with actions that cause or are likely to cause harm to the child's health or development. This may include restricting movement, degrading or humiliating behaviour, threats, discrimination, ridicule, and other non-physical forms of hostility or rejection.
- **"Cyber Bullying"**: Refers to intimidation or harassment using digital means such as computers, communication devices, computer networks, or the Internet.
- **"Mental Harassment"**: Includes insults, ridicule, humiliation, name-calling, and repeated threats of physical violence directed at a child.
- **"Penal Offence"**: Refers to offences punishable under the law by corporal punishment and/or fines, as defined and punishable under the Indian Penal Code, 1860, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, or any other relevant law.

- **"Physical Violence"**: Includes acts or conduct that cause bodily pain, harm, or danger to a child's life, limb, or health, impairing their development.
- **"Bullying" or "Ragging"**: Constitutes any disruptive conduct, whether verbal, written, or physical, that teases, mistreats, or causes psychological harm or fear to a student, particularly a junior or newcomer.
- **"Sexual Assault"**: Has the meaning assigned to it in Section 7 of the POCSO Act, 2012.
- **"Sexual Harassment"**: Has the meaning assigned to it in Section 11 of the POCSO Act, 2012.
- **"Stalking"**: Refers to following a child, attempting to contact them despite their lack of interest, or monitoring the child through electronic means.

Offences and other Acts covered under this CPP

The following offences and acts are grounds for filing a complaint under this Child Protection Policy (CPP):

- a) Cyber Bullying
- b) Cyber Stalking
- c) Mental Harassment
- d) Penal Offences
- e) Physical Violence
- f) Ragging / Bullying
- g) Sexual Assault
- h) Sexual Harassment
- i) Stalking

The definitions of these acts are provided in the Definitions section. It is important to note that these offences and acts are not mutually exclusive; they may overlap and will be addressed collectively as needed.

COMPLAINT OF AN OFFENCE

Complaints regarding any offence or inappropriate behaviour involving a child can be submitted in writing to the Chairperson (President), a Senior Staff Member (Director), or the Project Director.

The management of the organisation will address all complaints concerning inappropriate behaviour or communication with a child. However, it is the responsibility of the management to determine whether the reported behaviour or action constitutes a violation of the Code of Conduct or the Child Protection Policy, based on the facts and circumstances of each case. The findings and decisions made by the organisation's management will be final.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The organisation is committed to ensuring that honesty, integrity, and respect for each child are reflected in both organisational decisions and the conduct of its personnel. This Code of Conduct applies to all staff and work associates, including permanent, part-time, temporary staff, consultants, and volunteers.

Personnel Should:

1. Respect each child's privacy and dignity at all times.
2. Maintain visibility and avoid secluded areas when interacting with children at the workplace.
3. Foster an open environment where children feel comfortable expressing their concerns and issues.
4. Value and encourage children's voices and opinions.
5. Involve children in decisions that affect their lives, ensuring they are informed.
6. Communicate any steps being taken regarding interventions that affect the child.
7. Protect the child's identity and keep it confidential within the team and relevant duty bearers.
8. Refrain from disclosing the child's identity to the media.
9. Educate children about their rights and issues related to abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
10. Ensure that staff members of the same sex are present when escorting or caring for children.

Additionally, Personnel Should:

1. Show affection, care, and understanding towards the needs of children.
2. Be responsive to any special needs, such as health issues or emotional support.
3. Demonstrate accountability to prevent and address poor practices or abusive behaviour.

4. Report any suspicious behaviour or suspected abuse immediately, as it is a criminal offence to conceal or assist in such incidents.
5. Treat all children with respect, irrespective of their race, gender, language, religion, nationality, ethnicity, disability, or other status.
6. Comply with all relevant Indian and State legislation concerning child protection.

Personnel Should Also:

1. Be aware of and manage any situations that may pose risks.
2. Organise work and the workplace to minimise risks.
3. Maintain an open, non-defensive attitude towards discussing issues or concerns.
4. Encourage a culture of mutual accountability to address and challenge potentially abusive behaviour.
5. Create an environment where children feel comfortable discussing their interactions with staff and others.
6. Respect each child's boundaries and help them understand their rights and options if they feel there is a problem.

Personnel Should Not:

1. Spend excessive time alone with children away from others.
2. Engage in any form of physical assault or abuse towards children.
3. Use discriminatory, abusive, or hurtful language with children.
4. Develop relationships with children that could be deemed exploitative or abusive.
5. Store or show obscene or pornographic material to children.
6. Browse, publish, or transmit sexually explicit material involving children.
7. Create, share, or distribute electronic material depicting children in an obscene or sexually explicit manner.
8. Display or discuss sexual content or take inappropriate photographs of children.
9. Behave in a sexually suggestive or inappropriate manner towards children.
10. Engage in or condone any illegal, unsafe, or abusive behaviour towards children.
11. Use physical punishment on children.
12. Engage in behaviours that shame, humiliate, or degrade children, or any form of emotional abuse.
13. Discriminate against or show favouritism towards specific children.
14. Stigmatise or humiliate a child.
15. Act in a manner that puts the child at risk.
16. Engage in physical contact or communication with a child that could be perceived as a violation of boundaries or make the child or others uncomfortable.
17. Conduct investigations into allegations or suspicions of illegal or inappropriate behaviour; such matters must be reported to supervisors or the child protection coordinator.

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

The Child Protection Policy (CPP) will undergo a thorough annual review to ensure its alignment with contemporary standards and societal changes.

Actions outlined in the CPP, such as reporting criminal offences to law enforcement, seeking legal counsel, and enforcing disciplinary measures, will be executed by a designated committee or Senior Staff Members appointed by the Organisation's Management.

The Management or a designated committee reserves the right to revise or amend this CPP as necessary to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.

DISSEMINATION OF THIS CPP

A copy of this CPP will be provided to all staff members. Each staff member is required to acknowledge receipt of the CPP, confirm that they have read and understood its contents, and agree to adhere to its provisions.