



# **PRAKSIS NGO**

## **“POLICY ON CHILD SAFEGUARDING”**

## **I. GENERAL**

PRAKSIS' main goal is the elimination of social and economic exclusion of vulnerable groups of people and the protection of their personal and social rights. In this context, protection of vulnerable groups, including child protection, is a fundamental principle of the organization.

The purpose of this policy and the procedures described herein is to provide a framework for the services provided so that the children we come into contact (either directly or indirectly) are truly protected and their wellbeing is promoted, and that our actions while implementing programs or activities do not cause them any harm.

PRAKSIS' Child Safeguarding policy concerns all those involved in our field work, i.e. volunteers, collaborators, as well as those who, in the present policy, are referred as "colleagues" and who are required to act in a specific manner that ensures the protection of children's fundamental rights on a daily basis.

All colleagues are expected to be guided and follow the terms of the present policy. If any colleague has any doubt whatsoever regarding his / her conduct, or another colleague's way of conduct, he/she is advised to address to the appointed management team for Sexual Exploitation & Abuse and Child Safeguarding issues (SEA & Ch. S. Management Team). The appointed team consists of PRAKSIS' Programs' Director, Health Department's Director and the Head of Protection Issues. The appointed management team is responsible to inform the Management Board for Code of Conduct Violation Issues.

The management of all violations of the Code of Conduct is appointed to the Managing Board, which consists of the General Director, the Coordinator of the Legal Service, and the Director of Human Resources. The Managing Board informs accordingly PRAKSIS' Administrative Board for all issues that arise in this context.

## **II. DEFINITIONS**

### **1. Child Safeguarding**

It is the responsibility of an organization to ensure that colleagues, operations and implementing projects do not cause harm to children; meaning that they do not expose children to the risk of harm or abuse in any sense, and that any concerns that the organization has about children's safety within the community are reported to the competent authorities. This includes both preventative actions to minimize the chances of harm occurring, as well as responsive actions in order to ensure

that any incidents that may happen, are appropriately handled. Safeguarding implies a wider duty of care towards children rather than just upholding their right to protection, but it is primarily concerned with harm and wellbeing, rather than with the promotion and protection of child rights generally.

## **2. Child or children**

A human being below the age of eighteen (18) years.

## **3. Child abuse**

Anything which, individuals and/or institutions and/or legal entities and/or processes do or fail to do, which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood. That might include physical, emotional / psychological and sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment, violence and exploitation in all forms.

- a. Physical abuse: the use of physical force that causes actual or likely physical injury or suffering (e.g. hitting, shaking, burning, throwing or otherwise causing physical harm to a child).
- b. Emotional abuse: any direct or indirect humiliating or degrading treatment (e.g. insults/ bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation). Any such behavior may cause severe and long lasting effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, valued only so far as they meet the needs of another person or age / developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children or causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger.
- c. Neglect / negligent treatment: persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and / or psychological needs (e.g. failing to provide adequate food, clothing and / or shelter; failing to prevent harm; failing to ensure adequate supervision; or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment).
- d. Sexual abuse: all forms of sexual violence, including incest, early and forced marriage, rape, involvement in pornography and sexual slavery. Child sexual abuse also may include indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child and showing children pornographic material. It also involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities (physical contact, including penetrating or non-penetrative acts), whether or not the child is aware of what is happening or gives consent.
- e. Sexual exploitation: any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially

or politically from the sexual exploitation of another person(s). This includes exchange of assistance due to children benefiting from PRAKSIS programs. The sexual exploitation of a child who is under the age of consent is child sexual abuse and a criminal offence. The sexual exploitation of a child who is under the age of consent constitutes a sexual abuse and is criminally punishable.

### **III. PRINCIPLES**

In order to safeguard children, all colleagues must respect and promote children's rights. Above all they must protect the right of each child to live in safety, without risk of abuse or exploitation and they must act, at all times, in the child's best interests. The following Core Principles must be adhered to by all colleagues:

1. Children must be treated with respect and equally, regardless of their age, sex, gender, language, religion, opinion or nationality, ethnic or social origin, status, class, caste, sexual orientation or any other personal characteristics.
2. Children shall be assisted and encouraged to take part in decisions that concern them, according to their age and their level of maturity, as well as in the context of preserving child's autonomy (do not do things that the child can do for himself / herself).
3. A relationship based on good faith and trust shall be built both with children and their families-relatives-legal guardians.
4. Non-violent and positive behavior shall be used when interacting with children.
5. Children shall be informed on their right to report any worrying situations and empower them to protect themselves from any harm and/or abuse.
6. In all sessions that take place with children, it shall be ensured that another adult is present – when possible –, or be visibly available when in contact with a child.
7. Activities shall be undertaken in such a way that minimize the risk of harm, whilst taking into account the age, needs and developmental level of participants.
8. Information concerning children and their families remains confidential.
9. Permission shall be obtained from children and their parent's or legal guardian(s) for any material to be used for communication purposes (photographs, video, interview etc.) as well as in order to ensure that each child does not pose in a degrading manner or in a way that may be interpreted by others as having sexual connotations.
10. Any suspicions or allegations to the Ch. S. Management Team for any behavior, which goes against the principles of the present Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct, including any form of child abuse, shall be immediately reported according to the procedures of each specific context.

11. Colleagues are considered responsible for maintaining their proper, high quality professional skills when working directly or indirectly with children.

**In the same context it is of significant importance all colleagues to abstain from all below described behaviors that may directly or indirectly not safeguard children in general.**

12. It is forbidden to engage in any form of sexual relations with anyone under eighteen (18) years old. Any false estimate as to the child's true age is certainly not an excuse whatsoever.
13. It is forbidden to exchange money, job, goods or services or any form of humanitarian aid for sexual favors, or subject the child to any other kind of humiliating, degrading or abusive behavior.
14. It is forbidden to touch children or use language or make suggestions in an inappropriate manner, to provoke, harass, degrade or abuse children or show disrespect for their cultural practices.
15. It is forbidden to exploit children for labour.
16. Any kind of discrimination against children shall be avoided, and it is forbidden to favour children unequally or unfairly, e.g. by favoritism and excluding others.
17. It is forbidden to invite a child or its relatives to his / her home or develop a relationship with a child and / or its family, which may be considered outside normal professional conduct.
18. It is forbidden to transport a child alone without the prior authorization of the respective coordinator, unless absolutely necessary for the safety of the child.
19. It is forbidden to work with children whilst under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
20. It is forbidden to take photos or videos of children for any use that is not strictly professional, to publish any material which may endanger the child or use any material that has not been approved by the PRAKSIS' Administrative Board, or post unofficial pictures or information about children on personal websites or social networks.
21. It is forbidden to keep contact with children and their families via social networks and post any material (photos or texts) on such webpages.
22. It is forbidden to watch, publish, produce or share pornographic material showing children, and / or show pornographic material to children.
23. It is forbidden to present children who are particularly vulnerable as victims (e.g. weak, powerless, unassisted, desperate etc.).
24. All instances of suspected violation or violation of the Safeguarding Policy shall be reported accordingly and immediately.

#### IV. COMMITMENTS

PRAKSIS is dedicated to fulfilling the Core Principles through implementation of the following commitments.

1. Incorporate PRAKSIS' standards on child safeguarding in all relevant codes of conduct and induction materials and trainings for PRAKSIS' colleagues. Also, it shall ensure that all colleagues have given their signed commitment to Child Safeguarding Policy and to all relevant formal material where the policy is incorporated, such as codes of conduct, internal regulations of operation etc., according to each specific context.
2. Integrate the issue of child safeguarding into the communication of PRAKSIS' colleagues with the beneficiary population, through the consent form given in the first interaction, the continuous, detailed explanation in both individual and group format, of their rights and child safeguarding rules of each specific context, throughout all types of support provision, in a language they understand and according to their age, maturity level and other individual characteristics.
3. Ensure that complaint mechanisms for reporting child abuse are easily accessible at all times. This includes the contact of any colleague with the SEA & Ch. S. Management Team for the direct reporting on suspicion or detection of signs of child abuse, the operation of the info@praksis.gr email address for reporting on any child abuse incidents both by colleagues and beneficiaries and the operation of complaint boxes accessible to beneficiary population in every PRAKSIS' structure.
4. Investigate allegations of child abuse in a timely and professional manner as well as take appropriate actions to protect persons from retaliation where allegations of child abuse are reported involving PRAKSIS' colleagues.
5. Act directly and appropriately, including legal action when required, against any colleague who commits child abuse. This may include administrative or disciplinary action, and / or referral to the relevant authorities for appropriate action.
6. Ensure that when photographing or filming a child, consent from the child as well as a consent form from the parent or legal guardian is obtained, explaining how the material will be used and ensure that images are genuine and honest representations of the context and the facts.
7. Ensure the provision of assistance for the victim and taking immediate steps to protect and support the child.
8. Ensure that sensitive information related to incidents of child abuse whether involving colleagues, beneficiaries or others in the community shall be shared only with enforcement authorities and

PRAKSIS colleagues of the appropriate function who have a need to know such information. Breach of the terms of this policy may put others at risk and will therefore result in disciplinary procedures.

9. Apply a safe recruitment procedure for people that may provide services directly or indirectly to children (this may include background checks, verification of qualifications, references from past employers or academic referees or the use of probation period in the beginning of the collaboration) .
10. Ensure that the necessary files and personal records of beneficiaries are stored in locked, safe places and secured databases, and access to them is subject to specific procedures and restrictions.