

Child Protection Policy

as adopted by SECS General Assembly on December 4th, 2010. Revised in May, 2020.

1. Introduction

SECS formulated as its Mission to be an NGO acting as an advocate and resource for universal and non-discriminatory access to high-quality and comprehensive reproductive health and sexuality information, education and services. SECS advocates for national strategies, policies and regulations respecting sexual and reproductive rights as human rights. Our mission is to encourage and enable children and young people to promote the holistic health, well-being and development of themselves, their families and their communities. We believe in children's active participation and in respecting their freedom of expression and communication. We believe that child protection is crucial to ensuring that children under 18 years of age have the rights, confidence and environment in which they can make choices, express their views and communicate effectively with other children and adults. Children cannot become empowered change agents to improve their lives and that of their families and communities if they are not safeguarded from abuse, discrimination and harm of any kind, be it physical, sexual, emotional or neglect.

SECS commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through prevention, reporting and response.

2. Definitions

Child

For the purposes of this policy, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a "child" is defined as anyone under the age of 18.

Child abuse

The present Child Protection Policy uses World Health Organization, definitions for child abuse. According to this definition "child abuse" or "maltreatment" constitutes "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival,

development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power”. Child abuse include several types of abuses. Physical abuse includes hurting or injuring a child, inflicting pain, poisoning, drowning or smothering. Sexual abuse includes direct or indirect sexual exploitation or corruption of children by involving them (or threatening to involve them) in inappropriate sexual activities. Emotional abuse includes repeatedly rejecting children, humiliating them or denying their worth and rights as human beings. Neglect represents the persistent lack of appropriate care of children, including love, stimulation, safety, nourishment, warmth, education, and medical attention. Discrimination, harassment and bullying are also abusive and can harm a child, both physically and emotionally

Child protection

A broad term to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies particularly to the duty of SECS and individuals associated with SECS towards children in their care.

Safeguarding

In this policy, safeguarding refers to IPPF's commitments to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm arising from coming into contact with IPPF.

Direct contact with children.

Direct contact with children

Being in the physical presence of a child or children in the context of SECS's work, whether contact is occasional or regular, short or long term. Under SECS's portfolio of activities this could involve delivering talks to schools and youth groups, training persons to provide sexual and reproductive health information, education and services, involve children in activities, supporting their participation in workshops, conferences etc. [N.B. this list of examples is not exhaustive].

Indirect contact with children

1) Having access to information on children in the context of SECS's work, such as children's names, locations (addresses of individuals or projects), photographs and case studies.

2) Providing support and partnering with organizations that work ‘directly’ with children.

Policy

A statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the SECS is taking its duty and responsibility of care seriously.

3. Core child protection principles and values

The legal basis

The present Child Protection Policy is developed in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed by Romania. This document provides a comprehensive framework for the protection, provision and participation of all children without discrimination to ensure their survival and development to the maximum extent possible. On the understanding that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child must be read as a whole, the following articles nevertheless form the specific basis of child protection:

- Art. 1 - definition of ‘child’,
- Art. 2 - nondiscrimination,
- Art. 3.1 - the best interests of the child,
- Art. 3.2 - duty of care and protection,
- Art. 3.3 - standards of care,
- Art. 6 - survival and development,
- Art. 12 - participation
- Art. 13 - freedom of expression,
- Art. 19 - protection from violence,
- Art. 25 - periodic review of placements,
- Art. 32, 33, 34, 36, 37(a) - protection from economic exploitation, substance abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, ‘all other forms of exploitation’; torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment),
- Art. 39 - physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration.

Moreover, this policy is in agreement with IPPF’s Safeguarding (children and vulnerable adults) Policy, modified and approved in November 2018.

Children's participation and empowerment.

SECS will advocate and work for creating a space where children learn, feel and able will be willing to speak out about sexual and reproductive rights and that will empower them to become actors in their own protection without further discrimination or shame. Children have the right to communication – to enable them to receive information, to ask questions, to make choices, and to make decisions. SECS believe that helping children to find a voice is an essential step to helping them to claim their individual rights. Children will only benefit from this policy if they are aware of their rights and are given the proper environment in which to exercise them.

Moreover, through empowerment we understand that decisions will be survivor (victim) led in that they will, wherever possible, be based on the informed consent of adult survivors (victims), and will respect the views of survivors (victims) who are children or adults who are unable to give informed consent. IPPF will endeavour to ensure that all its communications with survivors (victims) are in an appropriate language and format.

Prevention

It is better to take action before harm occurs. IPPF recognises the key role that prevention has in safeguarding and will ensure it develops and provides safe services which keep people safe from abuse and exploitation. This includes applying a safeguarding lens to promotional communications and fundraising activities and providing training and support in recognising abuse.

Taking it further

The principles promoted by the present Child Protection Policy should be reflected in the recruitment procedures, management structures, creation of a space for children to speak out, staff and volunteers training. Abuse must never be tolerated. All suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. Volunteers and staff (employed and external consultants) have a responsibility to report concerns according to approved protocols. Staff/volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.

4. Child Protection Policy

SECS has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in its activities from harm. All children have a right to protection and the needs of disabled children and others who may be

particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. SECS will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in activities organized by SECS through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by SECS General Assembly.

Volunteers, Staff and all other Personnel

As a condition of working with SECS, all volunteers, employees, officers, interns, researchers, consultants, and advisers that interact with children, are required to undergo the following:

1. Both acceptance of and commitment to SECS's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct for working with children.
2. Providing a Certificate of behavioral integrity, as stated, the obligation is provided in art 18 of Law 118/2019. This document will be treated with the same confidentiality as all other personal documents.
3. Present a valid identification document.

Management

Corina Bimbașa is SECS designated Child Protection Officer and she is responsible for the day-to-day implementation, supervision and monitoring of the Child Protection Policy in SECS. The disclosure of personal information about children, including legal cases, will be limited to those employees, contractors, Executive Council members, officers, interns and volunteers who need to know. The SECS Executive Council will have the overall responsibility to oversee and ensure the policy's implementation.

Training and Education

Training and education are essential to implementing the Child Protection Policy. The Child Protection Officer will ensure that orientation training about the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct is given to all volunteers, staff and personnel, which will include training on behavior guidelines for those in direct contact with children, and guidance on the acceptable and unacceptable sharing of information on children.

Behavior Protocols

Any volunteer, staff member, intern, researcher, consultant or adviser who has direct contact with children in relation with SECS activities will be fully informed of SECS Code of Conduct

in relation with children. The Code of Conduct includes guidance on appropriate behavior of adults towards children and of children towards children.

Communications about Children

All publications and the websites that include images and texts related to children will not contain the following:

- Manipulated or sensationalized text and/or images
- Discriminatory and degrading language
- Images in which children are inappropriately clothed
- Information that could be used to identify the location of the child and cause them to be put at risk

Photos of children that will be included on the website or any of our publications must be taken with the parent's or legal tutor's signed permission (according with the GDPR national legislation). In addition, all information relating to children is limited to those members of staff who need to know and will be treated as confidential.

Prevention

The Executive Director and the designated Child Protection Officer will ensure all staff have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this Policy.

Ensure all staff have read, understood and adhere to the Code of Conduct and further safeguarding guidance within the Safeguarding Manual.

Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and associated personnel.

Ensure staff receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organization but, at a minimum, ensure that all volunteers, trustees and staff are aware that abuse, neglect and exploitation are not to be tolerated and that all concerns will be recorded and heard, and are also aware of how any such concerns may be reported and to whom.

Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by an SECS staff member or associated personnel to IPPF's Global Incident Reporting Unit or to local Unit of Report.

Reporting Incidents

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in SECS in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities. All witnessed, suspected or alleged violations of the Child Protection Policy will be immediately reported to the designated Child Protection Officer, who will record and act on these in a confidential manner in accordance with the standardized process approved by SECS Executive Council and the best interests of the child. SECS will take appropriate action to protect the child/children in question from further harm and others in the organization during and following an incident or allegation.

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the SECS Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

The SECS Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police.

The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.

The relevant contact details for child protection services, local social services department, police, emergency medical help and help lines will also be readily available and easily accessible.

SECS will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the *SECS* Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the relevant the Executive Director who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

External Reporting Service – IPPF SafeReport

SECS will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns in the form of IPPF SafeReport are made available and promoted to staff and the communities we work with.

Ramifications of Misconduct

SECS will immediately suspend any volunteers, staff, adviser, consultant, intern who is alleged to have violated the Child Protection Policy, pending the outcome of an investigation. SECS reserves the right to take any disciplinary action against any of the above who have been proven guilty in an investigation, which may include reporting the incident to the police.

Response

SECS will:

Follow up on safeguarding reports and concerns promptly and according to IPPF's Safeguarding (Children & Vulnerable Adults) Policy and procedures, and local legal and statutory obligations.

Apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found in breach of either the Safeguarding (Children & Vulnerable Adults) Policy or the Code of Conduct.

Ensure that responses are survivor (victim) focused, keeping the needs of the survivor (victim) at the forefront of any investigation process.

Offer support to survivors (victims) of harm caused by staff or anyone associated with IPPF, regardless of whether a formal investigation is carried out. An up to date list of local organizations and contacts offering support must be made available to survivors (victims) (or, in the case of children, to their parent or guardian) which should include, but not be limited to, information about legal, counselling, medical and psychosocial support. Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor (victim).

Ensure that appropriate confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the incident and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times, in line with IPPF's Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policy. Confidentiality should prioritize the survivor rather than the alleged perpetrator and must never be used as an excuse for not responding to a concern.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a **need to know** basis only. This includes the following people:

- SECS Child Protection Officer
- the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- the person making the allegation
- social services/police
- SECS Executive Director

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

The protection of personal data is ensured by SECS, through implementing and complying with Directive (EU) 2016/680, which entered into force on 5 May 2016 and was transposed into national legislation by Law no. 363/2018 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the competent authorities for the purpose of preventing, detecting, investigating, prosecuting and combating crime or the execution of penalties, educational and security measures, and on the free movement of such data.

Providing information to police or social services

Information about suspected abuse must be accurate and a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. It should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.

- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioral changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.

Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

Statement of Commitment to the Child-to-Child Child Protection Policy

I, _____, have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this Child Protection Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing child protection policies and practice while associated with the Society for Education on Contraception and Sexuality. I further understand that adherence to SECS Child Protection Policy will involve the following: provide a Certificate of behavioral integrity, released by the local police and a valid identification document.

(Print name)

(Job title/role)

(Signature)

(Date)