

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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A. ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

1. Mission - To create an enabling environment for women and girls by equipping the society with knowledge, life skills and capability development.
2. Vision. A society where women and girls enjoy equal rights and entitlements.
3. About Anahat For Change Foundation- We are a youth-led and youth-run organization working in the space of women empowerment through skill building and livelihood generation with sustainability at its core. We work with urban and rural communities on awareness regarding personal safety education programs, sexual reproductive health rights, menstrual health and hygiene and capacity development by engaging local partners and community leaders. We work with adolescent girls and boys in schools to create a gender sensitive school environment and build confidence among the students. Anahat has received several awards for their work in the field of menstrual hygiene promotion in India.

B. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1. According to the convention on the rights of the child (CRC), a child is a person who has not attained the age of 18 years unless under the relevant applicable law to the child, majority is attained earlier. In the context of Anahat, a child is being benefited from our various programs in Murshidabad, Alipurduar and other field areas in West Bengal & India.
 2. Child protection is a term that describes policies, standards, and practices that seek to protect children from harm- physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual or any other negligence. Harm can be caused by child supervisors, care workers, project facilitators and volunteers who are directly working with children. It may also include staff who may not be involved directly with childcare but working in the organization; and visitors, outsiders who come in contact with children.
 3. The main purpose of the policy is to protect children from all forms of harm and create an enabling environment. It is also a tool to enhance the commitment of the organization to provide a child friendly environment through sensitizing persons associated and enforcing the policy. It is expected that the policy will also work as a tool to protect staff and the organization from risks associated with being in contact with children.
 4. Therefore, this policy is meant for all staff members, team members and volunteers who work with or for the children. The above people are expected to show commitment to the policy and follow the guidelines and procedures of the child protection policy in their involvement with Anahat.
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5. The broad objective of the policy is to set minimum standards and procedures on child protection that seek to ensure that the volunteers, trainer, facilitators and supervisors of Anahat maintain a safe environment for children while implementing projects in schools. Specifically the policy seeks to protect children from abuse and exploitation by encouraging good practice among staff members and preventing behaviour that may be abusive to children.

C. POLICY GUIDELINES

1. Child abuse prevention policy in schools, communities where Anahat's Personal Safety Education Programme, School programs, Project Unnati and Project Udaan are implemented.
 - a. Child abuse is a state of emotional, physical, economic and sexual maltreatment meted out to a person below the age of eighteen and is a globally prevalent phenomenon.
 - b. Child abuse has serious physical and psycho-social consequences which adversely affect the health and overall well-being of a child.
 - c. The "Child Abuse prevention policy" is being adopted in Anahat to prevent child abuse and to deal with incidents of child abuse, if any, in its institutions.
 2. In this policy, unless the context otherwise requires: "Child Abuse" (source of reference: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India) means:
 - a. Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is the inflicting of physical injury upon a child. This may include burning, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating or otherwise harming a child.
 - b. Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual behaviour with a child. It includes fondling a child's genitals, making the child fondle the adult's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism, sexual exploitation and also non-touch sexual abuse like showing pornography, photos or exhibition of genitals or private parts or sending messages with
 - c. Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse is also known as verbal abuse, mental abuse, and psychological maltreatment. It includes acts or the failure to act, by teachers or caretakers that have caused or could cause, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental trauma. This can include facilitators/trainers using extreme and/or bizarre forms of punishment, such as confinement in a closet or dark room or being tied to a chair for long periods of time or threatening or terrorizing a child. Less severe acts, but no less damaging, are belittling or rejecting treatment, using derogatory terms to describe the child.
 3. Staff Recruitment Procedure
 - a. Employees with direct or regular contact with children shall undergo a screening procedure to check for any child abuse related or any other heinous crime record.
 - b. Two employment references should be taken up for applicants before appointment to post. These include (wherever possible) an employer who can comment on the applicant's work with children.
 - c. During recruitment and induction that the candidate should be clearly told that a child protection policy exists and he/she shall be required to be abiding by it.
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- d. Along with the appointment letter a copy of the child protection policy shall be given to the new employee to read and go through it. While signing and executing the Employment Contract the Employee declares and agrees that he/she has read the Child Policy and has understood the same and shall abide by the same at all count.
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4. Awareness and training given to the all representatives receive training and contextualised support in order to prevent, report, and respond to safeguarding concerns.Representatives are made aware of the expectation to comply with this policy.Children and their families will be made aware of the standards of behaviour they can expect from our representatives and of how they can raise a concern.
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5. Guidelines on corporal punishment
 - a. Guidelines to be implemented in schools, tuition centers, non-formal school, playschools, crèches or any other institutions where education or learning are being impacted by employees of Anahat:
 - b. Children are not to be subjected to corporal punishment and steps to be ensured that they receive education in an environment of freedom and dignity, free from fear.
 - c. Corporal punishment involves, rapping on the knuckles, running on the school ground, kneeling down for hours, standing up for long hours, sitting like a chair, and beaten with a scale, pinched and slapped, child sexual abuse, torture, locking up children alone in classrooms, ‘electric shock’ and all other acts leading to insult, humiliation, physical and mental injury, and even death.
 - d. All children are to be informed through campaigns and publicity drives that they have a right to speak against corporal punishment and bring it to the notice of the authorities. They must be given confidence to make complaints and not to accept punishment as a ‘normal’ activity of the school.
 - e. Every event conducted by Anahat in schools must have a forum where children can express their views.
 - f. Anahat will keep a separate box in the program schools and in program offices which particularly deal with children & adolescents where the beneficiaries can drop their complaints. Every month the complaints will be collected by team members of Anahat and the complaints will be addressed.
 - g. Parents as well as children are to be empowered to speak out against corporal punishment without any fear that it would have adverse effect on children’s participation in awareness sessions.
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6. Communication about Children
 - a. In its communication and fundraising strategy, Anahat may use images and recordings of children and field texts. Anahat has a responsibility towards the children that are portrayed and should ensure that children are treated with dignity as human beings with rights, by avoiding the following:
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- b. Inaccurate representation of children through words and images
- c. Communication that shames, degrades or victimizes children
- d. Taking pictures or statements from children without informed consent. Anahat will collect consent forms signed by respective principals of schools for usage of photographs from the school.
- e. Depicting children in sexually provocative poses

D. Enquiry of Complaint and Proceedings

1. Complaint - A complaint can be made by the victim, the child's legal guardian, any employee of Anahat or any other authorized person on this behalf on a reasonable cause and belief. In the event any employee of Anahat coming across or overhearing any instance of violation of this policy shall immediately lodge a complaint.
2. A complaint has to be lodged with your immediate superior in writing (in the event the complainant is not able to write then the immediate superior shall assist the complainant in writing the complaint in the presence of an independent witness) with a copy marked to the Director of Anahat.
3. A complaint may be against
 - a. An employee or
 - b. Against a person who is not an employee
 - c. Against an employee and a person who is not an employee.
4. In the event the complaint is against a person who is not an employee or against an employee and a person who is not an employee, the CAO shall immediately register or cause to be registered a complaint at the nearest police station to the place where the incident has been alleged to have taken place.
5. On receiving a complaint against an employee, whether written or verbal, of any instance of child abuse involving Anahat, the Director shall
 - a. place the concerned employee under suspension (hereinafter known as the "Defendant") till the Committee (as defined here in below) submits its report, so as to protect the Complainant and witnesses against victimization and discrimination and mental or physical distress. And then
 - b. constitute a "Committee of Enquiry" (hereinafter referred to as the "Committee") to enquire into the complaint within 7 days of receiving the said Complaint.
6. Instituting the Committee of Enquiry:
 - a. The Committee, comprising of not less than three persons (two of which shall be women and further at least one of the Committee members shall not be an employee of Anahat).
The Committee for 2024 will constitute :
 - Director – Purvi Tanwani
 - Member – Namrata Karamchandani
 - Member – Deblina Chatterjee
 - External member – Sanjina Gupta
 The committee will be reviewed and renewed after every one year.

Code of Conduct for Staff/ Outside visitors

Anahat is committed to ensuring all children are safe and protected. The safety, rights, and well-being of children participating in our programs is a priority in our daily operations. The intent of this Child Protection Policy is to guide every stakeholder of Anahat in developing appropriate relationships with the children we work with, thus ensuring a safe environment for them. This policy based on relevant laws aims to protect children from intentional and unintentional harm or abuse.

Here are the top Dos and Don'ts with respect to children we work with.

Dos:

- You must treat every child with empathy and respect, regardless of his / her race, color, gender, sexuality, language, religion, religious belief, heritage, political or another opinion, national/ethnic/social origin/disability/birth / another status.
- Do listen to children and respect their views.
- Do seek permission from Authorised persons if you wish to visit a programme location apart from your stipulated time.
- Dress appropriately.
- Always ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.
- You shall take children for outings only in groups and with prior permission from authorised persons.
- Ensure the responsible use of computers and other information technology.
- Keep data about the children confidential and refrain from sharing it with any third party without the consent of Authorised persons.
- Report any violations of the policy in letter or spirit to the Care Committee.
- All actions will be under the ambit of The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Don'ts:

- Don't use language or behavior towards children that are inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, or culturally inappropriate.
- Don't use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a child.
- Do not embarrass any child and engage in any activity that threatens the self-esteem of the child, like shouting or being sarcastic or putting them down, etc. Do not take/collect photos, videos, or stories of children and/or upload the same online or on any social networking sites without prior permission from the Authorised persons.
- Don't share your mobile phones with children for purposes other than teaching/learning.
- Don't use technology for inappropriate usage, especially that relating to the creation, viewing, downloading, or distribution of any inappropriate or offensive material, including, but not restricted to, abusive images of children, pornography or material encouraging crime, violence, terrorism, racism, sexism, self-harm, suicide, cruelty and gambling.
- Do not develop, encourage, induce, or support arrangements with children that could be deemed sexual, exploitative, or abusive.
- Do not use or encourage children to run personal errands in any form that may be construed as exploiting the relationship with the child for personal purposes.

- Don't use or encourage the use of alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, or other intoxicating substances while in the vicinity of children and refrain from providing such intoxicating substances to children.
- Do not give cash or gifts to children in a personal capacity.
- Do not place a child at risk of abuse or exploitation or be aware of these and not report it or not do anything about it.
- Don't bring individuals, who are not registered with Anahat, to any programme location without prior permission from authorised persons.
- Do not place oneself in a compromising or vulnerable situation when meeting with children.

Role of Care Committee

Anahat has Zero tolerance towards child abuse and will remove any person whose behaviour is found not in adherence to this policy.

If you come across any violation of the above policy by anyone contact Anahat's CARE committee via info@anahatngo.org

Definitions

Child abuse or maltreatment means all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results 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. (*According to WHO Factsheet on Child Maltreatment retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-maltreatment>*)

Scope – Who does this policy cover: Any Volunteers, fellows, interns, tutors, coordinators, Change Drivers, leads, facilitators, employees, consultants, members of the board, participants etc.

Where is this policy applicable: Any location but not limited to an office, school, shelter home, center, event site, external location etc.

When is this policy applicable: Any activity but not limited to during programme, session, event times; while commuting to programme locations; or outside programme timings.

Authorised Persons:

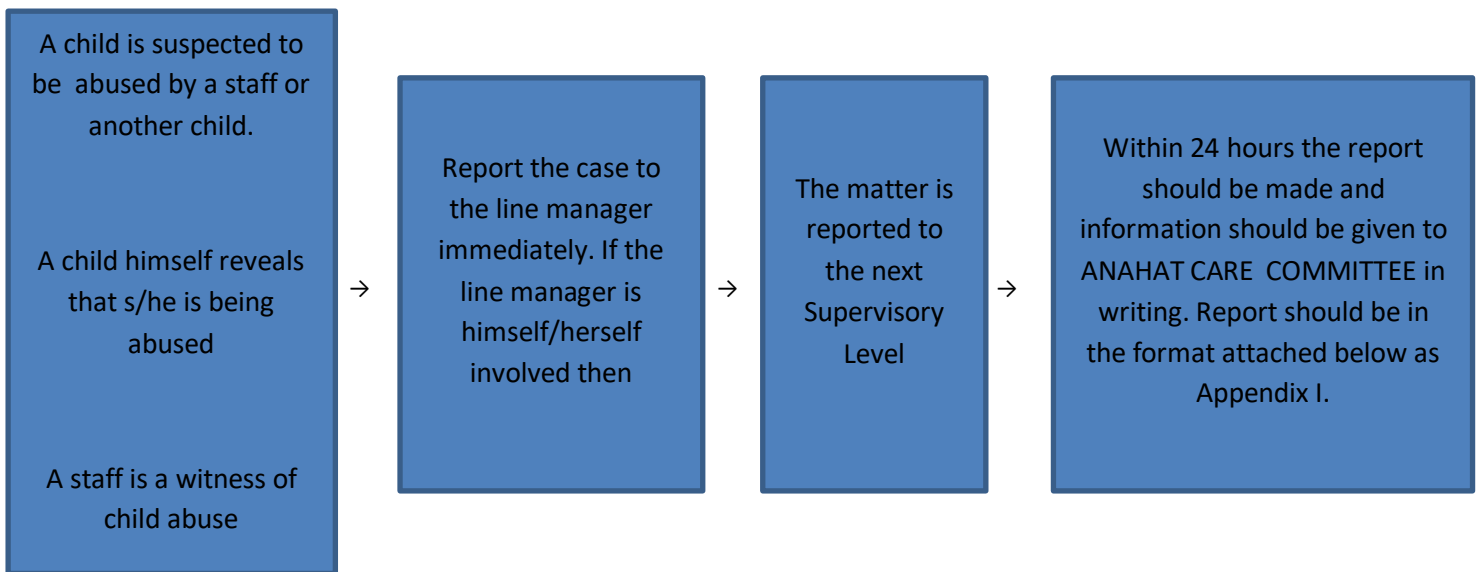
S.No	Requesting body	Authorising Person
1	Fellow, Facilitator	Programme Manager & School Principal
2	Volunteer	Project Coordinator or Chapter Support Team & Centre Management (POCs, warden)
3	Interns, Employees, Consultants	Manager
4	Tutors	Programme Associates
5	Participants	Event Coordinators & Chapter Support Team or Programme Associate

Laws:

While this code of conduct is voluntary, the laws of India supersede this code and Anahat will report to the concerned authorities whenever those laws are breached. Some of the laws including (but not limited to) guidelines, rules, and conventions based on which this code is rooted

1. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO)
2. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015
3. Guidelines for Organization, Institutions and Establishments – National Child Protection Policy; Ministry of Women and Child Development
4. Manual on Safety and Security of Children in Schools by NCPCR

Reporting Mechanism



- ANAHAT's Child Protection Committee will carry out the process assuring maximum confidentiality.
- Even before the investigation starts, the suspected staff will be barred any contact with children.
- ANAHAT's Child Care Committee will investigate the matter (Conduct investigation with the alleged staff, witness and the child)
- ANAHAT's Child Care Committee will take the decision accordingly and place it before the Director/Deputy Director.
- ANAHAT's Child Care Committee must process the case within 3 days/ 72 hours
- In case the offence is proved, strict actions will be taken by the committee members adhering to the provisions of the relevant laws, which includes termination of an employee as well as informing the police.
- In case of sexual offences against children, the matter will be dealt as per the provisions of the POCSO Act 2012

Appendix III

Planning safe activities with children Checklist			
Event	Yes/No	Comments	Action taken
Is the event considered Dangerous			
Is the location of the area safe for a child (whether there is the presence of any pool, or water side, or fire prone areas			
Is the venue appropriate to accommodate the said number of children			
Are basic facilities like toilets, safe drinking water, electricity etc., available for children			
Is the venue well maintained / hygienic / child friendly enough to conduct the activities			
What is the ratio of adults to children?. Are all the members aware of ANAHAT Child Protection Policy?			
Has a team leader / point person been designated			
Are first aid facilities available for a child (in case of sudden cuts, stomach aches or other health problems)			
Are telephone facilities available			