

Child Protection Policy



Created on: July 2016

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Introduction about the organization

Sol's ARC is a registered non-profit organisation established in 2003, under the Charitable Trust Act of Mumbai, working towards transforming education. We conduct innovative education research to build inclusive learning content, ensuring every child can learn and that our innovation will reach the last mile.

Need for Child Protection Policy

Scope of Policy

The scope of this policy covers the responsibility of;

- A. The management, school authorities, interns, volunteers towards safety and protection of children;
 - 1. Within centre premises during school hours and non-working days, if any applicable.
 - 2. Within centre premises during remedial hours
 - 3. In relation to transportation organized by the school and private transport service provider to the extent possible.
 - 4. Events organized by school management at locations other than centre premise or when students represent schools in other events outside on behalf of Sol's Arc.
 - 5. At locations such as schools, centers, institutions of Partner(s)/ Partner Organisations
- B. The vendors, partners, sponsors, funding agencies, suppliers who directly or indirectly associate with the children.
- C. Any person visiting the centre and accessing the premises.

Guiding Principles

The Child Protection Policy espouses the principles enshrined in the UNCRC² and the Constitution of India.

“All children and young people, regardless of their class, caste, race, creed, parentage, lineage, religion, faith, sex, disability, ethnic origin and sexual orientation have a right to protection from harm and maltreatment.”

² United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children

Sol's Arc shall;

1. Treat children and young people with special needs, with care, respect and dignity.
2. Leave no child out and will adopt an attitude of inclusiveness at all times.
3. Recognise that those working for the organization shall be perceived by children as trusted persons.
4. Ensure that the communication with children and young people with special needs is open, clear and interactive, where children wish to share their thoughts.
5. Assess the risks posed to children when undertaking activities and identify preventive ways to manage the same.
6. Sol's Arc will ensure that all communication regarding children and their families or caregivers portrays them with dignity and respect.
7. Ensure staff avoids any kind of physical contact with the children and adults with special needs, except for reasons of training, health and safety.
8. Respond to any allegations raised, appropriately and timely. Institute an appropriate inquiry and disciplinary process.
9. Annually conduct a Child Protection session for all existing employees wherein the policy is revisited and discussed.
10. Involve students/ children with special needs, wherever necessary, to take their opinions into consideration.
11. Review and update the policy once in two years.
12. Zero tolerance to any form of child abuse whether direct or indirect.

The staff of Sol's Arc shall;

1. Get themselves thoroughly familiarized with the Policy. Ignorance of the policy on any grounds shall not be acceptable as an excuse for inappropriate/ unacceptable behavior/ actions.
2. Ensure all important stakeholders are aware of the policy.
3. Protect the child's welfare as a priority.
4. Copy of the Child Protection Policy is available with the organisation at all times – both soft copy as well as printed copy.

Legal Framework

To ensure delivery of the constitutional safeguards and the commitment to the UNCRC, the Government of India has enacted several legislative measures for protection of children in general. While all of them

encompass provisions for protection or safeguards from some form of violence or abuse, the key child legislations in the context of protection of children are the following;

1. The Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection) of Children Act 2000 and Amendment Act 2006 (JJA)
2. The Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act 2005
3. The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE)
4. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012 (POSCO)
5. The Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013

Children with disabilities are specially covered under the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995.

Objectives

1. To promote a safe and positive environment in school, transportation vehicles, programs and field projects, conducive for learning and development for children with special needs at its main centre as well as franchisees.
2. To provide clear aspects on safety and protection of children and the measures taken for ensuring the same.
3. Create a physically, mentally, psychologically and technologically safe environment for children who are the beneficiaries of Sol's Arc.
4. To encourage children's participation wherever possible and appropriate.
5. To define roles and responsibilities and accountability of school authorities and other stakeholders
6. To enable staff and others recognize signs of abuse or situation when a child may require protection and help; and importantly enable them to report or bring to the notice of the concerned authority for immediate action
7. To set in place mechanisms for monitoring and review of the implementation of the child protection standards.
8. Promote the best interests of children at all times: In case of any conflict of interest between the various stakeholders involved either directly or indirectly with the children, the interest of the organization will be committed to protect the best interests of the children.

Definitions

1. Child: Any person, male or female, below the age of 18, as evidenced by relevant birth certificate or in cases where birth certificate is not available, medically ascertained by competent authorities.
2. Student: Any person with special needs, who is undergoing remedial training for the purpose of functional education.
3. Special Needs: Special needs children include those with movement, speech, visual, hearing, learning/ intellectual, hidden and multiple impairment who are made disabled by being discriminated against and excluded. Children with mild impairments can be severely disabled by lack of access to their basic needs and rights.
4. Staff: Any member, part-time, full-time or consultant who is functioning in full capacity, for a salary, honorarium, remuneration, fees, contract amount, or any other financial consideration. Such members could be the Principal, Teachers, Remedial Educators, Trainers, Support Staff, Bus in charge, drivers.
5. Beneficiaries: Those persons, especially with special needs who avail of the services offered by Sol's Arc either directly or indirectly. They also can be persons who are affected by the programs, projects and interventions carried out by the organisation, both directly and indirectly.
6. Volunteer: Any person, who has chosen out of his/her own willingness, to extend help in any programmatic or non-programmatic areas of the organisation's operations, without any remuneration whatsoever.
7. Intern: Any person (including non-Indians) who is studying (college/university), extending help to the organization, with an aim to complete an internship and achieve academic grades for the same, with/without any remuneration whatsoever.
8. Partners: Organisations or individuals who associate with Sol's Arc towards achievement of the common vision/goal, based on a clear MOU or contract, such undersigned by both/ all parties involved.
9. Resource Person: Any person who has been hired, to facilitate any educational or other activities for children.
10. Sponsor/ Donor: Any person (individual or representative) supporting the structure, activities or programs of the organization either monetarily or non-monetarily.
11. Stakeholders: Refer to all internal and external individuals, agencies, institutions, etc who are directly associated with Sol's Arc and impact the services and social change of the organization.
12. Corporal Punishment: The use of physical force with the intention of causing a child pain for the purpose of correction of behavior.

13. Visitor: Any member visiting, either independently or accompanied by a staff or member associated with the organization, for purposes of interacting with children, donations, understanding of organisation's work during the working hours.
14. Session: A session is a period starting from the time the children enter the centre for remedial work until handing over to the parent/guardian on completion of the work.
15. Direct Contact with Children: Being with and in the physical presence of a child or children as part of their professional or school related work, be it regular, occasional, temporary or long term
16. Indirect Contact with Children: Those whose work does not require them to be in the physical presence of a child but encompasses access to personal details and information, data on children including photographs, case files etc.
17. Child Right to Protection: Includes freedom from all forms of exploitation, abused, inhuman or degrading treatment and neglect. The following four will be categorized as child abuse;
 - a. Emotional Abuse: Is also known as verbal abuse, mental abuse or psychological maltreatment. It includes acts or failure to act by parents or caregivers, that have caused or could cause serious emotional harm, behavioural problems or mental trauma. It also includes – rejection, belittling, labelling children with derogatory terms, and habitually blaming children.
 - b. Sexual Abuse: Sexual Abuse as defined under Sections 3,5,7,9 and 11 under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012³
 - c. Physical Abuse: When someone abuses or neglects children by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm on children with disabilities. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to children.
 - d. Negligence: Breach of duty of care during the time of working with children, which results in injury or harm to children.
18. Technologically safe: Protecting children from all harm that maybe caused due to use of technology – telephone, mobile phones, computers, tables, laptops and internet or any other form of information or communication devices.

Policy statement

³ <http://www.childlineindia.org.in/pdf/csa-bill.pdf>

A Child Protection Policy is implemented throughout the organization. Other aspects of child safety such as health and safety, anti-bullying and photography are given due consideration. Standards are applied throughout the organization and Partner organisations are encouraged to adhere to these to ensure safe environments for children when working collaboratively with other organisations. Sol's Arc will take necessary action to ensure disclosure of details about a person or child in any of its written, printed or social media with prior permission taken from the individual and if need be, reserves the right to change the name of the individual in the interest and welfare of the beneficiaries.

Constitution of committees for child protection

Sol's Arc shall appoint a Committee for Child Protection comprising of three members- Field personnel, Principal and one senior Teacher. They shall be given the responsibility of ensuring implementation of the Child Protection Policy within the organization. The Committee shall report to the CEO and the Board of Trustees of Sol's Arc.

Reporting Format

The following process shall be followed for reporting under the Child Protection Policy;

1. Report the matter in writing on the Complaint Reporting Form to the Child Protection Committee within the organization.
2. The Committee shall inform the CEO and the Board of Trustees about the issue to address the same.
3. The Management team along with the Child Protection Committee shall investigate the matter and take appropriate action in line with the Policy.
4. Statement shall be taken from the victim, if possible and documented appropriately.
5. During investigation period, the individual under suspicion must be removed from direct contact with children or young adults with special needs.
6. The issue is to be addressed and brought to closure within one month of reporting.
7. The matter shall be treated in strict confidentiality in the interest of the victim, accused and the informer.
8. The process leading to decision making will be well documented and all facts, written allegations, responses and follow-ups shall be carefully filed.

9. If the abuse falls under IPC or any other relevant law, an FIR (First Information Report) must be filed with the local police.

Recruitment and Orientation of staff

1. New Recruitments: Every member who is recruited by the organization shall be given a copy of the Child Protection Policy manual and inducted into the organization once they confirm that he/she is willing to abide by the policies thus mentioned in the manual.
2. Members with previous record of any child-related or other offenses shall not be permitted to work in/with/for Sol's Arc organization under any capacity, both directly as well as indirectly.
3. The current staff shall be trained on the policies of Child Protection for better functioning of the organization.
4. The staff shall also be consulted for feedback on the policy, if there may be any valuable inputs to be incorporated.
5. Coordinators, team supervisors, Program managers should observe their team member's behavior and attitude towards the children and report any incidences, if any to the CEO.
6. Feedback will be taken from children about the staff and opinion of children will be counted in staff review.

Code of Conduct

1. For Board of Trustees, Management, Advisors, staff and visitors/outsideers, Volunteers and Interns

The following are the code of conduct to be followed by each of the members listed above;

- a. Shall undergo reference check before joining the organization. For the same, two references to get feedback on the individual's work with children can be assessed before appointment.
- b. Shall undergo an in depth interview/ interaction to assess the attitude, aptitude and sensitivity towards working with children and to understand their previous work with children.
- c. Shall be observed during induction period to understand their attitude and behavior towards the children.
- d. Shall read and abide by the Child Protection Policy of the organization in detail.

- e. Will exercise behavior protocols consistent with the core values of the organization in their relationship with children, in context of their language, actions, dress and behavior.
- f. Will not promise any monetary or non-monetary favors without the knowledge and permission of the management.
- g. Will not spend time alone with a child or children without any professional reason to do so, such as remedial work, individual teaching or training, behavior modification, counselling, etc.
- h. Will be responsible for the interaction with a child, even when it is perceived that a child is acting in a challenging (not listening to teacher/remedial trainer, creating disturbance in class or session, etc) manner.
- i. Will not touch, see or talk about private body parts and/ any sexual content to children or show them any material of sexual nature except in cases of the health/hygiene, personal safety, counselling sessions.
- j. Will take permission from the children, parents/guardians and management before taking or using any photos and videos involving the beneficiaries.

2. For Donors and Visitors

The following are the Code of Conduct for the above mentioned members;

- a. Shall inform in advance about their visits and any organizational/partner visits will be conducted only once consent from appropriate authorities like family/institutional authorities has been taken. The staff of Sol's Arc shall accompany the donors/visitors for the visit.
- b. Shall take appropriate consent from the institution/caretakers/family to interact with the child/children or about the children, at an appropriate location thus chosen – either organization's centre or the home of the child. No other location like hotel room, visitor's office, donor's office shall be permitted.
- c. Will have to exercise behavior protocols consistent with the core values of the organization in context of their language, actions, dress, and behavior.
- d. Will have to listen to children and show respect to them and their opinions.
- e. Will be respectful of the local cultural and religious differences amongst the persons with special needs.

- f. Will not promise verbally/non-verbally any monetary/non-monetary commitments to the student/ family/caretakers without the knowledge and permission of the organization's management.
 - g. Will not take/use any data/photographs/videos, testimonials of children, family members, caretakers, or organizational staff in any of their internal and/ or external communication in any format, without the prior consent of the Management of Sol's Arc.
 - h. Will not use images and / content available on the website of the organization, without informing the management and taking prior permission to do so.
3. For Partner Organisations

The following are the Code of Conduct for Partner Organisations;

- a. Sol's Arc will include a clause referring to child protection during any interaction with partner organisations especially through written agreements.
- b. Sol's Arc shall share its Child Protection Policy with the partner organizations at the beginning of its association and shall encourage the organisations/schools to also have its own policy for protecting their own beneficiaries. If necessary, Sol's Arc shall extend support in assisting the partner organisations in developing their child protection policy.

General Confidentiality for Media and Photographs

All stakeholders of Sol's Arc are mandated to maintain complete confidentiality in relation to use of children's data and photographs for external communication as per the following rules;

- 1. Sol's Arc will ensure that all possible communication and publication material in all formats about children with special needs in the form of pictures/ captions are required to be decent, dignified and respectful.
- 2. No images (printed or scanned), testimonials or videos of the children/ students with special needs shall be taken without prior permission from the family/ caregivers/ management and acknowledgements given accordingly.
- 3. The management, board of trustees, staff, Interns and volunteers shall be required to safeguard all records and documents pertaining to children with special needs within their projects/ work spaces and maintain their confidentiality.

4. All stakeholders will refrain from using the photos/data/ videos of beneficiaries of Sol's Arc on their personal blogs, social media pages, etc. In case the stakeholder(s) requires to use them, prior approval for the same from the management of Sol's Arc is a must.

Review of policy

The policy will be reviewed every two years by Sol's Arc. Upon review, the necessary changes in the policy will be incorporated. The updated policy will be intimated to all members of the organization and other stakeholders who come within the scope of the policy and compliance.

Monitoring of policy implementation

There shall be periodic monitoring and review of the Child Protection standards, behavior protocols, response and reporting mechanisms. The Monitoring Framework shall be used to do the same. The Committee and its members including the different stakeholders who are either directly or indirectly involved with the children shall be reviewed in the monitoring process and the report shall be shared with all important stakeholders as deemed by the organization.

Annexures

ANNEXURE I

REPORTING FORM

Every instance of violation of a child's Right to Protection must be registered in writing and brought to the attention of the Child Protection Committee within the organization.

COMPLAINT REPORTING FORM

To file a formal complaint, please fill out this form completely in writing and submit it to the Committee. If you may need help in completing the form, or want to discuss the issue before completion of the form, you can approach any person in the Committee or any person you trust within or outside the organization.

PART I

PERSON(S) SUBMITTING THE COMPLAINT

- A. Name of the Person completing the form _____
- B. Tick the appropriate option below;
 - a. I am the child making the complaint
 - b. I am the child's parent/guardian
 - c. I am the staff of Sol's Arc making the complaint
 - d. Others
- C. Address of the complainant:
- D. Contact number of the complainant:
- E. If you would like to have the parent(s), guardian (s), or another person attend a meeting with the committee please provide the following information:
 - a. Name of the person(s):
 - b. Address:
 - c. Contact:
 - d. Relationship with the child:

PART II

COMPLAINT

- A. Please describe the situation that has caused you to complain
- B. Date/ Time Period of the incident
- C. Location of the incident
- D. Description of the incident
- E. Person/s who witnessed the incident
- F. Please share with us how this incident has affected you so that we can know best how we can be of help
- G. Please describe any efforts you have made personally to resolve the issue informally, and the results of your efforts. Provide details of the date and location for the same.
- H. With whom did you share your experience?
- I. Describe the outcome or remedy you seek for this complaint. (OPTIONAL)

Signature of person submitting the complaint_____

Signature of member of Child Protection Committee_____

Date filed_____

ANNEXURE II

IMPORTANT CONTACT NAMES AND NUMBERS

Principal

Senior Teacher

Field Officer

ANNEXURE III

DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE

This form is to be completed and returned to the CEO and will be stored in the official files for future reference.
Kindly tick the relevant items below.

	I confirm that I have:	
1	Received written briefing materials informing about the Child Protection Policy	
2	Received a face-to-face briefing on the Child Protection Policy	
3	Had the opportunity to raise any queries, concerns regarding the policy	
4	Had all queries answered satisfactorily	
	I also confirm that:	
1	I understand the main principles, purpose and intentions of the policy	
2	I am clear on the responsibilities the policy places, to be aware and to protect children from abuse	
3	I am clear that there is a mandatory requirement to report any concerns I may have about possible child abuse or risks to children	
4	I am clear that I must adhere at all times to the Child Protection Policy's Code of Conduct	
5	If working in a management capacity, I understand I must ensure that the policy is operating effectively and respond positively to any concerns raised.	
6	I understand that any breach or failure to comply with the policy may result in disciplinary action	

I have discussed the contents of the policy in detail with my senior management/ Child Protection Committee and I agree to be bound by them.

Name:

Designation:

Signature:

Date:

ANNEXURE IV

MONITORING FRAMEWORK

The Child Protection Committee shall print more copies as necessary to include more monitoring areas.

ELEMENTS OF CPP/ OVERALL IMPACT	WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW TO ASSESS EFFECTIVENESS?	INDICATOR	WHO SHOULD TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEASURING THIS?	HOW SHOULD WE MONITOR/ COLLECT THE RELEVANT INFORMATION	WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION ONCE IT IS COLLECTED?
<i>Eg: Recruitment</i>	<i>Past records Reference checks</i>	<i>Resume Certificates Letter of Reference</i>	<i>Administration Officer CEO</i>	<i>Reviewing materials submitted at the time of recruitment</i>	<i>Filed into the staff's records for future reference</i>

