

CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

Sense International India is the first and only organization working with deafblind people throughout India. Deafblindness is a combination of vision and hearing impairments. Sense International India was established in 1997 as a Public Charitable Trust with an aim to ensure that all deafblind people have access to the advice, opportunities and support that will enable them to exercise their right to be full and active members of society.

This document represents Sense International India commitment of being a 'child safe' organization by preventing abuse and protect children & vulnerable adults with whom it comes into contact either directly or through its partner Organization. The aim is to help raise awareness of child abuse and of what is expected of staff and others within Sense International India and its partners in relation to safeguarding children & vulnerable adults.

Sense International India believes that

- Children have the right to a happy, healthy and secure childhood
- Children with disabilities (including deafblindness) have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.

Definition

Throughout this document:

‘Child’ refers to any young person in the care, supervision or contact of an employee or volunteer of Sense International under the age of 18, as defined by the United Nations’ Convention of the Rights of the Child

A ‘Vulnerable Adult’ is a person aged 18 or older who, by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness is, or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against ‘significant harm’ or ‘exploitation’.

Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults

Through its emphasis on prevention, the policy aims to minimize the risks of children & vulnerable adults being abused.

Sense International India and its partners will do all it can to ensure that children & vulnerable adults who are being abused, or who are at risk of abuse, are supported and given protection.

The policy also recognizes that, on occasions, staff and others engaged by SI (I) or its partners to work with children, may pose a risk to children& vulnerable adults and abuse their position of trust.

The policy demands the highest standards of professional practice in work with children and describes the values and principles that must underpin our approach to children.



Purpose

The nature of Sense International India as an organization and the situations it works mean that often there may be a limit to what it can do to intervene in the lives of the individual children& vulnerable adults and the extent to which it can afford them protection, even when it does take action. However where concerns are identified, it is crucial that these are raised and discussed and that whatever action is practicable is taken in order to ensure the protection of children& vulnerable adults from abuse.

The purpose of this policy is to protect children& vulnerable adults, both with and without disabilities, from sexual exploitation and sexual, emotional or physical abuse, including neglect. Sense International India believes that the welfare of the child is paramount in any situation.

It is important to note that children with disabilities are at least twice as likely to be abused as children without disabilities. The deafblind children, our projects target to assist, are therefore some of the most vulnerable in the world.

We endorse the “Convention on the Rights of the Child” as an important set of standards for the rights of children and will strive to ensure a child safe environment is maintained within the sphere of our activities. We encourage our personnel, project partners and all others associated with Sense International (India), to participate actively in building and maintaining a child-safe environment. The particular vulnerability of deafblind children means prevention is central to our task of child protection. Sense International India will endeavor to ensure that all of our practice focuses on prevention of abuse and prevention of situations where abuse could occur.

The child protection policy essentially aims to ensure that everyone across the organization is aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children& vulnerable adults, works in ways that minimize those risks, and is clear about their responsibilities and what to do if any concerns develop regarding the possible abuse of children& vulnerable adults. It is also intended to ensure that children& vulnerable adults are not abused or exploited by the adults who are meant to care for or work with them.

This policy refers to the guidelines that the staff and partner Organization of Sense International India should follow with respect to the children they work with.

Working Through Partners

Sense International India is a development agency that does not itself work directly with deafblind children& vulnerable adults. We work through partner Organization, often supporting them by providing expertise in areas of deafblindness. Where ever Sense International India is working with, funding or supporting partner agencies to work directly with children& vulnerable adults, the provisions of this policy and guidance should also be reflected in the partnership agreements. Sense International India should be assured that the practice and management arrangements of its partners reflect this common commitment to protect children & vulnerable adults and respond to issues of abuse.

Working For Sense International India



All Sense International India staff and volunteers will have satisfied all of the requirements in this policy.

Reporting

Where appropriate, where there are allegations (from any source) of serious abuse then the contact person, the local partner and the Director Sense International India should be informed within 24 hours.

A designated staff member should be appointed as a reporting officer and his/her name and contact details should be informed to all staff and volunteers and this should also be displayed at all prominent places including areas where children are involved.

The reporting officer, on receipt of a complaint/allegation (from any source) should initiate inquiry proceedings as per the rules of the organization and in case of serious violations may proceed as per civil law.

Policy

Sense International India is committed to working practice that protects children & vulnerable adults from harm. We aim to provide children with the maximum opportunities to develop their full potential. We want to ensure that children & vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm when they are with our staff and volunteers.

Staffs are central to the process of protecting children & vulnerable adults. Sense International India is committed to ensuring that all staff and volunteers are carefully selected, appropriately trained and adequately supported and supervised.

Working with other involved stakeholders is important to Sense International India. Parents, carers and other professional agencies have vital roles to play in the protection of children & vulnerable adults.

Guidelines

Child & vulnerable adults abuse is an issue that Sense International India takes seriously. Abuse takes many different forms. No suspicion or allegation of abuse should go unreported. All reported allegations should be investigated in the appropriate manner. If you have any concerns then you must report them.

Anyone can be an abuser- staff, volunteers, parents, other children, carers and other professionals. If you work with children & vulnerable adults you have the duty to be aware of the potential for abuse and a right to question behavior that you find concerning.

All staff and volunteers working with children & vulnerable adults should be aware of issues surrounding child abuse, of Sense International India child & vulnerable adults protection policy and of the process for reporting concerns.

It is important to pay attention to children. Deafblind children & vulnerable adults may have limited communication and can give messages about their experiences in a variety of ways. Changes in behavior may be especially significant and should be observed with care.



Code of Behavior

The document lays down some guidelines about acceptable and unacceptable behavior. They are not intended to be exhaustive but rather to provide guidance for staff and volunteers working with children & vulnerable adults. This code of behavior should be displayed by Sense International India and its partner's at all prominent places including areas where children & vulnerable adults are involved.

- The specific needs of deafblind children & vulnerable adults mean that a significant amount of physical contact will be necessary in order to meet the needs of the individual. As far as possible this should be with the consent of the child or adult.
- As far as possible it is important for a female educator to be placed with a female child or adult with deafblindness for activities involving privacy issues such as bathing, toileting and more so important with female adolescents
- Staff and volunteers should not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children & vulnerable adults. Where privacy is necessary other staff/volunteers should be informed and if practical, doors should be left open. However the privacy and dignity of the child are also important and should be respected.
- Staff and volunteers should not meet children & vulnerable adults outside organized activities/work, unless this is with the knowledge and consent of the parents and of the line manager responsible for that child's care.
- It is not good practice to take children & vulnerable adults alone in car journeys, however short. Where this is unavoidable, it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the parents and of the line manager responsible for the child's care.
- Staff and volunteers should never:
 - Engage in sexually provocative games
 - Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
 - Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
 - Make sexually suggestive statements about or to a child even in fun
 - Do things of a personal nature for children & vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves
- Staff and volunteers should not use excessive physical forms of punishment or verbal abuse as a means of punishment.
- Instances of older children/adolescents abusing younger children should be reported immediately and corrective measures should be taken involving the parents
- Staff and volunteers should not subject deafblind children & vulnerable adults to discriminatory abuse on basis of race, sex, religion and other forms of harassment
- If you suspect abuse of any kind or if suspected abuse is reported to you then you must pass your concerns to the appropriate person/reporting officer.

Training

Child Protection training is important for all staff working with children & vulnerable adults. The training should be comprehensive and delivered by trainers with appropriate qualification and experience.

- Staff and volunteers may not work with children unless they have received basic child protection information.
- Any member of staff or volunteer who has extensive unsupervised access to any child at any time must receive full child protection training. People who manage teams of staff/volunteers working with children should receive full child protection training. This should include:
 - Nature of abuse
 - Effects of abuse
 - Information on how to recognize child abuse (especially with deafblind children)
 - Sense International India code of behavior
 - Whom to contact in the event of any concerns

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