



Handbook on 'Child Safety and Protection'

This document aims at creating awareness on Child Sexual Harassment at the school levels and serves as a handbook to both parents and students on the Laws that are in place to protect children from abuse & harassment.

The recent years have witnessed more sexual crimes on minors and yet there are repeated incidents of harassment across schools which makes it imperative for creating more awareness on this.

ACTS THAT ARE TERMED AS HARASSMENT:

A person is said to commit sexual harassment upon a child when such person with sexual intent: -

- (i) utters any word or makes any sound, or makes any gesture, or exhibits any object or part of body with the intention that such word or sound shall be heard, or such gesture or object or part of body shall be seen by the child; or
- (ii) makes a child exhibit his body or any part of his body so as it is seen by such person or any other person; or
- (iii) shows any object to a child in any form or media for pornographic purposes; or
- (iv) repeatedly or constantly follows or watches or contacts a child either directly or through electronic, digital or any other means; or
- (v) threatens to use, in any form of media, a real or fabricated depiction through electronic, film or digital or any other mode, of any part of the body of the child or the involvement of the child in a sexual act; or
- (vi) entices a child for pornographic purposes or gives gratification therefor.

Our Initiatives:

- 1) We have taken measures to curate this document keeping in mind the recent developments, with the focus being given to Child Protection & Safety.
- 2) The POCSO (Prevention of Child Sexual Offense) act passed in 2012 aims at protecting children from the offences of Sexual assault, Sexual harassments and pornography, giving every child the opportunity of process of reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and speedy trial of offences through designated Special Courts.

- 3) Keeping in mind the above act, our school has taken this early initiative to unfold the following strict measures that will be implemented henceforth.
- 4) The school complaint committee has been formed with the Principal, two female teachers and a male teacher and a non-teaching staff will also be a part of the committee.
- 5) A qualified counselor is already on board as per the byelaws who will be readily available at the campus.
- 6) Any child below 18 years of age who is subject to any form of child abuse can immediately report to a teacher, a friend, a parent whoever the child takes into confidence to share even the smallest form of abuse.
- 7) Cases reported shall be escalated to the 'School Complaint Committee' and will be kept confidential.
- 8) The committee shall then probe into the case and make a thorough investigation with the people involved and take strong measures against the accused and if need be even dispel them from the organization.
- 9) The cases shall be documented and the committee members will comply to the decision taken in concurrence with each other against the offender.
- 10) The school shall also take measures to create awareness amongst children starting from Kindergarten to Grade X involving them through external workshop relating to good touch and bad touch such as touching a child's inappropriate body parts.

Here are some signs that may indicate sexual abuse:

- ✓ Acting out in an inappropriate, sexual way, with toys or objects
- ✓ Nightmares, sleeping problems
- ✓ Becoming withdrawn or very clingy
- ✓ Becoming unusually secretive
- ✓ Sudden, unexplained personality changes / mood swings
- ✓ Regressing to younger behaviours, e.g. bedwetting
- ✓ Unaccountable fear of particular places or people
- ✓ Outburst/s of anger
- ✓ Changes in eating habits
- ✓ New adult words for body parts with no obvious source
- ✓ Talk of a new, older friend and unexplained money or gifts

- ✓ Incidents of self-harm (cutting, burning self, for example)
- ✓ Physical signs, such as, unexplained soreness or bruises around genitals or mouth or sexually transmitted diseases
- ✓ Not wanting to be alone with a particular child or young person.

- 11) The school shall also take measures to instate 'Vigilant Monitor' block wise, be watchful of the behavior of the students and be mindful of activities like eve teasing and bully each other.
- 12) The school shall have a suggestion/complaint box at a prominent place within the premises.
- 13) The school shall maintain the contact details for the nearest local police station, hospitals, special juvenile police unit and child welfare committee.
- 14) The school shall empower teachers to stand against 'in appropriate name calling' and 'sexual comments'.
- 15) Students must be taught the difference between friendly teasing and bullying, between flirting and harassment.
- 16) Lady helpers will be posted at the entrance of the restrooms to ensure that there is an orderly use of restrooms and also ensure that children exit the restrooms without being there too long during recess times.
- 17) The Child Welfare Committee (CWC) covers almost every known form of sexual abuse against children as punishable offences and makes the different agencies of the State such as police judiciary and child protection machinery, collaborators in securing justice for a sexually abused child.

Functions and Responsibilities

The Functions and Responsibilities of the Child Welfare Committee are mentioned in Section 30 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. Few functions and responsibilities are listed below:

- Cognizance of children that are produced before it. Children who are neglected can be produced before this committee.
- Conducting inquiry on issues relating to and affecting the safety and well-being of the children under this Act.

- To direct the Child Welfare Officers, District Child Protection Unit and Non- Governmental organizations for social investigation and also to submit a report before the Committee.
- To conduct an inquiry for the declaration of fit persons for the care of children in need of care and protection.
- To direct placing of a child in a foster care facility.
- To ensure care, protection, restoration and appropriate rehabilitation of those children that are in need of care and protection. This is based on that child's individual care plan. It also includes the passing of necessary directions to parents or guardians or the people who are fit or children's homes or fit facilities in this regard.
- To select a registered institution for the placement of every child that requires support which is based on that child's gender, age, disability and needs. This should be done by keeping in mind the available capacity of the institution.
- To recommend action that is for the improvement in the quality of services provided to the District Child Protection Unit and the Government of a State.
- To certify the performance of the surrender deed by the parents and to make sure that they are given time to think about their decision as well as to make a reconsideration to keep the family together.
- To make sure that all the efforts are made for the restoration of the lost or abandoned children to their families by following due process which is prescribed by the Act.
- To declare children legally free for adoption after due inquiry who are orphans, abandoned and surrendered.
- To take suo moto cognizance of cases and also to reach out to the children who are in need of care and protection.
- To take action against the rehabilitation of children who are abused sexually and are reported as children in need of protection and care from the Committee, by the Special Juvenile Police Unit or the local police as the case may be.
- To deal with cases referred by the Board under sub-section (2) of 17 of this Act.
- To coordinate with various departments that are involved in the care and protection of children. These departments include the police, the labour department and other agencies.
- To conduct an inquiry and give directions to the police or the District Child Protection Unit in case of a complaint of abuse of a child.

- To access appropriate legal services for the children.
- To perform such other functions and responsibilities as may be prescribed.

18) The child safety and protection will ensure the following: -

- a) Right to life and survival.
- b) The best interest of the child.
- c) The right to be treated with dignity and compassion.
- d) The right to be protected from discrimination.
- e) The right to special preventive measures.
- f) The right to be informed.
- g) The right to be heard and express issues and concerns.
- h) The right to effective assistance.
- i) Right to privacy.
- j) Right to be protected from hardships.
- k) Right to safety.

19) The school in compliance with the above act shall provide a child friendly that judicial process to any child who is a victim of any kind of sexual abuse to report the offence and seek redress for their suffering as well as obtain counseling assistance in overcoming their trauma. The school shall in turn not only investigate the complaint but punish those who abuse and exploit the innocent victims also and prove the school to be an effective deterrent in curbing the occurrence of these offenses.

20) We assure that every action of the child will be closely monitored and will be more than assured of his/ her safe schooling and never give room for any obscene incident to take place causing embarrassment or inconvenience to either a child, or a parent or a teacher, as all 3 are valuable stakeholders to the school and their best of interests. Keeping in mind, all measures will be taken with utmost care.

Guidelines for positive engagement with children

The following guidelines are based on therapeutic strategies to turn on the principles. Discussed above that are commonly employed by mental health professionals in clinical settings. for families with children with behavior disorders. Though simple, these are effective strategies, when implemented consistently:

- Arriving at a consensus with children about expected behavior and consequences;
- Framing rules and guidelines in consensus with children;
- Focusing on every child's positives and appreciating good behavior;
- Using different strategies to encourage and promote positive behaviors;
- Never comparing one child's performance with another;
- Setting limits and developing clarity on boundaries;
- Providing children an opportunity to explain before any other response;
- Actively listening, remaining calm and ensuring the safety of other children while handling troublesome or offensive behavior;
- Addressing perceived 'severe or problematic behavior' through consultation with parents, child and counselor/psychiatrist;
- Discussing (with children) and adopting time-out strategy as the last resort with children.

Online Safety Provisions

- Internet safety protocols must be established and implemented in schools
- Teachers/staff should not be allowed to email or call children except and unless it is related to school work. Strictly no call should be made before 8.00 am or after 8.00 pm.
- All emails sent to children by teachers/staff should be copied to the parent/guardian or caregiver unless a teacher or staff member is suspicious that a parent/guardian/care giver is abusing the child.
- Teachers should not engage in any relationships with students on social media platforms unless it is approved in group settings.
- No child must be recorded in any manner that makes them uncomfortable and children must always be asked permission before taking of any photographs/recording videos.