

CHILDREN SAFEGUARDING POLICY OF THE LITHUANIAN RED CROSS

1. Definitions

1.1. Work with children is the activity of the LRC team, service provider, or partner involving a child where contact with the child is reasonably expected as part of normal activities and the contact is not accidental. Work with children includes volunteering, paid or other unpaid work.

1.2. Best interests of the child broadly include the child's well-being, which is determined by various individual circumstances (for example, their gender, age, level of maturity, and experience) and other factors (for example, the presence or absence of parents, the quality of the child's relationship with the family/custodian), and other risks or possibilities. The main principles of defining the best interests of the child:

- 1.2.1. children have the right to have their interests valued and to be given maximum attention;
- 1.2.2. the interpretation that suits the interests of the child the best should prevail if a legal provision can be interpreted in more than one way;
- 1.2.3. the decision-making process must assess the potential impact of the decision on the child(ren) concerned and demonstrate that the best interests of the children have been considered where a decision will affect a child, a group of children, or children in general.

1.3. Children abuse is an intentional act that has a negative impact on a child's safety, well-being, dignity, and development. It is an intentional act that takes place in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

1.3.1. Emotional or psychological abuse is when a custodian behaves in such a way that their actions or omission have a negative impact on a child's emotional health and development. Such actions include restricting the child's movements, belittling, bullying, threats and intimidation, discrimination, rejection, and other non-physical forms of hostile behaviour that prevent from creating an appropriate and supportive environment for the child, where he or she could develop and thrive.

1.3.2. Physical abuse is the use of physical force by a custodian with the intent to cause physical injury or suffering to a child.

1.3.3. Sexual abuse is the actual physical or psychological behaviour of a sexual nature against a child, or the threat of such behaviour, carried out using coercion or using unequal coercive conditions, including situations in which the child is not fully aware and is unable to give informed consent.

1.4. Adult means persons of 18 years of age or older, regardless of the legal definition of the term in the relevant country.

1.5. Child means a person under the age of 18, regardless of the legal definition of the term in the relevant country.

1.6. Child exploitation is taking or attempt to take advantage of a child by someone in a position of power and/or trust for their own personal gain, gratification, or profit. This personal gain can take many forms: physical, sexual, financial, material, social, military, or political. Exploitation may include rewards in money or in kind (for example, social status, political power, documents, freedom of movement or access to goods or services) to a child or a third party (-ies).

Child exploitation can be divided into three groups:

1.6.1. Economic exploitation is a slavery and slavery-like practices, servitude, indentured servitude, or labour.

1.6.2. Harmful or hazardous work is a work that, because of the child's age or the nature of the work, is harmful to any aspect of the child's welfare, including the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. This includes the use of children in the illicit production and trade of narcotic and psychotropic substances and the interaction of children with armed forces and armed groups.

1.6.3. Sexual exploitation is child prostitution, trafficking, or sale of children for sexual purposes (including forced marriage), child pornography and sexual solicitation, including sexual solicitation online.

1.7. Violence against children is a direct or indirect intentional physical, psychological, sexual impact on a child by action or omission, if as a result of which the child died, his or her health was impaired, normal development was disturbed, pain was inflicted, or danger to life, health, or normal development was caused, or the child's honour and /or dignity was humiliated. Child neglect is also considered as violence against a child. Actions that use physical force against a child and cause physical or mental pain to the child are not considered violence, when these actions are intended to avoid a greater danger to the child's physical or mental safety, health, or life and this cannot be achieved by other means.

1.8. Child neglect refers to a custodian's failure to protect the child from harm or to exercise the child's rights to survival, development, and well-being. Damage to the child is deemed to be caused by the custodian's negligence only when: 1) the custodian has the ability, financial capacity, and knowledge to meet the needs of the child, or; 2) when the custodian does not have the skills, financial capacity, and necessary knowledge and does not take steps to help protect the child or provide for him or her.

1.9. Child marriage means a formal or informal union where one or both parties are under the age of 18, regardless of the laws or customs in force in the country of either of the children, as well as in the country where the marriage takes place. All child marriages are considered forced because children cannot give informed consent to marry.

1.10. Child participation means the right of every child to express their opinion, influence decision-making, and seek changes. It is the informed engagement of all children, including children of all ages, genders, and disabilities, in any matter that concerns them.

1.11. Child safeguarding means preventing abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence, and responding to it.

1.12. Children safeguarding policy refers to a broad commitment of the LRC team (employees, volunteers, interns), partners (any organization with which LRC is engaged in joint work or to which LRC allocates funds or goods for performance of works), including the commitment of service providers (natural persons and legal entities) to ensure, that programs are designed and implemented in the best interests of the child, that children are not adversely affected, including violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect, and that any concerns regarding the safety of children would be properly reported and responded to.

2. Purpose, scope, and audience

2.1. The purpose is to define the framework for ensuring that LRC programs are designed and implemented in the best interests of the child and safeguard children from all forms of violence, abuse,

exploitation, and neglect, prioritizing preventive actions and ensuring response to violations.

2.2. This policy applies to the entire LRC team (staff, volunteers, interns) at any level and in any location. In addition, this policy also outlines what is expected of LRC's partners and service providers in relation to child safeguarding, and the reporting of allegations of violence, abuse, exploitation and child neglect in all programs of the LRC.

3. Key principles of the policy

3.1. Zero tolerance for child violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect: LRC does not tolerate violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect of children. LRC does not knowingly participate, either directly or indirectly, in any activities that would endanger children. LRC strives to reduce the risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect in programs and to ensure that the LRC team, partners, and service providers understand their responsibilities and obligations as defined in this policy.

3.2. Recognition of the best interests of the child: The LRC is committed to protecting the rights of the child. The best interests of the child must be considered first in all actions related to children.

3.3. Children should be involved in decision-making that affects children: LRC strives to include children in all decisions affecting them in LRC programs.

3.4. Assess and manage child safeguarding risks and impacts: LRC will take steps to create systems and environments in which children are safe, including, but not limited to, analysing of all program risks related to children, implementing of necessary measures, and providing of program support and monitoring thereof.

3.5. Sharing of responsibility for child protection: The entire LRC team takes responsibility for children safeguarding in order to manage risks to children effectively. Commitment, support, and cooperation of partners and service providers, who help implement LRC programs to safeguard children, is required as well.

3.6. Procedural fairness: Any suspected violation of this policy must be promptly evaluated to determine whether an internal investigation is warranted. If suspicions are substantiated, disciplinary proceedings must be initiated. Due process must be adhered to in order to ensure that suspects are afforded a full and adequate opportunity to defend themselves. Throughout the process, the LRC must ensure the safety of children, the principles of confidentiality, respect and non-discrimination and, where possible, respect the wishes of children.

3.7. Non-discrimination: Ensuring the safety of children does not take into account their nationality, migration status, disability, national and ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, socioeconomic status, family background, criminal record, physical or mental health, or any other distinguishing characteristic.

4. Actions that are prohibited with children

4.1. Including, but not limited to, LRC team, partners, and service providers are prohibited from:

4.1.1. Engaging in any sexual activity or having sexual intercourse with anyone under the age of 18, regardless of being of age, consent, or local customs. A false belief about a child's age is not justifiable.

- 4.1.2. Marriage or entering an informal union with a person under the age of 18, regardless of the legal age of marriage in that country.
- 4.1.3. Participating in any ceremonies involving the cutting/mutilation of children's genitals.
- 4.1.4. Maintaining relationships with children which may be considered violent, abusive, or exploitative.
- 4.1.5. Beating, corporal punishment, or other physical abuse of children.
- 4.1.6. Employment of children for work that is dangerous, exploitative, or does not comply with applicable legislation.
- 4.1.7. Use of language or behaviour that is perceived as inappropriate, harassing, offensive, exploitative, sexually provocative, degrading, discriminatory, or culturally inappropriate toward children in person or online.
- 4.1.8. Conduct that is reasonably likely to embarrass, humiliate, demean, or degrade children, or inflict any psychological abuse otherwise.
- 4.1.9. Discrimination against children based on gender, disability, sexual identity, religion, nationality, ethnic group, or caste.
- 4.1.10. Leaving a child unattended with a visitor of a program or event. Visitors, among others, are people from other organizations or other employees of LRC.
- 4.1.11. Failure to refer a child for services when a report about acts of violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect experienced by the child is received from a child or other whistleblower.
- 4.1.12. Any use of computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras, or social networks in a way that would harm a child, including accessing child exploitation material, such as viewing pornography at any time, whether during working hours and/or digital equipment dedicated to LRC.
- 4.1.13. Do not ask for permission to photograph or film a child, post children's photos without consent, depict children in an indecent manner or when children are not fully clothed.
- 4.1.14. Conduct activities or programs with children without the express consent of their parents/guardians.
- 4.1.15. Working alone with a child in a secluded place where other members of LRC team cannot observe.
- 4.1.16. Inviting unaccompanied children to one's home unless they are in immediate danger of injury or other physical danger, but in such case the supervisor must be notified immediately that such action is necessary.
- 4.1.17. Sleeping in the same bed or in the same room with the child/children with whom work is being performed, when staying overnight at the place without supervision and without the consent of the child's parents/guardians and LRC head or program manager.
- 4.1.18. Leaving a child alone in a room or at an event when the child or custodian has expressed doubts about the child's safety and/or about the behaviour of the LRC team, partners, or service providers.
- 4.1.19. Giving alcohol or narcotic and other psychoactive substances to the child.

5. Application of provisions of the Policy to Partners and Service Providers

- 5.1. LRC expects partners and service providers to:
 - 5.1.1. Acknowledge and adhere to the key principles of this policy;
 - 5.1.2. Notify LRC immediately if any representative of the partner or service provider is suspected, accused, arrested, or convicted of criminal acts related to violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect of children;

5.1.3. Agree that any agreement between LRC and a partner or service provider may be terminated immediately upon proven violation of the policy principles and/or failure to take appropriate action upon identification of a policy violation, including reporting of suspicions to LRC on the same day the report is made to the partner or service provider;

5.1.4. Ensure that every effort is made to promote and strengthen children safeguarding measures and protective actions among those employed by them to perform the work.

6. Reporting of violations

6.1. An LRC team member, partner or service provider, or any witness who has reason to believe that a child may have been subjected to violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect, or that the child's safety or well-being may be at risk due to actions or omissions by members of LRC team, must report this as soon as possible to any of the following subjects:

- a) the Internal Investigation Commission;
- b) the immediate supervisor of the reporting person or any other head of the LRC department or other structural unit;
- c) the Human Resources Manager;

6.2. Any of the above subjects receiving complaints shall immediately forward the information to the Internal Investigation Commission.

6.3. Messages can be sent to:

- a) the Internal Investigation Commission – via e-mail at complaint@redcross.lt;
- b) the heads – via e-mail at the addresses specified on the webpage of LRC at <https://redcross.lt/kontaktai/>;
- c) by calling the general number of LRC – +370 659 71 598;
- d) By filing out a general request on LRC website at <https://redcross.lt/konfidencialaus-pranesimo-forma/>.

7. Actions of LRC team in case of suspicions of possible domestic violence

7.1. Any member of LRC team, who suspects that a child may have experienced domestic violence, immediately reports this to the head of the unit (department/program) by means of electronic communication. In the absence of a possibility to report to the head of the unit, a member of LRC team, who suspects that the child may have experienced domestic violence, reports directly to the relevant territorial department of the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, and/or the police.

7.2. The head of the unit (department/program) and/or LRC team member, who suspects that a child may have experienced domestic violence, but cannot yet confidently state this, can consult with the coordinator of help for people at crisis of LRC MHPSS Program; in the absence of possibilities for consultations at LRC — consult with the specialists of the municipal educational assistance or pedagogical psychological service.

7.3. The head of the unit (department/program), upon receiving a report from a member of the LRC team about a child who may have experienced domestic violence, immediately reports to the territorial department of the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor and/or the police;

7.4. The head of the unit (department/program) who reported the case of a child who may have been subject to domestic violence to the relevant territorial department of the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor and/or the police, informs the coordinator of help for people at crisis of LRC MHPSS Program regarding the

organization and/or provision of help for the child;

7.5. Failure to notify the territorial department of the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, and/or the police about violations of the child's rights committed by the child's statutory representatives and/or other persons shall entail liability in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania.

8. Functions and obligations

8.1. Secretary General:

8.1.1. Ensures that all LRC programs are designed and implemented with assurance of children safeguarding in mind.

8.1.2. Initiates policy approval in the Committee of Managers.

8.1.3. Ensures that an analysis of risk for children would be carried out in all programs and appropriate measures would be taken.

8.1.4. Ensures that the budget and necessary mechanisms are in place for policy implementation and monitoring.

8.1.5. Encourages to adhere to this policy and its principles.

8.2. Human Resources Manager:

8.2.1. Ensures that all prospective employees would be properly screened to ensure that they would not pose a risk to children.

8.2.2. Ensures that all employees would be aware of this policy and agree to abide by it as part of their agreement.

8.2.3. Ensures that staff would have received training on the children safeguarding.

8.2.4. Ensures performance of an internal investigation after receiving a report of a policy violation.

8.2.5. Ensures the safety of whistleblowers.

8.3. Coordinator of Volunteering Processes:

8.3.1. Ensures that volunteers would have received training on the children safeguarding.

8.4. Communication Manager:

8.4.1. Ensures appropriate communication, including social media communication related to photos and stories of children.

8.5. Heads of programs and departments:

8.5.1. Encourages to adhere to this policy and its principles.

8.5.2. Ensure that staff and volunteers have the knowledge, skills, and commitment to safeguard children.

7.7. LRC team:

7.7.1. Reports any suspected violations of this policy in the prescribed manner.

7.7.2. Cooperates with any investigation of suspected violations of this policy.

9. Monitoring and assessment

9.1. Human Resources Manager is responsible for promoting and monitoring of the implementation of this policy.

9.2. LRC Committee of Managers reviews the progress of implementing of this policy every year.

9.3. The Internal Investigation Commission reports annually to the LRC Committee of Managers and the Board on the number of submitted complaints related to the children safeguarding, information on cases, and resolution thereof.

9.4. The report is also published publicly on LRC website <https://redcross.lt> together with

information on the employed preventive measures.

9.5. This policy will be reviewed no later than every two years after its approval or sooner if required by the Secretary General.