

## **Child Protection Policy**

### **Introduction**

Sarvodaya Ashram is steadfastly dedicated to creating a safe and nurturing environment for all children associated with its programs and activities. The **Child Protection Policy** is the cornerstone of this commitment, designed to prevent, identify, and respond to any instance of child sexual abuse. This policy is developed in strict compliance with the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**, and other relevant Indian laws, which provide a robust legal framework for the protection of children's rights and well-being. Our objective is to not only meet but exceed the statutory requirements, fostering a culture of vigilance and accountability that puts the safety of children first.

### **1.0 Scope and Applicability**

This Policy applies to all individuals and entities involved with Sarvodaya Ashram's operations, including:

- All employees, whether permanent, temporary, or contractual.
- Volunteers, interns, and consultants.
- Contractors, vendors, and any other third-party personnel who have direct or indirect contact with children.

The scope of this policy extends to all physical premises of Sarvodaya Ashram, as well as all activities and events organized or sponsored by the organization, including field trips, workshops, and online interactions.

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### **2.0 Definitions**

For the purpose of this Policy, the following definitions are in alignment with the POCSO Act, 2012:

- **Child:** A person below the age of eighteen years.
  - **Child Sexual Offences:** A broad term encompassing any act that is in violation of the POCSO Act, including but not limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, child pornography, and the grooming of children for sexual purposes. This also includes any form of physical, emotional, or psychological abuse that could lead to sexual exploitation.
  - **Zero Tolerance:** An absolute prohibition on any form of child abuse, with a commitment to taking immediate and decisive action in response to any reported or suspected incident.
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### 3.0 Child Safeguarding Principles

Sarvodaya Ashram operates on the foundation of these core principles:

- **Zero Tolerance:** There will be no exceptions for any form of child abuse.
  - **Best Interest of the Child:** All decisions and actions will be guided by the best interest and well-being of the child.
  - **Respect and Dignity:** Every child has the right to be treated with respect, and their dignity must be upheld at all times.
  - **Empowerment:** We aim to create an environment where children feel safe to speak up and where their concerns are heard and taken seriously.
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### 4.0 Prevention and Proactive Measures

Sarvodaya Ashram will implement the following proactive measures to prevent child abuse:

- **4.1. Screening and Background Checks:** All individuals, regardless of their role, who will have regular contact with children must undergo a thorough background verification process. This includes criminal background checks to ensure there is no history of offenses against children.
  - **4.2. Training and Awareness:** Mandatory and recurring training sessions will be conducted for all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders. These sessions will cover:
    - Recognizing the signs and indicators of child sexual abuse.
    - Understanding the provisions of the POCSO Act, 2012.
    - Reporting procedures and legal obligations.
    - Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries with children.
  - **4.3. Code of Conduct:** All individuals covered by this Policy must adhere to a strict **Code of Conduct**. This includes the prohibition of any inappropriate physical contact, suggestive language, or any behavior that could be misconstrued as improper.
  - **4.4. Supervision and Monitoring:** All activities involving children will be subject to appropriate supervision. Regular monitoring of interactions and a robust system for feedback will be established to ensure compliance and identify potential risks.
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### 5.0 Reporting and Redressal Mechanism

Any person who has knowledge of, or has a suspicion that a child has been a victim of, a sexual offense must immediately report the concern.

- **5.1. Internal Committee (IC):** An Internal Committee will be constituted to handle all complaints of child abuse. The IC will consist of the President or Secretary of the organization, a board member, and a legal expert. The committee will ensure impartiality and confidentiality in all its proceedings.
  - **5.2. Reporting Procedure:** A report of any suspicion or incident must be made immediately to the IC. The report can be made verbally or in writing, and the IC will ensure that it is handled with utmost confidentiality, sensitivity, and urgency.
  - **5.3. External Reporting:** In accordance with the POCSO Act, 2012, the IC is obligated to report any offense to the **Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU)** or the **Local Police** within 24 hours of receiving the information, regardless of whether the perpetrator is an employee or a third party.
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## 6.0 Disciplinary and Legal Actions

- **Consequences:** Any individual found guilty of violating this Policy or the POCSO Act will face immediate and severe disciplinary action, including but not limited to **termination of employment** or contract.
  - **Legal Cooperation:** Sarvodaya Ashram will fully cooperate with law enforcement and the judiciary in the investigation and prosecution of any reported cases. The organization will ensure that all necessary evidence and facts are preserved to support legal proceedings.
  - **Support for the Child:** The organization will provide support mechanisms, including counseling services and access to legal aid, for the affected child and their family, as appropriate.
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## 7.0 Review, Updates, and Dissemination

This Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with evolving legal standards and best practices. Any necessary updates will be made in consultation with legal experts. The Policy will be widely disseminated to all stakeholders through various channels, including official communication, training sessions, and readily accessible digital and physical copies.

By implementing and strictly adhering to this Policy, Sarvodaya Ashram reaffirms its unwavering commitment to protecting the innocence and well-being of every child under its care, in full compliance with the laws and ethos of the Government of India.

