

DBM INDIA

Child Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

DBM India is committed to ensuring the safety, welfare, and protection of children who are engaged with our activities, programs, or services. This Child Safeguarding Policy sets out our commitment to safeguarding children and outlines the measures we have in place to prevent child abuse, protect children from harm, and respond appropriately to any safeguarding concerns.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and partners associated with our organization, as well as any external individuals or organizations involved in activities, programs, or services for children on our behalf, within the premises of DBM India and during all hours of engagement with the children

3. Definition

Definition of a Child For the purpose of this policy, a child is defined as any person under the age of 18.

4. Principles of Child Safeguarding

Our organization adheres to the following principles of child safeguarding:-

4.1. Best Interests of the Child:

The best interests of the child shall be our primary consideration in all decisions and actions that may affect them.

4.2. Non-Discrimination:

All children, regardless of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, or any other status, have the right to be protected from harm, abuse, or exploitation.

4.3. Participation and Empowerment:

We will promote the participation and empowerment of children, ensuring their views are heard and taken into account in matters that affect them.

4.4. Duty of Care:

We have a duty of care to take all reasonable measures to protect children from harm, abuse, or exploitation, and to respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.

4.5. Confidentiality:

We will handle safeguarding concerns in a confidential manner, respecting the privacy and dignity of the child, and ensuring information is only shared on a need-to-know basis.

5. **Child Abuse** - All forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, harm, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, development and dignity.

This abuse can be further understood as: Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Financial, Social. Corporal punishment is also recognised in this policy as abuse. For definitions of different abuses, the policy will rely on –

- Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (Chapter 2; Chapter 9)
- Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses, 2012 (Chapter 2)
- Right to Education Act, 2009 (Section 17 - Corporal Punishment)

6. **Child Safeguarding** refers to the responsibility of agencies working with/in contact with / impacting children, to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children are minimised; and where there are concerns about the welfare of children, to take appropriate actions to address those concerns (i.e. working to agreed policies and procedures, and in accordance with local laws).

Safeguarding refers to institutional/internal policies and procedures intended to ensure that children are not exposed to harm and abuse through their contact with the organisation, their staff and their participation in projects and programmes and that the organisation's operations do no harm to the children in any way. Child Protection is part of safeguarding and refers to activities undertaken to protect specific groups of children who are being or are at risk of being abused.

7. **Monitoring and Review:** We shall regularly monitor and review our safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices

8. Child Protection Committee:

To receive and effectively deal with child abuse complaints, a Child Protection Committee (CPC) has been constituted by DBM India. The CPC consists of:

- CPC Chairperson - Paramjeet Singh-Managing Trustee (paramjeet@dbmindia.org)
- Child Protection Officer- Farheen Peshimam (farheen@dbmindia.org)
- A senior staff member - Parvinder Kaur, Director Operations (manager.operations@dbmindia.org)
- An external member committed towards the cause of children's rights and empowerment

A panel of three (3) members is required to be present for the proceedings to take place. The panel shall include the CPC Chairperson and at least two (2) members. Further, DBM India designates the Director-Projects and Programmes– Farheen Peshimam (farheen@dbmindia.org) as the Child Protection Officer (CPO) to look into overall implementation of the policy.

8.1. The Child Protection Committee will:

- Discuss the concerns, record the same and give appropriate recommendations to the organisation's management for further action.
- Ensure the concerns are addressed and closed within a specified time.
- Maintain all registers, files and folders and documents related to child safety and protection.
- Seek external expert help as and when required.
- Convene as soon as an incident is reported with periodic follow-up until the closure of the case.
- Cooperate with the police, judiciary and local administration in the investigation of the reported incident, to the extent applicable by law, while keeping in mind the safety, security, right to privacy and confidentiality in the best interest of the child.
- Assess and address the impact of the incident on other children, adults working there and on the organisation as a whole.

9. Responsibilities:

All employees at DBM India are required to:

- Be aware of situations which may present risks and appropriately manage them.
- Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks.
- Be visible to others when working with children whenever possible.
- Create and maintain a non-defensive attitude and an open culture to discuss any issues or concerns.
- Foster a culture of mutual accountability so that any potentially abusive behaviour can be challenged.
- Develop a culture where children can talk about their contacts with staff and others openly.
- Respect each child's boundaries and help them to develop their own sense of their rights as well as helping them to know what they can do if they feel that there is a problem.

Anyone working for or associated with DBM India must avoid actions or behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. Everyone working for with DBM India will not:

- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others.
- Take children to your own home, especially where they will be alone with you.
- Have a child or children to stay overnight at your home unsupervised.
- Sleep in the same room or bed as a child.
- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children.
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative towards a child or develop physical/sexual relationships with children.
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse that includes intentionally humiliating, belittling, degrading, holding, kissing, cuddling, touching a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour towards children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive or exposes the child to danger.
- Discriminate against, show different treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others

10. Procedures:

This section is to ensure what steps should be taken if it is believed that the Child Protection Policy is being violated.

10.1. **Reporting:**

DBM India Employees, Associates and Consultants should report their concerns to the CPO within 24 hours of observing a breach of the Child Protection Policy. All concerns or allegations should be submitted in writing. It is not the responsibility of the person first hearing or encountering a case of alleged or suspected abuse to decide whether or not abuse has taken place; it is their responsibility to immediately report the concern.

The reporting should focus on:

- Evidence that the Child Protection policy has been violated with relevant dates
- Potential / Actual Risks to the child/children
- Measures to safeguard children and minimise risk
- Action/next steps

10.2. **Ensure the safety of the concerned child:** The CPO shall ensure that the child is removed from any imminent danger immediately by preventing contact with the person involved. The CPO will ensure that the child is not further questioned or interrogated. The CPO will liaise with the partner NGO to reassure the child that the problem will be attended to and they are safe and protected.

10.3. **The CPO will within three (3) days of receiving the complaint:**

- Conduct a risk assessment of the reported concerns and inform the relevant authorities as appropriate who will ensure that the child is provided care and protection.
- Put together all the evidence submitted.
- Prepare and communicate an appropriate response e.g. disciplinary process or urgent action if consequences of the breach of Code are severe.

10.4. **Medical Intervention:**

The CPO will liaise with the partner NGO to ensure that the child is provided with the appropriate medical assistance as required. The CPO will liaise with the partner NGO on the medico-legal papers which will be referred to during the case proceedings.

10.5. Informing Parents/ Guardians:

The CPO will liaise with the partner NGO to ensure that the parents/guardians are informed about

- The Complaint
- The internal inquiry procedures that will be followed to address the complaint.
- The confidentiality that will be maintained.
- The relevant local authorities that will be informed about the case details.

10.6. Internal Inquiries and Suspension:

- The CPO in consultation with the Chairperson shall convene the CPC meeting within 24 hours of reporting of the incident to take further action and inform the partner NGO accordingly.
- The CPO will meet with the person who has reported the concern to ensure that facts, opinions, observations are recorded accurately and prepare an investigation report.
- The CPC will decide whether the person responding to the complaint should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.
- If the person responding to the complaint is at an outstation location, the CPC will decide on whether they should be asked to return to the main office.
- Based on the outcome of the internal inquiry, the CPC will refer to the Disciplinary policy to assess the appropriate disciplinary outcome that will be implemented.

10.7. Documentation:

- Written complaints submitted to the CPO should be signed and dated.
- Minutes of the meeting should be detailed and precise, focusing on what was said or observed, who was present and what happened. Speculation and interpretation should be clearly distinguished from reporting.
- All such records should be treated as confidential. It is the responsibility of each individual in possession of the information to maintain confidentiality.

11. Training

The Management of DBM India shall provide the necessary resources and direction for the following capacity building programmes including information for all adult stakeholders.

The content of the capacity building process should include the following:

1. Orientation on child abuse, neglect and exploitation; applicable laws, policies and guidelines, such as UNCRC, POCSO, JJ Act and ICPS to ensure they are aware of the key provisions; redressal mechanisms, media relation, confidentiality and reporting obligations.
2. Training of all personnel, contract staff and volunteers on the policy, response and redressal mechanisms set up within DBM India. Additionally, DBM India will conduct other relevant training (related to appropriate behaviours with children) to ensure staff are able to understand finer aspects related to the policy.
3. The members of the Child Protection Committee also to be trained and oriented for case management, best practices and when to reach out to external stakeholders and how.
4. There should be a refresher course for all of the above topics, every year or as needed.
5. This will include signing the declaration indicating their understanding of the Policy.

12. Policy Review Schedule

The DBM India Child Protection Policy will be reviewed annually or based on management discretion to ensure the policy is updated.

DBM India will also look into ensuring that all our Partners have a Child Protection Policy in place and supervise an annual reviewing and revision of the policy.

Signature (of the Employee) _____

Name _____

Date of Acceptance _____