Child protection policy

1. Purpose

ISA Institute values responsibility and duty of care to protect the children who are engaged in our activities both in person and online or directly and indirectly impacted by our work and to act in their best interests.

The purpose of the policy is to protect children from harm, abuse, violence, neglect, and exploitation. Some children are particularly vulnerable to potential abuse, exploitation and ill-treatment by parents, caregivers, volunteers and those who have access to their personal data. Many children growing up in precarious circumstances have already experienced a breakdown in trust or abuse of the adult-child relationship in the form of physical, psychological or sexual abuse.

ISA institute's staff is committed to protecting children, ensuring their safety and well-being. We are committed to the protection of children as expected in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and the legistlation, best practices and other requirements of the Republic of Slovenia and the European Union.

2. Scope

This policy is intended to apply to all ISA institute's activities. It is applicable to employees and volunteers, working with children, involved in ISA institute's activities. All staff and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that the policy is adhered to. The policy also extends to ISA institute's partners and associates, such as consultants or trainers.

All of the above are expected to read the Child Protection Policy and sign a declaration of commitment declaring that they will respect its principles and procedures.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Council of the Institute and the Expert Council to ensure that ISA institute takes every precaution to protect the children and young people we serve and encounter during the course of our work.

The employees and associates have to adhere to codes of conduct of each profession and of the organization. Rules of procedure are set for all cases in which suspicion of children's rights violation is present.

4. Definitions

Child protection includes prevention of and response to any risk or actual instance of physical, sexual and emotional harm, neglect, exploitation or abuse, whether done directly to a child or with the use of communications/technology.

A child is any person under the age of 18.

Physical, sexual and emotional harm, neglect, exploitation or abuse are defined in Penal Code of Republic of Slovenia and in the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act.

5. Recruitment

Recruitment involves the hiring of staff, volunteers, consultants and suppliers in the Republic of Slovenia and abroad to work for ISA institute and partners.

ISA institute seeks to minimise child abuse risk through every step of the hiring process by including well-advertised child protection commitments and thorough background vetting systems of potential hires.

Staff and volunteers go through careful HR selection process. They have to provide the confirmation that they have not been convicted of sexual offences crimes against children.

6. Education, training and awareness

ISA institute will ensure all stakeholders are aware of and uphold the Child Protection Policy. Education around the Child Protection Policy will be provided to all staff through inductions and regular trainings, so staff remain informed of current best practice.

Staff and volunteers are required to successfully accomplish the basic training of violence prevention and child protection before starting their work with children.

7. Child Participation

ISA institute recognizes the need to include children in all processes affecting them and encourages their participation. We believe that effective and sustainable protection of children can only be achieved through their participation.

We support the implementation of strategies that include child participation based on the nine requirements for meaningful, safe, and inclusive child participation (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12, 2019):

- Participation is transparent and informative.
- Participation is voluntary.
- Participation is respectful.
- Participation is appropriate.
- Participation is child-friendly.

- Participation is inclusive.
- Participation is supported by training.
- Participation is safe and risk-sensitive.
- Participation is responsible.

8. Interactions with children

ISA institute acknowledges the significance of protecting children while involved in ISA institute's activities and programs.

Staff and volunteers tasked with guardianship of children while working for ISA institute will receive child-friendly training, resources and support to effectively and safely work with children.

All children involved in or affected by ISA institute's services, projects and programmes have the right to health, safety and well-being and to have their best interests considered as a priority; to have their development encouraged and protected so that they can fully realise their potential; to be valued, respected and understood within the framework of their culture, religion and ethnicity; to have their views listened to and taken into account carefully; and to be encouraged and assisted to participate in decisions that affect them, including decisions regarding child protection.

Regardless of the different circumstances, working with a child who has experienced neglect and/or violence includes the following principles:

- In all measures when working with a child who has experienced violence, the safety of the child must be the primary consideration.
- In all measures taken when working with a child who has experienced violence, the child's expressed interest must be taken into account and followed to the greatest extent possible (as long as it does not endanger his or her safety).
- The goal of working with a child is to increase his or her safety, prevent further neglect and violence, include the child in assistance programs with the aim of reducing the consequences of the experienced neglect and/or violence, and enable the child to have appropriate psychosocial development.
- Every child has the right to safety and protection, regardless of personal or other circumstances.
- Every child has the right to appropriate care, upbringing, and protection by adults.
- When working with a child, we must take into account the child's level of development, any developmental specificities, and the child's cultural and social background. With due respect, the listed factors should not be a reason for minimizing violence or inaction by competent institutions when a child experiences neglect and/or violence.
- Persons who care for a child after experiencing neglect and/or violence, or persons who provide professional assistance to the child, must ensure the child's safety, take into account his or her rights and interests, and prevent further and secondary victimization of the child.
- Anyone, especially professionals and workers of various institutions and organizations, who believe that there is a possibility or suspicion that a child is experiencing neglect

or violence, or suspect that this could happen, are obliged to take action (report neglect or violence to competent institutions: centre for social work, police, prosecutor's office).

- ISA institute's staff, volunteers and other professionals working with children must, in accordance with the law, ensure the confidentiality of the data obtained during their work.
- Special attention must be paid to children with special needs and to children from disadvantaged social groups (due to gender, ethnicity, race, social status, religion, sexual orientation of parents, type of family community, etc.).

ISA institute will not, for any reason, publish text, photographs or other forms of information that may cause harm to a child or represent a child in an inappropriate or illegal (harmful, abusive or exploitative) manner.

9. Misconduct

ISA institute will promptly investigate all reported actual or suspected breaches of this policy and, where grounds are found to exist, will take appropriate corrective measures and/or report the matter to the relevant authorities.

ISA institute reserves the right to initiate appropriate action up to and including employment/contractual termination for staff or other representatives, or for volunteers/interns to discontinue the volunteer relationship.

10. Incident Reporting

All ISA institute's personnel and associates should pay attention to the signs that a child may need help and protection, and/or that the activities of the ISA institute's staff may present risk of harm for children.

It is mandatory for all ISA institute's personnel and associates to report any witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse, violence or any breach of the Child protection Policy.

These concerns may relate to a child or a staff member involved in the organisation or to a child or person/s outside of the organisation's programs.

ISA institute strives towards child friendly incident reporting. Everybody who has a concern should immediately follow the ISA institute's child abuse reporting procedures.

ACT steps:

A – Act when in doubt. Speak up when in doubt.
C – Put the child at the centre. Protecting children is paramount.
T – Time is of the essence. Ensure timely, efficient, confidential, and appropriate responses to child care inquiries.

Who should report?
All ISA institute's personnel and associates including people in the community and partner organisations.

What should be reported?
Any disclosure, concern or allegation from a child, community member, staff or associate regarding the safety, abuse or exploitation of a child (this includes actual, suspected, or risk of abuse or harm to a child).

Any observation or concerning behaviour exhibited by an ISA institute's personnel, volunteer or other associate.

When to report?
Violence and child abuse concerns should be raised immediately.

Who to report to?
The report can be made to:

a. The ISA institute's Child protection Contact person or/and
b. The head of the Council of the Institute.

In cases of suspicion of violence and child abuse a report can be made directly to:

c. the centre for social work
d. the Police
e. the Public Prosecutor's office

In case a report is made directly to the centre for social work, police or public prosecutor's office, the ISA institute's Child protection contact person or ISA institute's CEO or the head of the Council of the Institute should be informed.

In case the disclosure of violence of child abuse happens in a school or other educational institution during the performance of ISA institute's programs/activities, the report of violence and child abuse has to be made in cooperation with the educational institution. The ISA institute's Child protection contact person or ISA institute's CEO or the head of the Council of the Institute should be informed, too.

How should it be reported?
Verbally and/or by completing the ISA institute's violence and child abuse incident reporting sheet.

What will happen next?
The ISA institute's Child protection Contact person and/or CEO in consultation with the head of the Council of the Institute will discuss the report and all available information and then decide upon the next step. This will involve one or more of the following:

- Interviewing the person/persons who made the report and/or other witnesses to gather more information with which to make a decision regarding the report;
- Reporting to the centre for social work;
- Reporting to the police;

- Handling the concern internally if reporting to the centre for social work or the police is not required.
- Providing support to all stakeholders (including reporter) as necessary.

All incidents that involve sexual or physical abuse should be raised at the next scheduled Council of the ISA institute meeting. Details regarding the child and the case should be strictly anonymized.

The members of the Council of the ISA institute would consider the incident report and reflect on whether any change to organisation policy, procedures and protocol is required.

11. The Child protection Contact person

The Child Protection Contact Point is an employee whose duties include:
• informing new employees of the ISA institute's Child protection policy;
• monitoring the implementation of the Child Protection Policy within the organization;
• acting as a point of contact for all aspects of child safety and welfare and reporting inappropriate behaviour by all ISA institute's staff;
• preparing annual reports to be submitted to the Council of the ISA institute and the Expert Council.

The name and contact details of the Child Protection Contact Point will be prominently displayed in the ISA institute's offices, and new employees will be made aware of this function.

12. Policy review

ISA institute will regularly (triennially) review the Child Protection Policy and procedures.

Last update: 22. 4. 2025

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