

“CHILD PROTECTION POLICY”



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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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SECTION 1: THE ORGANIZATION

Jan Vikas Samiti (JVS) is a charitable society registered in 1997 under Societies Registration Act, 1860. From its inception it has been rendering dedicated and committed services for the empowerment of the marginalized and vulnerable groups of the society with special focus on women, children and dalits.

Vision

To build a just inclusive humane society based on the values of Equality, Justice, Freedom and brotherhood.

Mission

Empowerment of the marginalized people of the society, especially the Dalits, Women and Children through a process of awareness, organization for collective actions and advocacy for raising Socio- Political, Educational, Economic, Health Status and Promotion of Environment.

SECTION-2: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

2.1 Definitions

As per the United Nations convention on the rights of the children (UN-CRC), a child is a person who is 18 years and below unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. In the context of Jan Vikas Samiti, a child may be living in rural communities, in slums, on the streets and public places, shelter home, hostel, contact point or any other disadvantaged circumstances with or without family are applicable.

Child protection is a term that describes policies, standards, and practices that seek to protect all children regardless of gender, ethnicity, social and religious background, disabilities and any other status from harm- physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual or any other negligence. Harm can be caused by community based rehabilitation workers, project supervisors, teachers, volunteers, and other care workers and staff of the partner organizations (JVS-LF Child Empowerment program) who are directly working with children; staff who may not be involved directly with childcare but working in the organization; and visitors, outsiders who come in contact with children.

In this policy, child protection applies to the responsibility of Jan Vikas Samiti, its day care centers for the children with disabilities, sub-centers, contact points, partner organizations (JVS-LF) and all the persons associated with the organization. The policy will ensure that system is at place to protect children benefited from the organization against any abuse and exploitation.

Though the main purpose of the policy is to protect children from all forms of harm and create an enabling environment, is also a tool to enhance the commitment of the organization to provide a child friendly environment through sensitizing persons associated and enforcing the policy. It is expected that the policy will also work as a tool to protect staff and the organization from risks associated with being in contact with children.

2.2 Purpose

Children living in the rural communities, slums, hostels, homes or other disadvantaged circumstances, or living with or without families face increased risk of abuse and exploitation not only from peers, individuals, immediate stake holders, family members and community, but equally so from development

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workers and care givers whose role is to work for the development of children.

As an organization working and supporting more than 400 children directly and 8000 children through the partner organizations in different states of north India; staff, team members' and volunteers come in contact with children through their work. And due to the global increase in reports of child abuse by development workers, it is important that Jan Vikas Samiti puts in place mechanisms to protect children, staff members and organization itself.

The organization, since its inception in 1997 has been rapidly increasing its strength by reaching more number of children (with disabilities) while providing quality rehabilitation through direct implementation and also through partner organizations. In this process the number of personnel associated with the rehabilitation of the children has also grown significantly. Due to its rich work culture and commitment towards overall development of the children it is important to make everyone associated with the organization accountable to promote child safety. It is both a moral and a legal responsibility for Jan Vikas Samiti. The policy thus seeks to create an organization wide culture of awareness by promoting and upholding principles of transparency and accountability on matters of child protection.

Therefore, this policy is meant for all staff members, team members, and volunteers who work with or for the children within JVS and also for the project staff of the partner organizations implementing the JVS-LF Child Empowerment program in their respective areas. The above people are expected to show commitment to the policy and follow the guidelines and procedures of the child protection policy in their involvement with Jan Vikas Samiti.

2.3 Principles

Jan Vikas Samiti realizes that children constitute a special group of persons. Children with disabilities with whom JVS works are a most vulnerable group needing not only care and protection but an enabling environment for their overall development. Most of the children with disabilities are neglected due to their disabilities, poverty, lack of educational and rehabilitation opportunities etc. Girl children, especially those with intellectual disabilities, may be at greater risk of sexual abuse. The policy calls for action to protect children including those with disabilities against any kind of abuse.

JVS's programme with children with disabilities aims to unleash a positive change in their lives.

The right to development is a core principle that constitutes the foundation for the Organization's child protection policy. Using child protection as a core principle, the organization strives to ensure that measures and systems are in place, in day care centers, rural programs, sub-centers, and central office to protect children from all forms of abuse and maltreatment by staff members and anyone affiliated with Jan Vikas Samiti.

2.4 Policy objectives

The broad objective of the policy is to set minimum standards and procedures on child protection that seek to ensure that the rural programs, day care centers, hostels, shelter homes, contact points, and central office maintain a safe environment for children.

Specifically the policy seeks to protect children from abuse and exploitation by encouraging good practice among staff members and preventing behaviour that may be abusive to children.

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SECTION 3: POLICY GUIDELINES

3.1 Staff Recruitment Procedure

- 3.1.1 Current and potential employees with direct or regular contact with children shall undergo a screening procedure to check for any child abuse related criminal record.
- 3.1.2 The job interview should include specific questions at the first stage on child protection issues to probe the applicant's attitude, experience and approach to working with children relevant to the post applied for.
- 3.1.3 Two employment references should be taken up for applicants before appointment to post. These include (where possible) an employer who can comment on the applicant's work with children.
- 3.1.4 During induction of a new employee, the relevant coordinator and executive board member should observe the "child friendly personality" of the staff and give feedback to executive committee/management before final appointment.
- 3.1.5 During induction period, feedback would be taken from children about the staff and opinion of children would be counted.
- 3.1.6 During recruitment and induction that the candidate should be clearly told that a child protection policy exists and he/she shall be required to be abiding by it.
- 3.1.7 Along with the appointment letter a copy of the child protection policy and the employee manual shall be given to the new employee. (Child protection policy may be included in the employee manual). The employee shall be asked to sign a statement that he/she has read the policy and shall abide by it.

3.2 Training and Orientation

- 3.2.1 All existing staff shall be given full training on this policy as part of ongoing training programmes at Jan Vikas Samiti.
- 3.2.2 Specialized orientation for child protection shall be provided for staff working directly with the children.

3.3 Reporting and case management

- 3.3.1 The first point of contact for all child protection (ill treatment or abuse) matter is the project coordinators of respective projects. In case the coordinator is not seen to be taking any action in the matter, then the report should be made to the Associate Director and then Executive Director.
- 3.3.2 When the coordinator is being implicated, the matter would be reported to Executive Director.
- 3.3.3 The coordinators will work together with the Executive Director and Management on all child protection cases.

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- 3.3.4 The matters are to be treated in strict confidence in the interest of the accused, the reporter, and the system.
- 3.3.5 Reports that are made maliciously or not in good faith shall warrant strict disciplinary action by the Executive Director/Management.
- 3.3.6 Based on the evidence and careful deliberation of the case, the Executive Director/Management will decide whether to have the matter dropped, further handled internally or referred to the police depending on level of assessed gravity and complexity.
- 3.3.7 The process leading to decision making should be well documented and all facts or written allegations and responses kept on file.
- 3.3.8 When a case is immediately dropped, the reasons for doing so shall be communicated to the person who reported the matter.
- 3.3.9 Thorough investigations will be carried out before such decisions or actions are taken.
- 3.3.10 In all case whether reported to the project coordinators or Associate Director, the matter shall be immediately brought to the attention of the Executive Director/Management.
- 3.3.11 As soon as a case of misconduct is brought to the attention of the Executive Director/Management they shall consider the case and if the matter warrants further investigation then the accused staff member shall be suspended pending investigation and final decision.

3.4 Ramifications of Misconduct

- 3.4.1 Following completion of investigation, Executive Director/Management will decide on appropriate action to take based on available evidence.
- 3.4.2 This will follow the JVS's disciplinary procedure as described in the HR manual.

3.5 Statement of Commitment

Staff, interns, volunteers, consultants (as and when required), partner organizations (JVS-LF Child Empowerment program) have to sign statements of commitment attached to this policy document.

The level of detail in statements of commitment and expectations may vary depending on the contractual status of person, the nature of assignment and the level of contact with children in line of work.

3.6 Communication about Children

In its communication and fundraising strategy, JVS may use images and recordings of children and field texts.

The JVS has a responsibility towards the children that are portrayed and should ensure that children are treated with dignity as human beings with rights, by avoiding the following:

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- Inaccurate representation of children through words and images
- Communication that shames, degrades or victimizes children
- Taking pictures or statements from children without informed consent
- Depicting children in sexually provocative poses

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SECTION 4: ANNEXTURES

4.1: Statement of Commitment/Code of Conduct for staff/volunteer/visitor/staff of partner organization implementing Child Empowerment Program (JVS-LF)

This code of conduct constitutes a set of standards for appropriate behavior for guiding people who work with Jan Vikas Samiti, whether on a part time or permanent basis. It also gives guidance to avoid situations that increase chances of risk misbehavior when in the company of children.

The code is applicable to anyone acting as a representative of the organization, whose work requires him/her to be in contact with children.

Don'ts

- Spend time alone with a child either at the day care centre, adult's home or any other secluded place
- Carry out personal activities on a child like bathing and dressing without the presence of parents/guardians/family member's/care taker of same gender
- Engage in inappropriate touch or physical contact with a child
- Make sexually provocative gestures towards a child
- Have a sexual relationship with a child
- Physically assault or abuse a child
- Make use of language that causes mental or emotional harm to a child
- Exploit children in any way or form
- Practice disability, racial, cultural, gender based, religious, political or any other form of discrimination towards children.

Do's

- Avoid compromising situations that increase vulnerability
- Meet children in public places as much as possible
- Avoid actions and language and behaviour of any kind that can be subject to misinterpretation by a third party
- Get informed written consent from the child, parent or person with primary responsibility over the child before taking photographs/videos or statement from a child

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- Be aware that age difference creates a power imbalance between adults and children and so avoid situations that might result in you taking advantage of children

Declaration

I (Name)..... have read and understood the guidelines, standards, and code of conduct as stated in the Jan Vikas Samiti's child protection policy. I agree with principles contained therein and undertake to uphold the policy principles while working with/for the Jan Vikas Samiti.

Title/Position:

Signature:

Program/Centre / Organization:

Date:

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4.2: Statement of Commitment/Code of Conduct for the partner organizations (JVS – LF child empowerment program)

This code of conduct constitutes a set of standards for appropriate behaviour/actions for guiding partner organizations of Jan Vikas Samiti for Child Empowerment Program. It also gives guidance to avoid situations that increase chances of risk misbehavior when in the company of children.

Once signed and ratified by the chief functionary of the organization, the code (below mentioned) is applicable to all staff/volunteers/visitors directly associated with the Child Empowerment Program (JVS-LF), whose work requires him/her to be in contact with children directly or indirectly.

1. I will always base organizational planning, decisions and actions for the best interest of the children.
2. Program will treat all children with respect and dignity regardless of gender, ethnicity, social background, religion, political beliefs, disability, or any other status. The program won't favour, belittle or exclude any child for any reason.
3. Program staff / volunteers understand that they may be working in positions of power and trust in relation to children. They will never abuse this power or do anything that might endanger this trust. They will do their best to empower children, and to cultivate a culture of openness and security where children feel comfortable asking questions and seeking help.
4. Program staff / volunteer will never act in ways that are abusive, exploitative, physically or emotionally harmful, and will work to protect children from situations where they may be at risk for this from others, including from their peers.
5. Program staff / volunteers won't behave in a way that is physically inappropriate. And won't fondle, hold, hug, kiss or touch children in a culturally insensitive way, and will never behave sexually.
6. Program staff / volunteer will not spend time alone with children away from others; if privacy is needed, it will be ensured that a staff member is aware and will leave a door open or in some way maintain visibility.
7. If not a member of the organization staff, Organization will always ensure the company of an Organizational staff member. Organization will ensure that any non-staff member is accompanied by a staff member at all times.

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8. Organization will obtain consent from each child and his/her parents or caretakers before taking any photographs or videos or engaging in any program activity. It will be ensured that any images taken are respectful and empowering, and that they do not present children as victims, vulnerable or submissive.

9. The program will protect the safety and privacy of children by not publishing identifiable images in the media or on the internet, or use them in a way that reveals their location & Identity.

10. Program staff will have a responsibility to report any incidents of child abuse or mistreatment that is observed, or that are reported, to a designated Child Safety Officer or the senior person responsible for child protection at _____.

Declaration

I (Name, Designation)..... have read and understood the guidelines, standards, and code of conduct as stated in the Jan Vikas Samiti's child protection policy.

On behalf of Jan Vikas Samiti, I agree with principles contained therein and undertake to uphold the policy principles while working with the Jan Vikas Samiti as partner organization for Child Empowerment Program.

Title/Position:

Signature:

Program/Centre / Organization:

Date: