GETTING STARTED

4 steps to implementing organization standards for child safeguarding

SUMMARY

Although organizations are cognizant of the importance of having child safeguarding standards, many will feel encumbered by the process of adopting an acceptable standard. This reader will summarize guidance recommended by the *Keeping Children Safe* alliance for those nonprofits that desire a quick and harmonized step by step overview.

Keywords: Policy, child safeguarding, procedure, accountability, reporting mechanisms

PREPARING FOR CHILD SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

The *Keeping Children Safe* alliance recommends four types of standards around policy, people, procedure and accountability.

►**Organizational policy** should be based on the guidelines of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, that details organizational commitment and measures taken to protect children, binding not only staff but its associates including contractors. Consult staff, children, and communities to guide your child safeguarding policy statement. The policy should be explained and distributed to all people that work with and for the organization.

►**Standards for people** should spell out key responsibilities of focal persons such as managers and provide details and what is acceptable when interacting with children. Staff should be oriented and trained on attitudes, skills and knowledge that ensure children are safe. Sensitize children and their communities about complaint reporting mechanisms and possible actions that may be taken in the event of violations. The onus is on the organization to develop a contacts database showing which staff is responsible for which children and the level of interaction between the two parties.

►**Procedure standards** speak to integration of the policy throughout organizational processes, systems, and activities such as planning, procurement, and monitoring and evaluation. This requires a delicate balance between ensuring the standard is locally relevant and globally acceptable for example in who constitutes a child, what abuse is, and how children can be protected.

A risk assessment should be conducted to address: the context of your organization, risk impact of your activities on children, minimizing and mitigation measures in consideration of staff, partners, associates, services and ICT risks. Based on every identified risk, policies and

Box 1: Policy, people, procedure and accountability

Policy standard details

- Identify and list how you mitigate risks
- Code of conduct applicable to all staff at all times including outside the office
- Confidential reporting mechanisms
- Distribute it in poster form, with contracts, in appointment letters and on your website
- Make a child-friendly version

Developing the People standards

- Assign responsibility to managers, staff, partners, communities
- Inform children and communities about your safeguarding practices and encourage caregiver involvement in programme activities
- Conduct reference checks for all staff who will come into contact with children
- Create an information repository for staff to seek guidance and clarity
- In the community, staff should be easily identifiable through t-shirts, badges, caps or name tags
- Develop feedback mechanisms that allow children and communities to tell the organization what is working well and what needs to change

procedures should be put in place to address the risks. As part of risk management there should be multiple reporting channels and an internal and external (community) flowchart for raising concern:

- Safety officers: Trusted personnel who are based in the community, known to the children and conduct monitoring visits
- Complaints/Suggestion boxes: These must be placed in accessible locations which also allow for safe, confidential placing of letters by children
- Helplines: Organizations have to be objective, allowing complaints about it to be sent through by the helpline which should be audited for safety and confidentiality
- Community-based child protection mechanisms: These work best when they are endorsed by local authorities or child protection organizations

Accountability mechanisms for child safeguarding

Accountability involves monitoring and evaluating for continuous improvement and responding to incidents. Reports which capture lessons learned should be developed and disseminated to stakeholders as part of the knowledge management process.

Key principles for accountability:
- Ensuring standards are being implemented through staff surveys, progress reports, key informant interviews to allow for timely review and re-strategizing
- Use your risk register regularly to assess how the organization is performing on the standards. You should be able to make a link between your policies and procedures and standards
- Conducting internal self-audits and subjecting yourself to external audits can also improve implementation as well as accountability to donors and partners

For organizations starting out on standards for child safe guarding it is best to start with a simple and short document that can be modified and improved on the learning journey. Although it is better to have a policy than nothing, a policy in itself is not proof of implementation; effective child safeguarding can only be realized in as far as it is regularly, authentically monitored and improved.

Developing the Procedures standards
- Work with local authorities and service providers to ensure cultural relevance
- Build a database of contacts of legal service providers, develop summaries of legal provisions around child issues, map out service providers on the referral pathway
- Review academic research on children's rights and good practices for child safeguarding
- Engage the community on child related risks they have observed and document them; review community solutions on child safeguarding

Further Reading

Trócaire's Child Safeguarding Policy- International Programmes
https://dochas.ie/sites/default/files/Trocaire_Child_Safeguarding_Policy_International_Programmes_0.pdf

Child Safeguarding Policy. Terres des Homme
https://www.tdh.ch/sites/default/files/955ede1a-c959-4e91-914e-5aa7fb944b28_r_pse_d_pol_en_original_0.pdf