



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



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I. INTRODUCTION, HIPS'S VISION AND POLICY STATEMENT

Context:

In keeping with the mission and values of Harsha International Public School, we believe that every child regardless of age, has at all times, and in all situations, a right to feel safe and protected.

We are committed to safeguarding processes which include protecting children from abuse and neglect; preventing risk of harm to children's health or development; and ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and supportive care.

Underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), HIPS is committed to promoting the rights of children including their right to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation. HIPS takes active measures to ensure a child's rights are protected.

This Child Protection Policy is HIPS's statement of intent that demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding children from harm and makes clear to all in the organization and who come into contact with us what is required in relation to the protection of children, and that child abuse in any form is unacceptable and HIPS expects all individuals and groups affiliated with the school community to act with integrity and to take responsibility for keeping students safe. Whether you are a staff member, a service or activity partner, a volunteer, intern, contractor, guest, parent or visitor, it is our expectation that you will support our students and act with their wellbeing in mind at all times.

HIPS's Vision for Child Protection:

We aim to create a 'child safe' environment, both internally and externally, where children are respected, protected, empowered and active in their own protection, and where staff are skilled, confident, competent and well supported in meeting their protection responsibilities.

Policy Statement:

All staff will safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in our care. Child abuse (including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect) is a violation of children's human rights and is an obstacle to their education and development. All staff have a responsibility and duty of care to protect the rights and dignity of all students and to create a safe, secure and supportive environment. All staff must report suspected incidences, reports or disclosures child abuse to the Child protection committee. The Head of School / Child protection officer's responsibility for child protection. In the absence of the above, the matter should be fully discussed with members of the Child Protection Committee.

II. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AT HARSHA INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL

Purpose

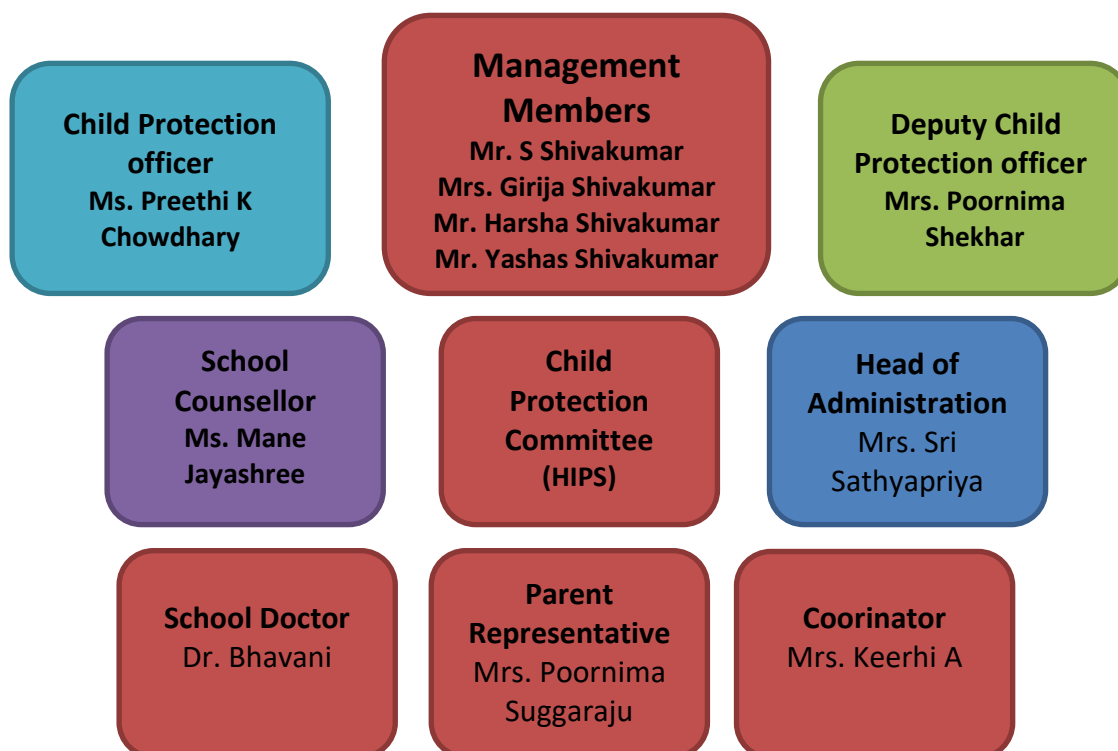
Harsha International Public School is committed to safeguard the interest of children under its care and takes responsibility for their emotional and physical wellbeing when they are in the premises of the school. This policy applies to all the stakeholders involved in the child's growth and development including the Senior Management Team, teaching staff, Parents, Students, Non-teaching and ancillary staff who are working with the school. It aims to guide and direct the school community with procedures in case of allegation, suspicion, or incidence of abuse or neglect of students.

School's Commitment

To ensure that any form of child abuse, verbal, psychological, and/or physical will not be ignored by the members of the Child Protection Committee of Harsha International Public School or any trainer/vendor associated with HIPS. The school understands that any form of child abuse is a criminal offence. We ensure that child protection is given utmost importance and the issue of child abuse is dealt with empathy and professionalism. The school follows a "Zero Tolerance Policy" and every suspected or reported incident is dealt with by the Senior Management Team and the Counsellor in cooperation with the parents and the students. The stakeholders are encouraged to be vigilant - to notice any underlying behavior involving abuse and report it to the concerned authorities.

Child Protection Committee at Harsha International Public School

The Child Protection Committee at HIPS includes –



SI No	Name of the Staff	Designation	Description
1	Mr. S. Shivakumar	Chairman	Chairman
2	Mrs. Girija Shivakumar	Vice- Chairperson	Management Members
3	Mr. Harsha Shivakumar	Secretary	Management Members
4	Mr. Yashas Shivakumar	Co- Secretary	Management Members
5	Mrs. Preethi K Chowdhary	Principal	Child Protection Officer
6	Mrs. Poornima Shekhar	Pre School Principal	Deputy Child Protection Officer
7	Mrs. Sri Sathyapriya	Vice- Principal	Head of Administration
8	Dr. Bhavani S.	School Doctor	School Doctor
9	Ms. Mane Jayashree	School Counsellor	Member
10	Ms. Rajeshwari	Yoga Instructor	Member
11	Ms. Keerthi A.	Primary Coordinator	Member
12	Mrs. Poornima Suggaraju	Parent Representative	Member
13	Mrs. Veena K P	Principal, HPUC	Member
14	Mrs. Suma A. S.	PGT	Member
15	Mr. Anantha S. B.	TGT	Member
16	Mrs. Veena K. V.	TGT	Member
17	Mr. Mujeep Pasha	PET	Member
18	Ms. Aditi G. A. Kulkarni	Student Representative	Member
19	Mr. Aneesh Gaonkar	Student Representative	Member

Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. (Source: A report of the consultation on child abuse prevention, WHO, Geneva, 29-31 March 1999)

III. TYPES OF ABUSE EVERY CHILD MUST BE PROTECTED FROM -

1.1. Physical abuse

According to WHO, physical abuse of a child is defined as the intentional use of physical force against a child that results in – or has a high likelihood of resulting in – harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity. Physical abuse may involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child. (These symptoms could also indicate harm to self, such as, cutting and suicide ideation).

1.2. Emotional/Psychological abuse

According to WHO, emotional and psychological abuse involves both isolated incidents as well as a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or caregiver to provide a developmentally appropriate and supportive environment so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with his or her personal potential and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. Conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person, age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children causing children frequently to feel frightened, or the exploitation

or corruption of children are few of the types of emotional abuse.

1.3. Neglect and negligent treatment

According to WHO, neglect includes both isolated incidents, as well as a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or other family member to provide for the development and well-being of the child – where the parent is in a position to do so – in one or more of the following areas- health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions. Negligence might take place irrelevant of the financial condition of the parents. Neglect is the failure on the part of the parents, guardian, teacher or any other responsible people to recognize or provide for the child's basic needs, such as food, shelter, medical care, educational opportunities, or protection and supervision. It is abused through omission of the necessary environment and resources for the child to reach their full potential.

1.4. Exploitation

Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are detrimental to the child's physical or mental health, education, spiritual, moral or social- emotional development.

1.5. Sexual abuse

According to WHO, "Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared or that violates the laws or social taboos of society".

1.5.1. Sexual abuse is an act or behaviour which constitutes a sexual offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, as amended from time to time. Such sexual offences include penetrative sexual assault (including rape), non-penetrative sexual assault (including touching the private parts of a child), sexual harassment (including stalking a child, showing a child pornography and making a child exhibit his/her body) and using a child for pornographic purposes (including storing of pornographic material involving a child for commercial purposes).

1.5.2. An abetment of and an attempt to commit a sexual offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 are also considered to be offences. Certain offences under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 are considered to be aggravated offences and are subject to stringent punishments. For instance, sexual assault committed by persons in a position of trust or authority in relation to the child (including relatives of the child, persons managing or working in an educational institution, police officers or public servants) are considered to be aggravated offences.

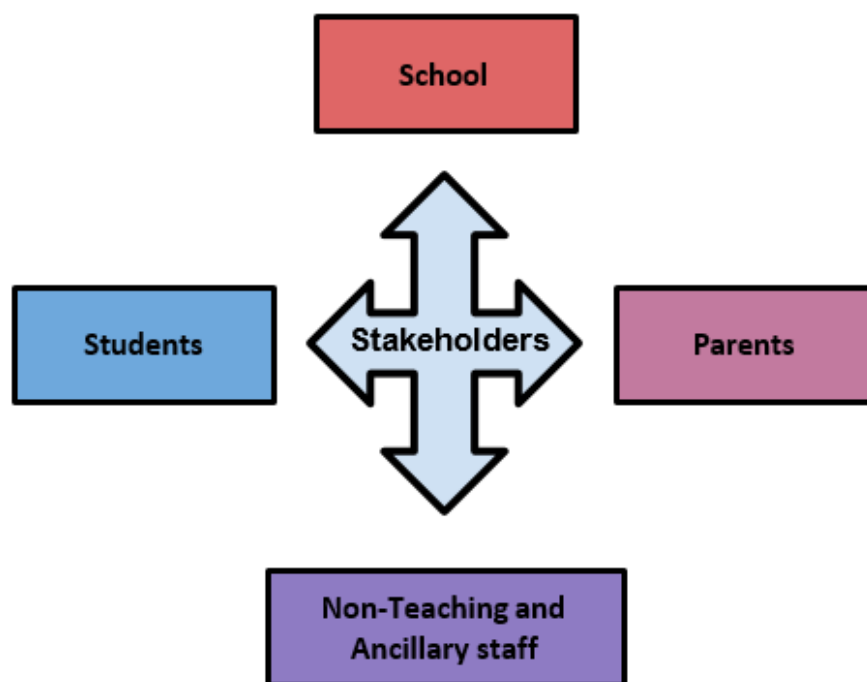
1.6 Abuse in Virtual Space

Virtual worlds have become a regular destination for children. Easy access and affordable fees enable children of all walks of life to participate in virtual worlds. Games specifically, appear to be a great attraction for young children in their use of the internet. While virtual worlds provide entertainment to many children, it also offers opportunities for sexual child offenders to access contact with vulnerable children. Aggressors can exploit all the possible communication channels of virtual worlds (chat, messengers, video and audio) to perpetrate virtual sexual abuse (sexual age play, virtual rape and pornography) via avatars, and traditional forms of online sexual abuse (exposure to sexually explicit/harmful content, the creation,

storage and distribution of real child pornography, and online solicitation which can lead to three devastating contact crimes: rape, sex tourism and child trafficking). Devoid of geographical borders and

lacking in a universally agreed upon and accepted definition of both online child sexual abuse and virtual sexual abuse, law enforcement can do little should an abuse become known. It becomes imperative for parents and caregivers to engage with their children in discussions of safety and for the collaboration of parents, schools, virtual world operators and law enforcement to join in efforts to prevent such abuse, especially in the case of child-headed homes where there is no primary parental supervision. (Reddy and Minnaar, 2019)

IV. ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS



1. Role of The School

- To make the Child Protection Policy available to all parents via the school's website.
- To appoint faculty and support staff who are well qualified, competent and of sound nature to carry out the school's programmes, services, and activities to ensure student protection and well-being.
- To ensure all school staff members are aware of the signs of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.
- To create awareness among the parents, students, teaching, non-teaching and the ancillary staff about the Child Protection Policy followed by the school.
- To inform stakeholders about the nature of abuse, consequences of such abuse and the ways to report any suspected/ confirmed abuse with evidence.
- Staff members are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with students.
- Staff members may on extremely necessary occasions have to help change student's clothes when administering first aid, or after accidents, for PE etc.
- The complaint of child abuse is addressed directly to the Head of School. If the complaint is against

the Head of School, it should be addressed to the Chairperson of the Management. All complaints should be documented by the committee.

- If a complaint includes an accusation against another child, for incidents that occurred within the school premises, the accused child's parents are informed by the school. Discipline will remain solely ensured by the CPC.
- The school aims at taking prompt action against any incidence of abuse.
- No members of the school staff are allowed to investigate the matter without consulting the CPC.
- With concerns about possible abuse, the CPC member and Head of School will inform the POSCO wing of the Police department. No other person is entitled to inform the matter to any third party or Media without permission of the CPC.
- To inform the POSCO wing of the police department about the abuse.
- To review the Child Protection Policy every two years.
- To train the staff with POSCO training.
- To make students aware that they can access the Child Helpline 1098 in case they wish to report any abuse.
- To inform the stakeholders that any person who might be aware of the fact of physical abuse of a child and fails to report such a fact to the CPC is punishable with imprisonment of 6 months or fine under Law.
- To inform the stakeholders that anybody giving false complaints to CPC shall be also punishable under Law.
- To conduct sessions on Cyber Safety for parents and students informing them about appropriate Virtual Behaviour and conduct and consequences of indulging in abuse through virtual platforms.
- Teachers/staff should not be allowed to email or call children except and unless it is related to school work. No child or parent should be contacted on social media by the school staff.
- To install CCTVs in classrooms and in school premises and ensure that their feed is monitored.
- To have safe boundaries around photographing children, using photographs of children, Internet and technology usage within the school premises. Arrange for regular sessions on personal safety with all children.
- To create a committee consisting of the Principal, one male teacher, one female teacher, one female student, one male student and one non-teaching staff member must be set up to serve as complaints and redressal body.
- The coordinators should have access to the virtual classrooms to monitor lessons.
- The participant who behaves inappropriately in the virtual classrooms should be given enough reminders and then put in the waiting room. In case of usage of abusive language or sharing of inappropriate content done by the participant/s, the facilitators should remove the student/s immediately and inform their respective coordinators.
- The staff must adhere to norms set by school in terms of the attire allowed at the workplace in a physical classroom as well as a virtual classroom.
- The staff should be mindful of the language used to interact with the students. Derogatory and demeaning language should be strictly avoided.

2.Role of the Parents

- To inform the school with the names of all people who have permission to collect their child from school (or to confirm that their child may leave the grounds unaccompanied). They will also be asked to inform the school of any change in this routine.

- To brief school about arrangements following any separation or divorce.
- To brief the school about any major life changing event that might affect the student emotionally or psychologically.
- To inform the school of any possible or confirmed incidents of child abuse taken place within the premises of the school and not to deal with the issue on their own.
- To make their child aware that they can access the Child Helpline 1098 in case they wish to report any abuse.
- To be informed that any person who might be aware of the fact of physical abuse of a child and fails to report such a fact to the CPC is punishable with imprisonment of 6 months or a fine under Law.
- To be informed that anybody giving false complaints to CPC shall be also punishable under law.
- To monitor the student's virtual behavior to safeguard them from potential abuse virtually.

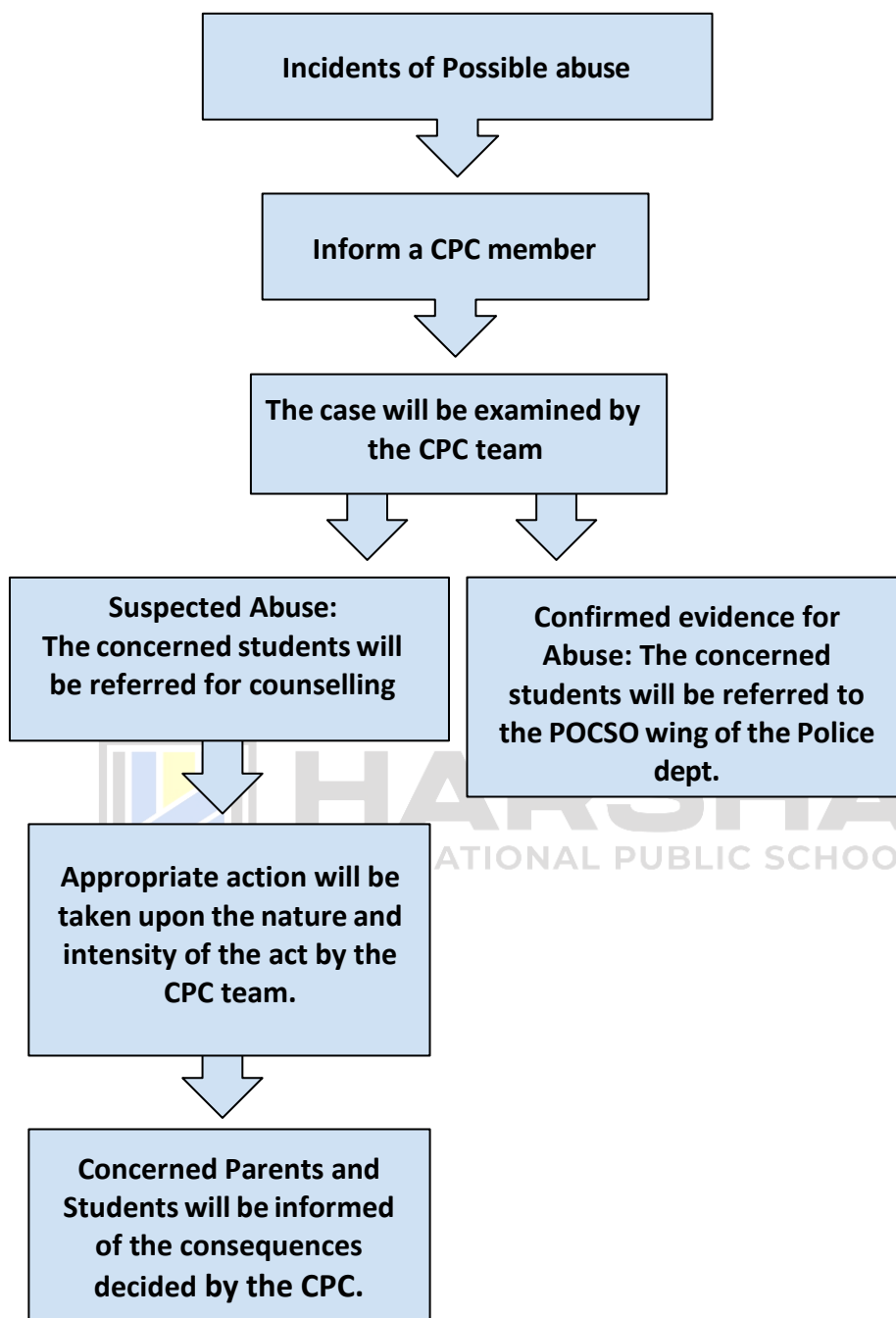
3. Role of the Students

- To inform the teachers/counsellor about any incident of abuse that they have undergone or witnessed physically or virtually so that the teachers can report the incident to the CPC.
- To be aware that they or their parents can access the Child Helpline 1098 in case they wish to report any abuse.
- To be informed that withholding of any information related to the abuse is a punishable offence.
- To be informed that any person who might be aware of the fact of physical abuse of a Child and fails to report such a fact to the CPC is punishable with imprisonment of 6 months or a fine under Law.
- To be informed that anybody giving false complaints to CPC shall be also punishable under Law.
- To adhere to the school norms, be mindful of their own actions and safeguard themselves by indulging in appropriate behavior at all times.

4. Role of the Non teaching and the Ancillary Staff

- To be aware of the POCSO rules about maintaining distance from the students and indulging in appropriate behavior during student interaction.
- To report to the Administration senior most staff (the Team member of CPC) about any incident of abuse that they have witnessed.
- To be informed that withholding of any information related to the abuse is a punishable offence.
- To be informed that any person who might be aware of the fact of physical abuse of a Child and fails to report such a fact to the CPC is punishable with imprisonment of 6 months or a fine under Law.
- To be informed that anybody giving false complaints to CPC shall be also punishable under Law.

V. PROCEDURE TO REPORT AN ABUSE AT HIPS



VI. EXISTING CONSTITUTION & LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution of India guarantees several rights to children and enables the State to make provisions to ensure that the tender age of children is not abused.

A summary of the United Nations on The Rights of the Child

ARTICLE 1 (definition of a child)

The rights set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) apply to everyone under the age of 18.

ARTICLE 2 (non – discrimination)

The rights set out in the UNCRC apply to every child whatever their race, color, gender, language, religion, ethnicity, disability or any other status.

ARTICLE 3 (the best interests of the child)

All decisions and actions that concern children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

ARTICLE 5 (parental guidance)

The state must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their child in exercising his or her rights and in a way that is consistent with a child's developing capacities.

ARTICLE 12 (respect for children's views)

Every child has the right to express their views on matters that affect them and for these views to be taken into consideration.

ARTICLE 13 (freedom of expression)

Every child has the right to find out and distribute information and to express their ideas – through talking, writing, art or any other form of expression.

ARTICLE 14 (freedom on thought, conscience and religion)

Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose, and to practice their religion, provided this does not prevent others from enjoying their rights. The state should respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to provide direction to their child that is appropriate to his or her development.

ARTICLE 15 (freedom of association)

Every child has the right to meet other people and to join groups and organizations, as long as this does not prevent others from enjoying their rights.

ARTICLE 16 (privacy)

Every child has the right to privacy, including their family and home life, and they should be protected from unlawful attacks on reputation.

ARTICLE 17 (mass media)

Every child has the right to find out information and material from a variety of media sources. The state should encourage mass media information that supports children's wellbeing and development. The mass media should be encouraged to consider the linguistic needs of children from minority groups. The production and dissemination of children's books should be encouraged. Children should be protected from information that may be damaging.

ARTICLE (protection from violence, abuse and neglect)

The state must do all it can to protect children from violence, abuse, neglect, bad treatment or exploitation by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

ARTICLE 23 (disabled children)

Disabled children have the right to enjoy a full life, with dignity and to participate as far as possible in their community. The government should support disabled children and their families.

ARTICLE 24 (health and healthcare)

Every child has the right to the best possible health and to healthcare. The state should ensure children have healthcare services, nutritious food, clean water, a clean environment and healthcare information. Richer countries should support poorer countries in this.

ARTICLE 31 (play and cultural and artistic activities)

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in cultural and artistic activities.

ARTICLE 33 (drug abuse)

Children should be protected from using, producing or distributing illegal drugs.

ARTICLE 34 (sexual exploitation and abuse)

All children must be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, including unlawful sexual activity, prostitution and in pornographic materials.

ARTICLE 37 (cruel treatment and detention)

No child should be tortured or treated in a cruel or inhuman way. Prison should be a last resort. Children who are detained should not be imprisoned with adults and they should have the opportunity to remain in contact with their family. No child should be given the death penalty or a sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of release.

POCSO – Protection of Children from Sexual Offences

To deal with child sexual abuse cases, the Government of India has brought in a special law, namely, The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. The Act has come into effect from 14th November, 2012 along with the Rules framed there under.

The POCSO Act, 2012 is a comprehensive law to provide for the protection of children from the offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography, while safeguarding the interests of the child at every stage of the judicial process by incorporating child friendly mechanisms for reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and speedy trial of offences through designated Special Courts.

In keeping with the best international child protection standards, the said Act also provides for mandatory reporting of sexual offenses. This casts a legal duty upon a person who has knowledge that a child has been sexually abused to report the offense; if he fails to do so, he may be punished with six months' imprisonment and / or a fine.

The said Act also casts the police in the role of child protectors during the investigative process. Thus, the police personnel receiving a report of sexual abuse of a child are given the responsibility of making urgent arrangements for the care and protection of the child, such as obtaining emergency medical treatment for the child and placing the child in a shelter home, should the need arise. The police are also required to bring the matter to the attention of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) within 24 hours of receiving the report, so the CWC may then proceed where required to make further arrangements for the safety and security of the child.

The said Act makes provisions for the medical examination of the child in a manner designed to cause as little distress as possible. The examination is to be carried out in the presence of the parent or other person whom the child trusts, and in the case of a female child, by a female doctor.

The prevention of child sexual abuse, protection of victims, justice delivery, and rehabilitation of victims are not isolated issues. The achievement of these objectives requires a coordinated response of all the key players, which include the police, prosecution, Courts, medical institutions, psychologists and counselors, as well as institutions that provide social services to the children. The protection of children from violence and abuse thus requires an integrated approach. Needless to say, the identification and understanding of the roles of each of these professionals is crucial to avoid duplication and promote effective convergence.

The responsibility of supporting children who have been sexually abused should be embraced by the whole community, but it is the professionals that work in this field who play an important role in enabling the healing process.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 Section 82.

Corporal punishment.

- Any person in-charge of or employed in a child care institution, who subjects a child to corporal punishment with the aim of disciplining the child, shall be liable, on the first conviction, to a fine of ten thousand rupees and for every subsequent offense, shall be liable for imprisonment which may extend to three months or fine or with both.
- If a person employed in an institution referred to in sub-section (1), is convicted of an offense under that sub-section, such person shall also be liable for dismissal from service, and shall also be debarred from working directly with children thereafter.
- In case, where any corporal punishment is reported in an institution referred to in sub-section (1) and the management of such institution does not cooperate with any inquiry or comply with the orders of the Committee or the Board or court or State Government, the person in-charge of the management of the institution shall be liable for punishment with imprisonment for a term not less than three years and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to one lakh rupees.



Mandate of Section 82 – Now under Section 82 of the 2015 Act, whosoever subjects a child to corporal punishment causing hurt and emotional distress for the child, shall be liable, on the first conviction, for imprisonment which can extend to six months or fine or both and for every subsequent offense the person shall be liable for imprisonment which may extend to three years and fine or both. However, if a person employed in an institution providing services to children, is convicted of an offense under this section on more than one occasion, such person shall also be dismissed from service. In case, the corporal punishment has caused grievous hurt or severe mental trauma for the child, the person having committed the offense shall be liable, for rigorous imprisonment of three years and fine of rupees fifty thousand and for subsequent conviction, imprisonment which may extend to five years and shall also be liable to fine of rupees or both.

However, if a person employed in an institution providing services to children, is convicted of an offense under this sub – section such person shall also be dismissed from service, and debarred from working directly with children thereafter. In case, where corporal punishment is reported in an institution and the management of such institution, does not cooperate with any inquiry or comply with the orders of competent authority or Court or State Government, the person in-charge of the management of the institution shall be liable for punishment with imprisonment for a term not less than three years and shall also be liable to a fine which extends to one lakh rupees.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) 2012 was formulated in order to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 received the President's assent on 19th June 2012 and was notified in the



References:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-shheets/detail/child-maltreatment>

<https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/POCSO%20Act%2C%202012.pdf>

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<https://www.teachforindia.org/child-protection-policy/>

https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/POCSO%20Rules%20merged_2.pdf

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long-term-consequences/>

<https://www.childlineindia.org/>¹

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