

Child Protection Policy

SYNYO GmbH is committed to safeguard the welfare of children as well as respecting their rights and acting in their best interests. The organisation is aware of its responsibility to promote safe practices referring to the social interaction with children and to protect them from any kind of abuse, harm or exploitation. The Child Protection Policy is developed to ensure that children's rights and well-being are respected and that they are treated in a fair and adequate way according to national and international child protection and safeguarding standards. That applies especially for activities, where the participation of children is intended. To further strengthen the commitment, it is ensured that all employees, other staff members and project partners are obliged to comply with the Child Protection Policy of the organisation.

Legal Fundamentals

The content of the organisation's Child Protection Policy is based on the following laws, policies and standards:

- ✚ The UN Child Rights Convention and its three additional protocols;
- ✚ The General Declaration of Human Rights;
- ✚ The International Keeping Children Safe Standards;
- ✚ The Constitution of the Republic of Austria;
- ✚ The Federal Constitutional Law on the Rights of Children 2016 (BVG Kinderrechte);
- ✚ The Federal Children and Youth Welfare Law 2013 (B-KJHG);
- ✚ The Austrian Criminal Code (StGB), especially these sections, which include penal provisions regarding the endangerment of children's welfare;

Scope of the Child Protection Policy

The following persons/organisations are obliged to comply with the rules:

- ✚ SYNYO's management team as well as all employees;
- ✚ All people/organisations, which are not continuously part of SYNYO's staff/project work, such as interns and external service providers (e.g., law and consulting firms);
- ✚ All project partners and partner organisations SYNYO is collaborating with;

Glossary and the Definition of Forms of Violence

This section is here to clarify the meanings of different terms, which are used in the Child Protection Policy. Furthermore, this is made to prevent confusion and misinterpretation about the exact meaning of a certain word:

- ✚ Children: According to the UN Child Rights Convention and the Austria General Civil Code (§ 21 Abs. 2 Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch) people, who are below the age of eighteen, are classified as children.
- ✚ Physical Violence: Physical violence is defined as an actual or potential physical injury. In the case of vulnerable people, it is the failure to protect them from physical injury.
- ✚ Emotional/psychological Violence: This includes the denial of an environment appropriate to the child's age and the persistent or severe verbal abuse or rejection that has a negative impact on a child's emotional development or behaviour.
- ✚ Sexual Violence: Sexual violence against children is defined as the actual or threatened sexually motivated touching of a child. That includes all forms of sexual activity, such as indecent touching, sexual intercourse, showing pornographic material and so on.
- ✚ Structural Violence: This is described as the avoidable impairment of basic human needs or life, that reduces the real degree of the satisfaction of needs below that what is potentially possible (according to mathematician, sociologist and political scientist *Johan Galtung*).
- ✚ Neglect: Neglect begins when a child is excluded from the basic services, which are required for his or her psychosocial development, for example in the areas of health, nutrition, clothing, housing or education.
- ✚ Abuse: According to a definition of the United Nations, abuse can be described as a certain pattern of behaviour within any kind of relationship, that helps one person to gain or maintain power and control over another person, whose behaviour is getting influenced by these actions. Abuse, just like violence, can also be physical, emotional/psychological, sexual and even economical. Any behaviour, that frightens, intimidates, terrorizes, manipulates, hurts, humiliates, blames, injures, or wounds someone can be seen as abuse.
- ✚ Cyber mobbing: Cyber mobbing refers to various forms of harassment, bullying and threatening of people or organisations with the help of electronic communication tools. This also includes the theft of (virtual) identities in order to insult others in someone else's name.
- ✚ Human trafficking: Human trafficking means taking control of another person by exploiting his or her personal or economic vulnerability or weakness in order to exploit him or her for specific purposes, such as forced prostitution or other forced activities. Men, women and children of all ages and backgrounds can be victims of human trafficking in all regions of the world.

Principles of the Child Protection Policy

The organisation proclaims the following principles on child protection and safeguarding:

- ✚ Child protection is the responsibility of every staff member and every partner of the organisation.
- ✚ The Child Protection Policy identifies the children's well-being and welfare as primary concern.
- ✚ Every child has the right to be protected from any kind of harm, abuse or exploitation regardless of their age, cultural background, physical and/or mental disability, gender, language, ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity.
- ✚ Children have the rights to participate and express their opinion on all matters, which actually or potentially affect them.
- ✚ The organisation is committed to collaborate with external partners/project partners, partner organisations and parents/other relatives to ensure welfare, health and development of the children.

Responsibilities for those addressed by the Child Protection Policy

This section explains the responsibilities for those people, who are covered by the scope of the Child Protection Policy. People, who fall under this scope, are defined in the section above. The responsibilities are as follows:

1. Never abuse and/or exploit a child or behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm and/or is able to influence the (personal) development.
2. Always behave in a manner of respect towards the feelings, wishes and the rights of children and act in their best interests. Do not expose them to dangerous, harmful and/or uncomfortable situations, that undermine their dignity and/or their integrity.
3. The organisation takes preventive measures to strengthen the protection and safeguarding of children and to prevent future incidents. That includes the training, recruitment and the supervision of the organisation's staff members on child protection and safeguarding issues as well as the requirement to adopt and apply this Child Protection Policy and its obligations.
4. The organisation contributes to the setup of an environment, or more precisely a safe space, where children are able to feel protected and where they can share any thoughts and concerns not only about the organisations work but also about its private life.

5. All responsible persons are committed to respect the obligation to maintain silence, especially when it involves intimate and private information from the child's surroundings. This does not include information around abuse, harassment and/or violence affecting the child.
6. In case of the occurrence of child abuse and/or violation, as defined in the sections above, as well as in case of the mere suspicion of incidences, which are potentially able to harm or influence a child, all persons responsible are obligated to report the incidence to the management, before communicating with the local support offices.
7. Has an incident already happened, all persons responsible are obligated to react in a respectful and adequate manner, namely to listen and respond to the child's concerns and to protect it from further damaging happenings.
8. All responsible persons are committed to participate in child abuse/violation investigations and support their progress, especially when it comes to sharing relevant information.
9. The organisation has to regularly inform itself about child protection and child safeguarding guidelines as well as changes in their contents, released by local Child Protection Committees for the protection of children.
10. The organisation has to regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Child Protection Policy.

Data Protection and Privacy

The organisation is committed to protect data privacy information (e.g., collected photos and videos) of children from unintentional dissemination and publication. Furthermore:

- ✚ The collection of personal data of children is legally based on the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679 and the Austrian Data Protection Law (DSG).
- ✚ Before collecting personal data of children, the organisation has to ask for permission either from their parents or other people, who are in charge of their parental custody.
- ✚ The sharing of private information with other entities will not take place unless they are participants in the project or project partners. If this is the case, they are obligated to declare their confidentiality.
- ✚ The content of the declaration of confidentiality depends on the conducted project.

Step by Step Guide in Case of Detected Child Abuse/Violence

It is recommended to take the following steps in case of the suspicion or the actual occurrence of child abuse and/or violence:

1. In case that a child reports an incident, listen to them, treat their statements with respect and take them seriously.
2. Make sure that you are not alone with the child. If they want to speak to you alone, ensure that someone is close to you. Do not promise confidentiality and inform them about the next steps you are about to take and that you have to involve other persons that are able to help them.
3. Make sure you are clear about what the child says before you report it. That means, write down or record what the child explained to you. Be as detailed as possible but at the same time, avoid emphasizing on unnecessary details.
4. Try to maintain confidentiality, which means that you should only discuss the matter with those you want to involve to protect the child.
5. Report the incident to the management team within 24 hours, after you spoke to the child. This should be done via email, which has to include a detailed description of the conversation and the persons involved.
6. Once the management team received the email, it is encouraged to clarify and pursue the information. While doing this, the privacy of the child should be guaranteed and respected. Depending on the degree of danger and harm, the management team has to intervene and is committed to collaborate with the local authorities.
7. If the management team finds out that criminal action towards the child took place, it must immediately alert the local law enforcement and child protection agencies.