



## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY** Boxgirls South Africa

Version January 2016

Boxgirls South Africa is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children in its care. Boxgirls South Africa founds its work on the standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and promotes these rights. All children shall be treated with respect and dignity. The rights, wishes and feelings of children will be listened to and they have the right to have their voices heard. All children have equal rights and shall be treated equally and be protected of all forms of harm and abuse regardless of their age, culture, socioeconomic background, gender, skin color, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, beliefs, religious or political affiliation, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. Boxgirls South Africa will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in Boxgirls South Africa through adherence to the child protection guidelines adopted by Boxgirls South Africa and as stipulated in this policy. Any staff member and person being involved in the Boxgirls South Africa program including volunteers, visitors etc. are obliged to act according to the Code of Conduct and the Child Protection Policy of Boxgirls South Africa. The Child Protection Policy is promoted by those in the position of leadership within the organization.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (South African Children's Act 2005). Boxgirls South Africa's Child Protection Policy is in compliance, amongst others, with the following South African Legislation: Constitution of South Africa, in particular Section 28, the Children's Act (2005), the Child Care Act (1983) as amended by Section 52A of the Child Care Amendment Act (1991) and the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2).

### **POLICY AIMS**

The aim of the Boxgirls South Africa Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of BOXGIRLS SOUTH AFRICA.
- Allow all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

### **PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE**

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the afterschool environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child enters the Organisation's programmes having been subjected to child abuse the Organisation's programme staff must work with the appropriate agencies (e.g. by consulting with Childline, Service Number: 0800 055 555) to ensure the child receives the required support.

### **GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

**Good practice means:**



1. Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
2. Treating all young people equally, and with respect and dignity.
3. Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
4. Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with young people (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
5. Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
6. Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly. Young people and their parents should always be consulted and their agreement gained.
7. Keeping up to date with skills, qualifications
8. Involving parents/carers wherever possible. For example, on events.
9. Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
10. Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
11. Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
12. Recognizing the developmental needs and capacity of young people
13. Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
14. Requesting written parental consent if the Organization's staff/officials are required to transport young people in their cars.

### **Practices to be sanctioned:**

You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Share a room with a child
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- Do things of a personal nature for children, that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised

**N.B.** It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the children involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

### **Incidents that must be reported/recorded:**

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate officer and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a child.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.



### **Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers:**

Boxgirls South Africa recognizes that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- All volunteers/staff should complete an application procedure that will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving license with photo).

### **Interview and Induction:**

All employees/volunteers will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees/volunteers should receive an induction, during which:

- A check should be made that the application procedure has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures).
- Their qualifications should be substantiated.
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified.
- They should sign up to all of the organisation's relevant Codes and Policies.

### **Training:**

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help staff/volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is not likely to result in allegations being made.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- Work safely effectively with children.

### **Responding to allegations or suspicions:**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in Boxgirls South Africa in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities.

Boxgirls South Africa will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

### **Sexual abuse and sexual exploitation**

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 and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. This may include but is not limited to: the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of a child in prostitution in pornographic performance and materials or other unlawful sexual practices; They may include



non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### **Physical abuse**

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 for the child's health, survival, development or dignity. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating.

### **Neglect**

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. The parents of neglected children are not necessarily poor. They may equally be financially well-off.

### **Emotional abuse**

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. Acts in this category may have a high probability of damaging the child's physical or mental health, or its physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Abuse of this type includes: the restriction of movement; patterns of belittling, blaming, threatening, frightening, discriminating against or ridiculing; and other non-physical forms of rejection or hostile treatment.

(definitions according to WHO, Preventing Child Maltreatment 2006)

The present Child Protection Policy is based on the guidelines for child protection of our partners UBS Foundation and Beyond Sport.

1. The Boxgirls Club is a safe and inclusive environment for the girls and free from all forms of abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation.
2. All children have equal rights to protection,
3. Any staff of Boxgirls Club will not condone or participate in corrupt activities or illegal activities
4. No staff shall misuse its power by neither withholding assistance nor by giving preferential treatment for sexual favors or acts.
5. Any suspicions of any kind of child maltreatment as defined above shall be reported to the lead person for child protection following the guidelines attached. Strict confidentiality must be maintained to protect all individuals involved. If a child protection case emerges during the programme the safety of the child has to be made sure before it is sent home.
6. If I see or suspect any disregard of the Code of Conduct or child maltreatment, an allegation of child maltreatment is made, a child discloses child maltreatment I'll take action according to the guidelines of the Boxgirls Child Protection Policy
7. Any images (meaning photos, videos ect.) shall be taken in agreement with the persons, who are in the photo video ect. They shall only be published or shown to third persons in agreement. They shall not undermine the dignity of the person shown or be harmful to them in any way.
8. All staff has the responsibility to support the care and protection of the girls



9. Boxgirls will terminate its cooperation or contract with any person or employee of partners who does not obey the organization's Code of Conduct or Child Protection Policy.
10. All staff members of Boxgirls who work with children will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, and will be provided with guidance and/or training child protection procedures



## **ACTION IF THERE ARE CONCERNS**

### **1. Concerns about poor practice:**

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the designated/Organisation Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Organisation/Organisation Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the board of director who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

### **2. Concerns about suspected abuse:**

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Organisation/Organisation Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Organisation/Organisation Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- The Organisation/Organisation Child Protection Officer should also notify the board members who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the Organisation/Organisation Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Manager who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

### **Confidentiality:**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The Organisation's Child Protection Officer.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation.
- Social services/police.
- Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

### **Internal Enquiries and Suspension:**

- The Boxgirls South Africa Director will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Boxgirls South Africa management will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Boxgirls South Africa management must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

### **Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse:**

- Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of staff may need. Use of help lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process



- Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

#### **Allegations of previous abuse:**

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, the Organisation should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside Boxgirls South Africa, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

#### **Action if bullying is suspected:**

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

#### **Action to help the victim and prevent bullying:**

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the Organisation Child Protection Officer or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

#### **Action towards the bully(ies):**

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully (ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Provide support for the victim's peer-educator.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.
- Most 'low level' incidents will be dealt with at the time by peer-educators and volunteers. However, if the bullying is severe (e.g. a serious assault), or if it persists despite efforts to deal with it, incidents should be referred to the designated/Organisation Child Protection Officer as in "responding to suspicions or allegations" above.

### **3. Concerns outside the immediate Boxgirls South Africa environment (e.g. a parent or carer):**

- Report your concerns to the Organisation Child Protection Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.

#### **See 4. below for the information social services or the police will need:**

- If the Organisation Child Protection Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.



- Social Services and the Organisation Child Protection Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- The Organisation Child Protection Officer should also report the incident to the Boxgirls South Africa management. The management should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in Boxgirls South Africa and act accordingly.
- Maintain confidentiality on a **need to know** basis only.
- See 4 below regarding information needed for social services.

#### **4. Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse:**

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

#### **REVIEW:**

This policy and procedures will be regularly reviewed:

- In accordance with changes in legislation and guidance on the protection of children and changes within Boxgirls South Africa
- Following any issues or concerns raised about the protection of children within Boxgirls South Africa
- In all other circumstances, at least every three years.