



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

for

**ENSURING SAFETY and
PROTECTION of CHILDREN**

at

PADALA CHARITABLE TRUST (PCT)

CONTENTS

PART – I

1.	About PCT	2
2.	About the Policy	3
3.	Purpose of the Policy	3
4.	Child Protection committee	4
5.	Scope of the Policy	4
6.	Limitations of the Policy	4

PART – II

7.	Employees' Code of Conduct	5
8.	Children's Code of Conduct	5
9.	Infrastructure	6
10.	Transport Safety	6
11.	Confidentiality Principle	7
12.	Standard Operating Procedure for Reporting	8
13.	Counselling Children	9
14.	Notifying Parents / Guardians	9
15.	Child Safety Checklist	10
16.	Glossary	11
17.	Bibliography	13

PART – I

ABOUT PCT (PADALA CHARITABLE TRUST)

PCT (Padala Charitable Trust) is a non-profit, non-government organization founded and registered in 2002. PCT works in the fields of advocacy and operates to reach out to marginalized people with no bar on their caste, religion or gender.

We advocate for girl child safety, female empowerment, child sexual abuse, and socio-economic upliftment of marginalized people. PCT constantly strives to reinvent its projects and practices to foster the socio-economic development of the deprived. Our Educational projects include providing scholarships to meritorious students in need. We select orphans and semi-orphans from impoverished backgrounds and take care of their educational, medical, and personal needs.

It is our motto to strengthen government-run schools and colleges. We strive to improve their educational standards, awareness on safety and practical skills by providing education on menstrual health, personal hygiene, career guidance, etc. Our approach is activity-based which leaves a lifetime of memories. Our team loves upgrading to maximize our impact and is on a constant learning curve. Every time we hold a session, we design it to leave an everlasting impression on our listeners.

Thousands of students and benefactors give oral and written testimonials on how we have touched their lives. We feel immensely grateful for all the life stories we get to be a part of. Each and every person in our team is empathetic towards our benefactors and their needs.

Our impact is our legacy.

ABOUT THE POLICY

The Child Protection Policy (CPP) is to protect children from any form of danger and provide them to experience a healthy childhood. In India, a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years. Protection also means reducing their vulnerability to any form of danger and ensuring that every child has a safety net that protects and rescues them from harmful circumstances. Every child has a right to protection and this policy ensures that every child receives protection required for the level of their vulnerability. The Right to Protection is essential for children and failing to provide that will negatively affect the rest of the child rights.

Protecting a child is every citizen's responsibility according to the Constitution of India. The Constitution of India guarantees equal rights to children as citizens and equality before the law. This policy is a tool that protects both children and employees of PCT by clearly defining what action is required to take in order to keep children safe, and ensuring consistency of behaviour so that all the employees follow the same process.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

Oftentimes, child rights are ignored, and children are not respected genuinely. However, at PCT, we believe that every child must be respected and treated with appropriate behaviour. Our organisation established this policy to give assurance to children and their parents or guardians that children's safety is given the highest priority in our organisation.

The purpose of a CPP is to ensure the protection of all children from harm, abuse, and exploitation while participating in our activities. The policy is built in a way to avoid any sort of discrimination when enforcing it. The policy provides Code

of Conduct guidelines to both children and employees which are to be strictly followed to ensure the safety and security of children. This child protection policy also demonstrates our organisation's commitment to children and their personal safety.

CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

A Child Protection Committee will be established and maintained at PCT which will include at least 5 members – 4 members who are employees of PCT and 1 external member. The purpose of the committee is to assist in decision-making while considering all aspects of the situation and without bias.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The policy is applicable to –

- » Every employee of PCT and,
- » Every child that visits PCT or is supported by PCT

LIMITATIONS OF THE POLICY

Although the policy was prepared with much care and effort to include every aspect to ensure the safety and protection of children, it is crucial to understand that some situations might require further guidelines or strategies. The policy will be updated as needed to include further aspects as we encounter them.

PART – II

EMPLOYEES' CODE OF CONDUCT

This section gives a list of guidelines to be followed by the employees of the PCT while interacting with children.

- » Employees must always wear their PCT identity cards around children and they must be visible
- » Employees must follow their work dress code
- » Employees must present themselves respectfully and sit in a proper manner
- » Employees must speak in a decent and appropriate manner with the children
- » Employees must not speak with a demeaning tone with the children
- » Employees must respect the children just as one would respect any adult and verbal abuse is strictly prohibited
- » Employees must never isolate a child for any purpose and touch them inappropriately
- » Employees must never touch the children for any purpose
- » If a child seems distressed, employees must notify the person in charge and talk with the child calmly
- » If a child requires first aid, employees must make sure that some other person is also present while performing first aid

CHILDREN'S CODE OF CONDUCT

This section gives a list of guidelines to be followed by the children during their visit to PCT or at an event organised by PCT.

- » Children must treat all the employees with respect
- » Children must wear decent clothes appropriate for a public event

- » Children must not use vulgar language with the employees or fellow children
- » Children must maintain discipline at all times
- » Children must maintain proper hygiene on all premises of the building
- » Children must report any unsafe or inappropriate behaviours by other children or employees

INFRASTRUCTURE

The following section contains items that need to be present in the building where the PCT event is planned to happen.

- » The building must have safe certification from the local authorities
- » Preventive measures must be put in place in case of any kind of calamity such as fire or flood
- » A fully equipped first-aid kit must be maintained at the PCT office and other locations where PCT event takes place
- » At least one person trained in first-aid assistance must be present at the PCT event
- » Separate toilets for girls and boys must be present
- » Water supply should be present in all toilets and handwashing stations
- » Proper hygiene must be maintained in all areas of the building
- » The building premises must be locked or guarded to ensure that no child goes missing

TRANSPORT SAFETY

As PCT organises transport for children, the following measures must be taken to provide safety to the children during transportation.

- » The driver of the vehicle must be a trusted person by PCT

- » If the driver is someone new, one of the PCT employees must accompany the new driver
- » One of the parents must be present and arrange the transport and only then can the transportation begin
- » One of the parents must accompany the children during transportation if any of the PCT employees are unable to do so
- » The driver must have all the required documents to drive a public transport vehicle
- » The driver must follow all the traffic rules without fail
- » The vehicle must be legally registered and have insurance
- » The vehicle must be in good condition
- » 4-wheeled vehicles such as vans are preferred over 3-wheeled vehicles such as an auto
- » Children must maintain discipline and must not distract the driver while driving

CONFIDENTIALITY PRINCIPLE

It is necessary to follow the below confidentiality principle to maintain the safety of the children and the organisation.

- » Every child's personal information must be saved in a file which is password-protected
- » When taking pictures, get consent from the children before posting those pictures on social media
- » PCT employees must maintain the confidentiality principle strictly with all children's personal information
- » When a child shares some private information, evaluate if the situation needs to be addressed
- » If it needs to be addressed, get the child's consent and provide appropriate help

In case of abuse,

- » Employees must not share any of the child's information with anyone unless it is necessary to do so
- » Take the child's permission before sharing their information with other employees
- » Never post any of the child's pictures in any document while reporting the abuse case to authorities

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING

Reporting includes cases related to abuse of any kind: Physical, Emotional, Social, and Sexual. Each case might require different steps of action; however, the following steps must be followed as preliminary steps for every abuse case –

- » Whenever an abuse case comes to light, do not panic and follow the procedure calmly
- » Listen patiently to the child and only ask questions that provide a better understanding of the details
- » Do not blame the child for the abuse and tell them that “It is not your fault”
- » Ask the child if you can take help from their support system
- » Do not make false promises, instead promise the child that you will help them
- » Explain the importance of reporting the case to the authorities
- » Discuss the case only with child protection committee of the organisation and if needed, take guidance from partner organisations
- » Report to appropriate authorities (such as School/College Management, District Administration, Commissioner of School Education, and Secretary/Principal Secretary as needed) upon discussing the case with the child protection committee
- » Stay up to date on the details of the progression of the case

- » If the abuse is happening at the child's home and the child does not want to go home, contact CWC (Child Welfare Committee) immediately for proper guidance on the situation
- » Do not take the child home with you in the case where the child does not want to go home
- » Provide appropriate counselling support to the child

COUNSELLING CHILDREN

Children's counselling is very different from adult's counselling. Certain behaviour patterns must be followed to gain the trust of the children. Here are some guidelines to remember while counselling children -

- » Children usually have trouble opening up and do not respond well to the interview method. The better way is to build their trust first by explaining how you are going to help them
- » Impart hope and confidence by telling them stories and examples
- » Establish a confidentiality agreement that the counsellor must strictly follow
- » Build the necessary life skills in the children, so that they can keep themselves safe
- » Teach the children to cope with their emotions
- » Keep the child's support system in the loop
- » Advice seeking professional counsellor's help
- » For those children who behave inappropriately,
 - a. Teach them the importance of respect and empathy
 - b. Explain the consequences of inappropriate or risky behaviours
 - c. Learn their strengths and encourage them to pursue purposeful activities or hobbies

NOTIFYING PARENTS / GUARDIANS

Parents react differently when they find out something they do not know about their children. So, it is important to maintain a gentle and respectful tone while notifying them. This section provides guidelines to follow while notifying a parent regarding a problem or abuse that their child is facing.

- » Request a private meeting with the parents
- » Help them realize that their child is facing a problem or abuse
- » Help them understand their child's needs
- » Discuss the best approach to take to solve the child's problem
- » Provide the resources that guide them rightly to protect their child
- » Educate them on the law and explain the importance of reporting an abuse case
- » Help them as they try to empower their child

Parents or guardians will only be notified based on the circumstances and this procedure is not considered mandatory.

CHILD SAFETY CHECKLIST

This section provides a list of provisions to ensure child safety. This is a precautionous measure that needs to be fulfilled before meeting with a child or a group of children.

- The employees of PCT must be completely trained on the code of conduct guidelines
- All PCT employees must wear their I.D. card visibly
- Children must be given a small briefing before the event on their code of conduct during their time at PCT
- Infrastructure items must be examined and marked as in good condition

- Transport safety guidelines are to be followed as listed in the policy
- The employees of PCT must understand the confidentiality principle and agree to abide by it in all circumstances
- While reporting an abuse case, ensure to follow the preliminary steps provided in this policy in the section of “Standard Operating Procedure for Reporting”
- Learn the important guidelines provided for counselling children and follow them while counselling children
- Learn the guidelines provided for notifying parents and follow them as needed
- Volunteers and new recruits must be trained on this policy during their first week
- Finally, all PCT current and new employees and volunteers must completely understand this policy and submit to all the guidelines provided

GLOSSARY

PCT employees or members – This includes the following people, board of trustees, full-time employees, part-time employees, interns, and volunteers.

Partner Organisations – Nirman, Child Line, and Arpan.

Child – Any person under 18 years of age.

POCSO Act – The POCSO Act is the abbreviation for Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses which was amended in 2012. It is a gender-neutral law. It protects the child at all stages of the judicial process and gives high importance to the best interest of the child. If medical care is required for the child, it is

provided free of cost. Under this act, the accused person is considered guilty until there is enough evidence to prove that the accused person is innocent.

POCSO Act categorizes CSA into 3 categories –

- » Sexual assault – Touching the private body parts of a child with sexual intent is sexual assault.
- » Sexual harassment – Exposing a child to private body parts, showing pornography, threatening the child, etc. are considered sexual harassment.
- » Using a child for pornography - Using a child in media for sexual programmes such as pornography and exposing the child's private body parts in videos or images.

CWC (Child Welfare Committee) – CWC investigates if the child's home environment is safe or not and if it is not safe, the child is placed in protective care of the state. If the home environment is safe, the child will not be taken away from their home.

Physical Abuse – When someone hurts or harms another person's body. Examples include hitting, slapping, punching, beating, etc.

Emotional Abuse – When someone hurts or harms another person with their words or verbally. Examples include threatening, insulting, manipulating, etc.

Social Abuse – When someone hurts or harms another person's relationships by monitoring, controlling, and disrupting their every activity.

Sexual Abuse – When someone hurts or harms another person's body or mind forcefully or without consent. Children do not have the right to consent, so even if children are wilfully involved in a sexual activity, it is considered sexual abuse. Examples include touching or kissing in the genital area, chest, or buttocks, and showing inappropriate images or videos.

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