



# PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA

Is committed to providing and maintaining a caring learning environment which promotes its core values and prevents and addresses child abuse and exploitation.

We strongly condemn all forms of child abuse and exploitation and always respond to any case of proven, alleged or attempted abuse within our field of function and influence according to its nature.

Efforts ensure that mechanisms are in place to raise awareness, aid prevention, encourage reporting and ease response. They range from human resource development actions such as training and counselling to legal actions where needed.

Our Child Protection Policy is based on:

- a) The mission, vision and values of Patronat Call de Girona
- b) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- c) Experience and input of stakeholders from various partnerships as great value is placed upon their views
- d. The standards on child protection as defined by the Keeping Children Safe Coalition.

The best interest of the child is our primary consideration. Every child has the right to develop to his or her full potential, to quality education, participation and non-discrimination. Everybody has the responsibility to protect children from all forms of abuse, abandonment, exploitation, violence and discrimination. In this policy, specific attention is focused on specific mechanisms to prevent and respond to child abuse.

## **Introduction**

This policy document is binding for all staff members. Every child is potentially at risk of abuse and exploitation. Some girls or boys may be more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, due to various forms of discrimination and marginalization relating to their socio-economic status, gender, disability, ethnicity, caste, or living situation. Therefore, it is crucial to outline the responsibilities of every person connected to the Organization.

According United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) a child is "every human being below the age of 18 years unless national law recognizes the age of majority earlier". We recognize that child abuse and exploitation take place in all countries and societies around the world.

To prevent and respond to child abuse, it is crucial that we as an organization reach a common understanding as to what child abuse is and in which circumstances our policies and procedures apply.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides an international framework outlining children's rights to protection from abuse and neglect (article 19), discrimination (article 2) and different forms of exploitation (articles 32-36); special consideration is given to children deprived of parental care (article 20), refugee children (article 22), children at risk of developing a drug habit (article 33), children who are deprived of their liberty (article 37, 40), children in situations of armed conflict (article 38, 40).



PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA further recognizes the importance of children's participation, empowering children to speak up against all forms of abuse, acting as agents of self-protection.

### **Goals of the Child Protection Policy**

This policy aims at:

- Preventing cases of child abuse and reducing the number of incidents (child-to-child, adult-to-child) in:
- Making children aware of their rights and their active role in child protection,
- Informing children, staff, board members, lodges, family, volunteers and partners about the child protection policy and related procedures (awareness, prevention, reporting, responding),
- Encouraging staff directly involved with children to apply the skills needed to contribute to each child's development and protection,
- Ensuring that all the staff have the working conditions needed to contribute to each child's development and protection,
- Fostering open and honest discussions on child abuse in national meetings and workshops in all programmes and facilities amongst all stakeholders.
- Putting in place fair, secure and transparent reporting channels in all types of programmes that guarantee the right of stakeholders (children, parents, staff) to be heard,
- Forming an active network of protection so that all children and adults in our sphere of influence are safe and protected. Within and across all staff and partners, we strive together for the protection of children.

### **Definitions of Child Abuse**

**Physical Abuse** is the actual or potential physical harm caused by an action or lack of action, which is reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a position of responsibility, power, or trust. Physical abuse may involve hitting, spanking, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, and suffocating. It can also mean causing physical harm to a child by fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing, ill health to a child. The incidents may be single or repeated.

**Sexual Abuse** is evidenced by an activity between a child and an adult or another child who, by age or development, is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power; the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. Child sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact and penetrative or non-penetrative acts. This may also include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.



**Neglect and Negligent Treatment** is the inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the development of the child in: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and which causes, or has a high probability of causing, harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

**Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child that adversely affects his or her self-perception and development. It may involve conveying to the child that he or she is worthless, unloved, and inadequate, or there only to meet the needs of another person; or imposing inappropriate expectations upon him/her. Acts include restricting movement, threatening, scaring, discriminating, scapegoating, corrupting, ridiculing, degrading, bullying, humiliating (e.g. asking potentially embarrassing questions, demanding potentially embarrassing action) or other nonphysical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

### **Specific Considerations**

Child-to-Child Abuse Allegations or concerns regarding the abuse of a child by another child need to be responded to with particular sensitivity; nevertheless, they have to be dealt with through child protection procedures.

All work with young people who have committed abuse requires an effective approach which ensures the protection of people affected, while at the same time supporting the young person in challenging and changing their behaviour.

Any such approach requires:

- The recognition that a child who has abused another child differs significantly from adults who have committed similar offences, as the child is not fully aware of why he or she has committed abuse and what the consequences are
- Keeping in mind that the best interest of the child is the primary consideration in all decisions made - for both the victim and the abuser. Violation of Children's Privacy

The protection of a child's privacy refers to private data of the child as well as pictures, texts, films etc. about children, which are produced for publicity purposes: Any information about a child's history, medical condition and family background has to be stored carefully and to be handled confidentially and with discretion. Children and even their parents or caregivers might not always be aware of a specific form of emotional abuse, which might occur in fundraising, public relations or communication. A child's privacy is, for instance, violated by the production of unauthorised publicity material (pictures, films, texts, etc.) featuring the boy or girl; or by presenting sensitive information within a context that reveals the child's identity.

All staff members and external partners involved in spreading information on children and in creating and distributing publicity material act according to the following guidelines:



When producing publicity material featuring a child, we need to ask both the child and his or her legal guardian (or at least an adult caregiver of the child) for permission to do so.

- We do not actively ask children to do or say anything that might make them feel displayed as 'objects of pity' (e.g. to speak about their past or ask for donations).
- We handle children's names carefully, especially in connection with sensitive information about the same children (e.g. the family background, their medical condition, disability or negative behaviour).
- We act with caution when it comes to combining textual and visual information whenever a text includes sensitive information about a child and whenever a photo or video track shows sensitive aspects of a child's life and reveals his or her identity.

Following these guidelines ensures the respect of the children's privacy while at the same time preventing, and raising awareness for, violations of that privacy. Based on these guidelines, co-workers who are directly involved with children have the right and obligation to protect the children from any attempted violations of their privacy – be they intentional or not. Stakeholders Child protection is everyone's business. It is an integrated part of our work and affects everyone in PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA and anyone who comes into contact with our organization. The specific approach is defined by each member association based on the Child Protection Policy on hand.

Key messages include Children (below 18 years of age) and Young adults (18 years of age or older attending our programmes and interventions):

- You have rights – and this includes the right to say 'No'.
- Violence is not allowed.
- We listen to you and take you seriously.

For Child development staff members: Educators, social workers, psychologists, carers, volunteers:

- You are role models and are listened to.
- You have support in developing positive and participatory discipline processes. - Listen to children: pay attention to possible signs of abuse; take responsibility and be there for them when they need your support.

For Leaders of various facilities and programmes, Board members, Sponsors, donors, journalists and visitors, Partners of other organisations who work and interact with our organization, external contractors and consultants who provide services:

Protection is everybody's business; you are part of the team. Key Parts of Child Protection Policy are:

- Awareness: Raise awareness of child abuse and its risks
- Prevention: Provide guidance on how to safeguard children from abuse
- Reporting: Set up and adhere to a clear and simple reporting procedure
- Responding: Ensure clear action is taken when child abuse is suspected or reported.



## **Child Protection Procedures**

PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA has its own child protection protocols that are based on Spanish and European laws on child abuse. The institution reports any case of child abuse directly to the relevant local authorities, following this protocol:

- Complaints of child abuse must be lodged confidentially at the offices of PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA, under the responsibility of its director, and/or the designated Child Protection Officer.
- PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA's director is Ms. Assumpció Hosta Rebés, who can be contacted via email at: [ahosta@ajgirona.cat](mailto:ahosta@ajgirona.cat)
- The director designates Ms. Neus Casellas Planella as the PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA's **Child Protection Officer**, and she can be contacted via email at: [ncasellas@ajgirona.cat](mailto:ncasellas@ajgirona.cat)
- The **prevention** of any situation of child abuse is based on the specific training of the staff of the PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA regarding this Child Protection Policy.
- The **detection** of any situation of child abuse begins with an actual complaint reported to the Child Protection Officer, by a compliant or by any other informant.
- The **intervention** has different steps:
  - In the event of a sexual abuse occurring in the last 72 hours, or of obvious physical abuse, the Child Protection Officer will immediately contact the Dr. Josep Trueta University Hospital, the reference hospital in the city, in order to take the appropriate measures and transfer the minor to the hospital.
  - Regardless of how long it has been since the abuse, the director must notify the Juvenile Prosecutor's Office, or the Guard Court, or the Mossos d'Esquadra Police, through the corresponding report.
  - When the alleged sexual abuse is committed by an adult with no professional connection to PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA, the director must notify the child's family.
  - If the alleged sexual abuse is committed by a member of staff, the director will also take the necessary measures to prevent the professional involved from direct contact with children.

## **Background Check**

To ensure proper conducting during work with children, PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA is informing prior to employment that it will conduct background checks of persons recruited to work with minors. A background check should be required when working with vulnerable groups such as kids and fragile individuals. In Spain, employers are required by law to recruit personnel who have no relevant convictions for positions involving minors (Ley Orgánica 1/1996, de Protección Jurídica del Menor, and Ley 26/2015 and Ley 45/2015). Employers who recruit ineligible workers may risk legal action and penalties.

The background check consists in a negative certificate of sexual-related crimes, expelled by the Ministry of Justice of Spain, on any individual before embarking in a position that includes work with children.

Girona, July 28th, 2023

*Assumpció Hosta*

Assumpció Hosta

Director

Patronat Call de Girona