



## **Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy**

### **Introduction**

AkiDwA is a national network for migrant women living in Ireland. Our members envision a just society where there is equal opportunity and equal access to resources in all aspects of society. AkiDwA is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of children and vulnerable adults by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm and neglect. The best interest of the child and vulnerable adult is the paramount consideration.

### **Guiding Principles**

The following are guiding principles which AkiDwA's endeavours to safeguard children and/or vulnerable adults:

1. Adopting safeguarding and child and/or vulnerable protection procedures, along with risk assessment procedures, safety checks and a code of practise for all who work on behalf of the organisation.;
2. Ensuring any concerns are reported to the relevant authority, regardless of whether one is a mandated person or otherwise;
3. Providing effective management for staff, interns, volunteers etc. through support and training; and
4. Treating all those supported by our services with dignity and respect at all times.

### **Policy Statement**

The purpose of the policy is to protect children and vulnerable adults from any harm that may be caused during any interaction with AkiDwA, its activities, employees, interns etc. AkiDwA aims to be a child and vulnerable adult safe organisation. We will do all that we can to ensure that any contact children and

vulnerable adults have with our organisation is one that is free from any form of harm, and that they feel respected, safe and heard.

Typically, AkiDwA's constituency is made up of adults, however when at public events, AkiDwA representatives (employees, board, interns, volunteers, contracted individuals etc) may come into contact with children and vulnerable adults. This policy is also meant to protect AkiDwA employees and representatives from any false allegation of improper conduct in that regard.

All staff and people representing AkiDwA, nationally and internationally, are bound by the policy and supporting procedures and are required to have an awareness and understanding of this document. It is the responsibility of all staff to know their responsibilities and of their duty to report and raise concerns at an early stage.

This policy complements the Staff Handbook and all other AkiDwA policies and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

### **Implementation of the Policy**

The manager has overall responsibility to ensure that the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy is implemented. The manager will be the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who will:

- Ensure adherence to this policy
- Act as a liaison with statutory services in matters relating to child and vulnerable adult's protection;
- Act as a resource person to the organisation and follow up of child and vulnerable adult protection referrals to the statutory services and ensure that the procedures are followed systemically and thoroughly.
- Maintain up to date records of any and all allegations of abuse, and ensure that these records are maintained in a secure and confidential manner.

### **Risk Assessment and Management**

Whilst not all risks can be diminished entirely, having in place effective risk assessment and management procedures will lower the likelihood of risk or its potential impacts. AkiDwA aims to protect all children and vulnerable adults from any form of abuse during contact with the organisation or its representatives.

This is achieved through:

- Ensuring all staff, interns, volunteers and representatives of AkiDwA understand the protective policies in place.
- Ensuring all staff, interns, volunteers and representatives of AkiDwA understand how to respond to any concerns of abuse raised.
- Identifying a key person who has overall responsibility in ensuring this policy is implemented.
- Regularly reviewing all policies related to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

### **Reporting and Reacting to Allegations of Suspected Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse**

The following procedure will be followed for reporting and reacting to any witnessed, suspected or alleged incident of child and vulnerable adult abuse or violation of the Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy by an employee, intern, volunteer or representative of AkiDwA. The guiding principle in responding to any concerns around child and vulnerable adult protection is that the safety and welfare of the child and vulnerable adult should always come first. No child or vulnerable adult should be put at more risk by any action that may be taken.

If you witness, suspect or a disclosure is made to you about a case of child or vulnerable adult abuse:

- Stay calm so as not to frighten the young or vulnerable person;
- Do not confront or challenge the alleged person directly;
- Do not investigate or inform the parents or guardians of the child or vulnerable adult;
- If you have to ask questions, keep them to a minimum so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. Do not ask leading questions – any questions asked should be for the purpose of clarification only. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or ideas have been suggested during the questioning;
- Let the child or vulnerable adult know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens;
- Do not promise confidentiality, but that you will inform only those people who need to know;
- Safety of the child or vulnerable adult should always be considered to be paramount. If urgent action is required in order to protect the child or vulnerable adult then it may be taken prior to the reporting procedure e.g. if the child or vulnerable adult needs urgent medical attention make arrangements to get the child or vulnerable adult to the nearest health facility and inform the medical personnel of your concerns and make them aware that there is a child or vulnerable adult protection issue;
- Record all concerns relating to the case;

- Report as soon as possible to the DLP who will assess the situation and advise on further steps that may need to be taken.

At this stage any reported or suspected abuse is an allegation rather than proved. All concerns, (where reasonable grounds for concern exist) and allegations about abuse must be referred to the DLP, who will assess the situation and can ask advice from the statutory authorities as to what course of action to take if they are unsure on how to proceed. In certain instances, there may be an obligation to report concerns to the statutory authorities.

When an allegation is made against a staff member, volunteer or intern or representative of AkiDwA, the following steps will be taken:

- Any action will be guided by the agreed procedures, the applicable contract and the rules of natural justice. The priority will be to ensure that no child or vulnerable adult is exposed to unnecessary risk.
- The DLP (unless the allegation is being made against them) and the Manager will be informed as soon as possible.
- The Manager will, as a matter of urgency, take any necessary immediate action. This action should be in proportion to the level of risk involved and will be guided by natural justice.
- The follow up on an allegation of abuse against a staff member or representative of AkiDwA will be made in consultation with the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána.
- The Manager will ensure that actions taken do not undermine or frustrate any investigations being conducted by the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána.

## **Outside Concerns**

Any person having any child or vulnerable adult abuse concerns from outside immediate AkiDwA related activities should:

- Contact their local child protections agency (Tusla) and/or An Garda Síochána, who will decide how to handle the matter;
- Report the incident to the DLP within AkiDwA who will ascertain whether or not the person(s) involved in the incident play any role within the organisation and act accordingly.

## **Confidentiality**

- Any information offered in confidence to an AkiDwA employee, volunteer or intern is received on the basis that it will be shared with the relevant people in the relevant authority; in the first

instance this will be the DLP, but may include statutory agencies such as Tusla or An Garda Siochana. Apart from this, careful confidentiality will be observed.

- Any recorded information must be kept confidential. Sharing of information, which could identify a child, vulnerable adult, or alleged perpetrator, should be purely on a 'need to know' basis.
- All information, including that contained in correspondence, shall be kept under lock and key in a secure place with limited access to designated people. It should not under any circumstances be available for a wider viewing.

This policy will be part of the induction material given to all new staff, volunteers, interns, board members and third parties representing AkiDwA at public events. The policy will be presented annually at a staff meeting and any further induction or training required will be put in place.

### **Code of Behaviour**

Employees, volunteers and representatives of AkiDwA who come into contact with children and vulnerable adults should:

- Treat everyone with respect, recognising their right to personal privacy;
- Plan and organise events in a manner which reduces risk;
- Empower children and vulnerable adults by promoting their rights and raising awareness,
- Ensure that activities affecting children and vulnerable adults are in the best interests of the children and vulnerable adults concerned;
- If providing child or vulnerable adult focussed activities, consult with children and vulnerable adults, to the extent feasible, in the planning, implementation and evaluation of activities that affect them;
- Ask for permission from parents, guardians or school authorities before taking photographs (See Appendix One)
- Foster a culture of mutual accountability so that potentially abusive behaviour can be challenged;
- Help children and vulnerable adults to develop their own sense of their rights as well as helping them to know what they can do if they feel that there is a problem.

Good practice includes valuing and respecting children and vulnerable adults as individuals, and the adult modelling of appropriate conduct - which would exclude bullying, aggressive behaviour, racism, sectarianism or sexism.

Employees, volunteers and associates must always avoid unnecessary physical contact with a child and vulnerable adult and must not, under any circumstances:

- Develop inappropriate relationships with children and vulnerable adults or spend excessive time alone with a child or vulnerable adult away from others;
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child or vulnerable adult at risk of abuse;
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive;
- Make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted;
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour which is illegal, unsafe or abusive; or
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children and vulnerable adults.

**Appendix One**



**Photo Consent Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ grant permission for AkiDwA to use photographs taken of INSERT NAME OF CHILD at NAME OF EVENT or as part of NAME OF CAMPAIGN OR WORK and for use by the organisation in the promotion of AkiDwA's work.

This promotion can include use in AkiDwA publications or printed material; on the organisation's website or in media work but not to include sale to third parties.

**Signed:**

Parent or Guardian

**Date:**

**Contact Details:**

Address

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Telephone

Email

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