

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF LOK CHETANA SAMITI

As of 01 January 2021

Objective of Lok Chetana Samiti's Child Protection Policy

Lok Chetana Samiti (LCS) is a charitable and educational association for the integral development of all people, especially those of the poor and weaker sections of society, without any distinction of caste, religion, sex or place of birth. It aims at building up a new Indian society based on justice, equality and fellowship. It also works closely with children and youth who are often the most vulnerable in the society. In all our intervention we put the welfare and well-being of children and youth first and is committed to preventing intentional or unintentional abuse or harm to children who are in contact with it. We aim to become a child-safe organization. We will work toward transformed contexts where children are loved, educated, protected, respected, and valued, and grow up to be a responsible citizen.

To meet the objective, LCS will do the following-

- Take proactive action to prevent child abuse in any form at LCS workplace and within its operating hours;
- Institute processes/systems/mechanisms for early detection, redressal and follow-up of all cases of abuse of children, LCS is working with, whether at workplace/within operating hours or in their homes/community, etc; and
- Take action, possible within its domain, against any abuser - LCS employee / any other person engaged with LCS children.

Basis of Child Protection Policy

LCS bases its intervention and policies on the principles mentioned in the international recognition of the 'Rights of the Child'. We recognize all child abuse is a serious criminal offense as spelled out in Indian law.

Purpose of the Policy

To ensure a secure, safe and protective environment for all the children at LCS work place and particularly at Chetana Chatravas, hostel for girl children.

Scope of policy

All people who represent LCS must act in accordance with the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct and will be asked to sign a declaration of commitment. This includes all who are paid or volunteer to work with LCS, i.e. General/Executive Body, Executive Committee, entire staff and associates (hereinafter called LCS personal). All such persons will be made aware of this policy and code of practice and so will undertake to abide by these while working with LCS. They are expected to be actively involved in the process of protecting children.

Definitions

- Child:** The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as "every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, the majority is attained earlier."
- "Children at Risk":** Children are at risk if any basic needs are threatened in any way.
- Abuse:** The World Health Organisation defines child abuse as 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.'
- Child protection** denotes physical & mental safety from any kind of harm.

Operationalizing the Policy

- The LCS will take proactive action to prevent child abuse in any form at the workplace and within its operating hours, by -
- Developing guidelines for the physical safety and protection of children attending LCS activities, hostel and ensure adherence to them.
- Contributing to an environment where children are able to recognize unacceptable behaviour and discuss their rights and concerns.
- Sensitizing and orienting its employees to norms of behaviour which recognizes the child as an individual with rights.
- Sensitizing and orienting all others associated with LCS on the Child Protection Policy.
- Ensuring that all employees and others meet the child/children in the presence of other LCS employees and there is no one-to-one meeting with the child/children individually.

LCS will enable early detection, redressal and follow-up of all cases of abuse of children LCS is working with, whether at the workplace/within operating hours or in their homes/community, Chetana Chatravas, by –

- Instituting systems to ensure that its Child Protection Policy has been disseminated to all its employees/others associated with LCS.
- Training and sensitizing its employees and others to detect cases of child abuse.
- Raising awareness of the community on child abuse and the need to take appropriate action.
- Developing a redressal plan, with the child/children's immediate family, which will include immediate disconnect between the child and the abuser, counselling of the child and immediate family, establishing linkages with specialized agencies, etc.

LCS will take action, possible within its domain, against any abuser - LCS employee / any other person engaged with LCS children, as follows:

- LCS will appoint a Complaints Committee for addressing complaints and carrying out the investigation
- In cases where the offence is proved to have been committed and disciplinary action is recommended by the Complaints Committee, LCS will take disciplinary action as per the service rules against the offender or in cases where it is so deemed appropriate through the criminal justice system.
- In cases where disciplinary action has been taken, a brief report with details of the offence, the investigation findings and the action taken will be shared with all staff members.
- In cases where the complaint is found to be false and motivated, LCS may initiate disciplinary action against the complainant and others who are proved to have provided false information or concocted evidence.

Duties and Responsibilities for Dissemination and Implementation of the Policy

- LCS will be responsible for the operationalization of the policy with regard to prevention, redressal and disciplinary action (when recommended by the Complaints Committee).
- LCS will ensure that the contents and implications of this policy have been disseminated by the department managers to their team members and others, through meetings and induction programs.
- All centres and the Head Office are required to have a copy of the policy.
- Managers/ Officers will be responsible for monitoring workplace practices and the work environment and may be held personally liable in cases where they knew or can reasonably be expected to have known about an incident of child abuse but did not take reasonable steps to deal with it.

- LCS will be responsible for training and sensitization of the staff members.
- LCS is responsible for creating an environment where employees do not feel that if they raise their voice against child abuse, it would adversely impact their promotion, increments or working conditions.
- It is the duty of the staff representative of the complaints committee to help the child and/or family in filing the complaint and providing moral support.
- The staff representative of the complaints committee ensures that procedures for registering complaints are simple, accessible and effective

Confidentiality and Protection

The Complaints Committee will address complaints and carry out the investigation process in a manner that respects the confidentiality and privacy of complainants, child abused and alleged offenders.

In exceptional situations, the Complaints Committee may decide to set aside the commitment to confidentiality, such as in cases where legal proceedings are initiated and the organization is required to disclose information, or in cases where disclosure is deemed necessary to protect the interests of others.

Under the terms of this policy, the organization is committed to provide support and protection to complainants. Measures will also be taken to prevent further abuse of the child on account of having filed a complaint.

Procedure for Implementation of Child Protection Policy

All LCS Staff and Associates (detailed on scope of policy) are equally responsible:

- to act positively for the cognitive, emotional, social and physical wellbeing of LCS Chatravas' children; to maintain the dignity and privacy of each child;
- to ensure that children are safe and free from all form of corporal punishment involving physical punishment, mental harassment, and discrimination; to protect LCS Chatravas' children against sexual abuse with zero tolerance attitude;
- to accept and follow Child Protection Policy; to inform to the member/s of 'Child Welfare Committee' or any authorized person of LCS, if found any kind of abuse as mentioned under code of conduct; to sign the declaration format and abide by the rules and regulations of 'Child Protection Policy of LCS'.

LCS Management (Chief Functionary/Secretary and Executive Director) **make sure that:**

- Each staff, associates and visitors should be aware of Child Protection Policy through orientation programs like showing videos, internal discussions, resource persons etc. as appropriate in their context.
- Children should be oriented about Child Rights, Child Abuse, Online Safety, CHILDELINE No. 1098 and, other child welfare services available to them.
- Contact details of 'Child Welfare Committee' is displayed appropriately and inform to Chetana Chatravas Children, Staff and Associates.
- Any individual related to LCS who abuses or exploits children or violets any section of 'Child Protection Policy of LCS' should be appropriately punished as per policy rules.

Training and Education

All LCS staff will receive specific training in matters relating to Child Protection so that they may fulfil their role.

Child Welfare Committee

This committee would consist of **Four members**: (1) one female staff member (2) two female nominees by the LCS management and (3) a senior hostel student.

The term of committee will be for three years.

If the accused is one of the Committee members, the Secretary and Executive Director will take decision to replace other person in the Committee.

The role of the Committee:

- i. must constitute to look into cases of corporal punishment, sexual abuse, mental harassment, discrimination, and all other points under code of conduct;
- ii. must see whether adequate steps have been taken to prevent corporal punishment, child sexual abuse, mental harassment, discrimination, and all other points under code of conduct;
- iii. must guarantee that the child who has been abused is given appropriate emotional support, care and protection, the best possible speedy care – medical and psychological – and the required treatment for the trauma that the child has suffered;
- iv. must ensure that those who have reported child abuse concerns are given appropriate protection and support;
- v. must ensure that those who are accused of child abuse are given appropriate support and protection in dealing with all aspects of the case including potential reprisals;
- vi. must proceed to the enquiry and provide a report about the case;
- vii. must recommend appropriate disciplinary action against the accused;

Enquiring and Reporting Procedure

Anyone who finds any misconduct against Chetana Chatravas child/children according to Child Protection Policy of LCS must contact the member/members of ‘Child Welfare Committee of LCS’.

The enquiring and reporting procedure by ‘Child Welfare Committee of LCS’:

- ◆ to hear the grievances of corporal punishment, child sexual abuse, mental harassment, discrimination and all other points under code of conduct without any delay.
- ◆ to take information from the ‘victim child’/informer/accused in form of statement /proof/evidence by any child/adult, staff, LCS associates – Video recorded verbal statement, and/or written statement.
- ◆ to prepare a written report about the case, and recommend a disciplinary action against the accused.
- ◆ on receipt of the enquiry report and recommendations from the ‘Child Welfare Committee of LCS’, the Chief Functionary/Secretary and Executive Director with LCS management will take the final decision.

DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

To be signed by all LCS Staff, associates and volunteers. A copy will be kept in the file in the LCS office

DECLARATION FORMAT

I, (full name), (Position held), declare that,

I am committed to ensure that I will create a child friendly environment where my behavior, conduct, practice, process and attitude will be humane and free of all forms of fear, trauma, prejudice, discrimination and exploitation.

I have read and understood the LCS Child Protection Policy and have attended/ will attend the Child Protection Training.

I will work within the procedure as laid out in the LCS Child Protection Policy.

I have not been accused or convicted to any offence involving physical or sexual abuse of children or young people.

I will always report to appropriate authorities, if any case of child abuse, exploitation and neglect comes to my knowledge.

I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding the abuse of children while engaged in LCS activities, the allegation will be thoroughly investigated in cooperation with the appropriate procedures. I agree to accept 'Final Decision' taken by appropriate authorities of LCS.

Date:

Signature: