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WORK PROCEDURE



IN THE CASE OF SUSPICION
OF ABUSE, NEGLECT OR
CHILDREN'S RISK BEHAVIOUR



GARÐABÆR



MENNTAKLIF



A work procedure for institutions, organizations and home day-care providers in suspicion of abuse, neglect or children's risk behaviour.

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„It takes a village to raise a child“

An African proverb

Preface

Some children and youngsters live in unacceptable conditions or have emotional difficulties. It is important for people working with children to know their duties and be well informed about the matter.

Each institute or organisation adapts the work procedure to its jobs. The arrangement chosen must work in a way that a report of neglect, abuse or risk behaviour is submitted as soon as possible. It is important that the work procedure is well known by every employee.

With this work procedure we want to make sure that everyone is well informed and employees know the correct procedures.

In this way we can all work together as one for the well-being of children in Garðabær.

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that regard neglect, abuse and children's risk behaviour.

Article 19. Protection from all forms of abuse

Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from abuse, violence and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 27. Adequate standard of living

Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing.

Article 33. Protection from illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

Children should be protected from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties. To do so the States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures.

Article 34. Sexual exploitation

Governments should protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. This provision in the Convention is augmented by the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Article 39. Rehabilitation of child victims

Children who have been neglected, abused or exploited should receive special help to physically and psychologically recover and reintegrate into society. Particular attention should be paid to restoring the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

DUTY OF NOTIFICATION

ACCORDING TO THE CHILD PROTECTION ACT NO. 80/2002

Article 16. Public duty of notification

All persons shall be obliged to notify a child protection committee if they have reason to believe that a child:

- Is living in unacceptable circumstances of upbringing.
- Is exposed to abuse or other degrading treatment.
- Is seriously endangering his/her health and maturity.

Furthermore, all persons are obliged to notify a child protection committee if there is reason to believe that the health or life of an unborn child is being endangered due to the unacceptable or dangerous life-style of an expectant mother, e.g. in the form of alcohol abuse or the consumption of drugs, or when an expectant mother is exposed to abuse, or if there is reason to suspect that an expectant mother is exposed to abuse, or of any incidents which may be regarded as falling within the child protection committee's concerns.

Article 17. Duty of notification by those who deal with children

All persons involved in matters concerning children or expectant mothers, through their position or occupation, are obliged to notify a child protection committee, if they become aware of circumstances as described in Article 16. Pre-school heads and teachers, child-minders, school heads, teachers, clergy, physicians, dentists, midwives, nurses, psychologists, social workers, developmental therapists, career counsellors and those providing social services or counselling are under an especial obligation to monitor the behaviour, upbringing and conditions of children as far as possible, and to inform the child protection committee if the child's circumstances appear to be of the nature described in the first paragraph. The duty of notification provided in this Article takes precedence over provisions in law or codes of ethics on confidentiality within the relevant professions.

Anyone that notifies must confirm their identity.

The notifier may request anonymity pursuant to Article 16.

The duty of notification takes precedence over provisions in law or codes of ethics on confidentiality within the relevant professions.

WORK PROCEDURE

IN THE CASE OF SUSPICION OF NEGLECT, ABUSE OR RISK BEHAVIOUR OF A CHILD.

Employees should:

- Be fully impartial, do their job professionally and with care.
- Make sure that a case follows the correct course within an institution or organisation.
- Show the children, the parents and anyone else concern with the matter full consideration.
- Show full confidentiality.

1



THE EMPLOYEE'S ROLE

If a child or youngster approaches an employee

If a child approaches an employee and implies that it is being neglected or there is abuse in its home or anywhere else it is important that the employee shows appropriate behaviour.

The employee must realise that the child is putting great trust in him/her. He/she must remain calm and make sure that their reactions are appropriate. It is important to listen to what the child is saying and allowing it to talk on without interruption.

It is good to use sentences such as:

- Thank you for trusting me and telling me about this.
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
- I will help you.

If the child does not want to say anything else it should not be pressed to do so. The child has opened up on its experience and one must not disregard the trust the child is showing. The child must be told that appropriate persons must be notified in order to provide help.

If there is suspicion of abuse, sexual or physical, it is important to listen to the child and receive that information without asking leading questions. Leading questions can influence the work procedure of a case with the police. If a child has obvious injuries or reports about abuse a supervisor of the institution or organisation should be notified immediately. The supervisor will contact the family welfare department of Garðabær.



Suspicion of inadequate situations, abuse or children's risk behaviour

It is important that an employee shows concern in a conversation with a child or a youngster and makes sure that the case follows the right course. The information must be delivered to a supervisor. It is the supervisor's responsibility to report the case to the family welfare department of Garðabær. It is the role of the family welfare department to investigate the matter and talk to the child according to their work procedures.

In cases where neglect or children's risk behaviour has gone on for some time in spite of parents being notified, the case should be reported to the family welfare department.

If there is suspicion of a parent or individual who fetches a child from school being under the influence of alcohol or other substances

Seek assistance from a supervisor and direct those concerned to the supervisor's office. There the supervisor should be notified that employees suspect the person concerned to be under the influence of alcohol or other substances and should not take the child off the premises.

Prevent the person concerned of taking the child off the premises if it is thought that the child could be endangered. The supervisor calls the police at tel.112 and requests assistance if necessary.

The supervisor reports the case to the family welfare department of Garðabær.

If there is suspicion of an employee being violent or showing inappropriate behaviour

Seek assistance from a supervisor who will proceed in accordance with the work procedure within the institution or organisation. The supervisor will report the case to the family welfare department of Garðabær.

**KEEPING
CONFIDENTIALITY
IS IMPORTANT**



WORK PROCEDURE

ANONYMITY
Reporting is not in the name of an individual employee, but in the name of the institute or organisation.

2



WRITING A STATEMENT OF CASE FACTS

It is important that employees write down all facts of incidences and conversations as soon as possible in case of a potential reporting.

3



WHERE DOES AN EMPLOYEE SEEK ASSISTANCE?

An employee should seek a supervisor's assistance.

If a supervisor can't be reached and a child is in danger, the family welfare department of Garðabær should be notified immediately at tel. 525 8500 or 112 and inform the supervisor later.

If an employee feels that he/she cannot seek assistance with the supervisor then seek assistance with the family welfare department of Garðabær at tel. 525 8500.

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REPORTING

The supervisor reports a case to the family welfare department of Garðabær or to the municipality where the child lives.

Notification forms can be found on Garðabær's website under Stjórnsýsla – Umsóknir og eyðublöð – Félagsþjónusta – Barnaverndartilkynning. Further information can be reached at tel. 525 8500.

If incidences occur outside office hours or at weekends it is possible to contact an on-call service of the child protection services at 112.

A supervisor can seek outside assistance to provide support for his employees. If an employee is in shock a crisis counsellor can be provided.

AFTER A CASE HAS BEEN REPORTED

Information for the person reporting and cooperation

The person reporting is not entitled to any personal information about a child involved in a reported case or its family. This includes information of a case, investigated or not, and all information related to subsequent work procedures. The child protection committee should however confirm to the reporting person that a report has been received and give general information on the general work procedures of such cases.

Anyone who in one way or another intervenes with the matters of children is obliged to cooperate with the child protection authorities and should endeavour to be in good cooperation with them according to article 20 of the child protection act.

Parental interaction

The supervisor should generally inform parents of a reported case. He informs the parents that it is his legal obligation. In conversing with the parents it must be made clear that the matter is about the welfare of the child and providing support to the child and its family. The aim is to find solutions and provide the appropriate support.

If there is suspicion of a child being exposed to violence in its home then parents should not be notified of the case being reported. In that way the risk of the child being exposed to more violence is reduced and the benefit of investigation will not be disturbed.

Means of support

Possible means of support of the child services are, among other things, regular interviews with a social worker, various specialist services, personal consultants, guidance and support families, besides the support given by Child Protection Agency. Cooperation with the parents is always emphasised.



EXAMPLES OF INCIDENTS WHICH SHOULD BE REPORTED



It is good to bear in mind that it is not one incident or occurrence that should worry an employee. It is often more factors or the notion of a child's feelings that are the cause for concern.

Child protection cases are often divided into three main categories.

These are: Neglect, abuse and risk behaviour of children. The boundaries between these categories are often vague.

The following list, which can also be found in the Child protection Agency's work procedure, can be taken into consideration to help an employee realise the state of a child and its feelings. It is important to bear in mind that this list is not complete.

Neglect

Neglect can be both emotional and physical. It can include a child not getting the proper care or home conditions necessary which could impair its development. Neglect can begin in the womb.

Generally it is not neglect when a child's needs are not met on a single occasion. When the care of a child is repeatedly insufficient it can be called neglect.

- Neglect can be when a child's physical needs are not met because of the parent's indifference. For example that a child doesn't receive adequate health care.
- Neglect can regard the care and supervision of a child. For example if a young child is left alone and unsupervised.
- Neglect can be caused by the parents not being able to take care of a child due to alcohol or drug consumption.
- Neglect can regard a child's school attendance. If a child is repeatedly without the necessities or clothing for school and notifications to parents are ineffective.

Abuse

Abuse can be physical, emotional or sexual and also if the life or health of an unborn child is in danger.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse towards a child is any kind of violence which causes harm to a child or is likely to do so. A child can show signs of violence such as bruises, scalds or broken bones, but traces of violence are not always noticeable. Physical abuse towards children is against the law.

- Physical abuse can involve a child being hit, shaken, being thrown about, scalded or tied up.
- Physical abuse can involve a child being given dangerous medicine or anything else that could harm a child.



Emotional abuse

This can often be hard to detect but can none the less have severe consequences. Emotional abuse towards a child involves parents or other care givers who constantly show a child a negative attitude and negative feelings which damages or prevents the development of a child's positive self-image.

Witnessing violence between parents can also be called emotional abuse.

- Emotional abuse can involve an attitude or behaviour that tells a child that it is worthless, nobody cares for it or no one wants to see it.
- Emotional abuse can involve total passiveness as in showing a child no feelings.
- Emotional abuse occurs when a child is insulted, called names or is treated in an inhumane or degrading manner.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves sexual incidents, words or pictures being directed at a child. Sexual abuse can happen between an adult and a child or between two children, where one of them dominates the other.

Sexual abuse can for example involve:

- Making a child watch pornography or look at genitals.
- Taking photos of a child for the purpose of sexual arousal.
- Touching a child's genitals or having a child touch someone's genitals.
- Sexual pictures, words or conversations on social media.
- Sexual intercourse with a child.

A child's risk behaviour

A child's risk behaviour involves a child behaving in such a way that is harmful or is possibly harmful to the child's health and development.

This risk behaviour can consist of:

- The consumption of alcohol or drugs.
- A child harming itself.
- A child being violent towards others.
- Difficulties in school in spite of parents being supportive.
- Misdemeanours such as vandalizing or not abiding the rules of outdoor hours for children.

According to the Child Protection Act, failure to report is punishable.



BULLYING

AGAINST BULLYING IN GARÐABÆR

Bullying is a repeated physical or mental violence, where one or more people harass an individual who finds it difficult to defend. Bullying involves the abuse of power, with the result that the victim feels bad and vulnerable.

Bullying often occurs where no one sees. The person who is being bullied often does not want to tell what has happened, to prevent the circumstances to get worse. Therefore, it is very important that everyone knows the symptoms of bullying.

The manifestations of bullying

Bullying appears in many ways, for example:

- **Physical:** Beatings, kicking, repelling.
- **Verbal:** Name calling, negative comments, repeated teasing.
- **In writing:** Negative computer- and phone communication, written notes.
- **Indirect:** Slander, exclusion.
- **Material:** Belongings stolen or destroyed.
- **Mental:** Constraint to doing something that is contrary to the sense of justice and self-respect.

Indications that a person is being bullied

Changed behaviour and well-being can be an indication that the child is experiencing bullying. The list below is not exhaustive.

Emotional

- Changes in mood.
- Frequent crying, fragility.
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares.
- Changes in eating habits, loss of appetite or overeating.
- Low self-confidence, fear and anxiety.
- Sadness, depression, suicidal thoughts.

Physical

- Physical complaints, such as headache, stomach pain.
- Anxiety symptoms, such as nail biting, stuttering, various types of tics.
- Physical injuries, such as bumps and bruises that the children cannot explain.
- Torn clothing and/or damaged goods.

Social

- The child seems isolated and lonely.
- The child does not go for nor receive visits.
- The child does not want to participate in social activities and has few or no friends.



Behaviour

- Unexplainable temper tantrums and/or crying.
- The child refuses to tell you what the matter is.
- Aggressiveness and difficult behaviour.

In school

- The child is afraid of going to and from school, asks for escort and/or goes another way.
- Departs earlier or later to school than usual.
- Often arrives late or starts to skip school.
- Avoids certain conditions in school, e.g. gymnastics and swimming.
- Discontinues to study, grades decrease, difficulties in concentrating.
- Isolates from schoolmates.
- Avoids taking recess.

If there is suspicion or confirmation that bullying occurs

If employees are aware of any of the symptoms above or others that indicate that the child is feeling bad, it is important to investigate. If there is suspicion or confirmation that bullying occurs, the policy in Garðabær is clear that the matter should be addressed immediately.

Report

Knowledge of bullying needs to be passed on to the supervisor, the student counselor, the head of department, the coach or the school manager. The employee who receives the knowledge of bullying should address the matter immediately. It is important to start by contacting a party from the bullying prevention team, but they consult on responses and actions.

More about the project

Against bullying in Garðabær is a collaborative project of the town's primary schools. The aim of the project is to establish a coordinated approach to prevent and respond to bullying, improve the well-being and safety of students and the school environment as a whole. In Garðabær's anti bullying program there is a definition of bullying and preferred response methods for employees to work with. All employees of the schools participate in the project. Last year a representative from Stjarnan, the local sports club, entered the project which has added value to the project.

More information can be found on Garðabær website: www.gardabaer.is/ibuar/skolar-og-daggaesla/forvarnir-og-fraedsla/gegn-einelti-i-gardabae

Suspected bullying should be notified formally. A form can be found on the website of Garðabær and the towns primary schools websites.

SUPPORT AND COUNCELLING

FOR EMPLOYEES OF INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISA-
TIONS OR ANYONE WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Supporters and counsellors within institutes and organizations

- The head of an institute or organization
- A contact in the project Well-being of Children in Garðabær.

Outside supporters and counsellors

- The family welfare department of Garðabær: 5258500
- Educational and cultural department of Garðabær: 5258500
- Human resources manager of Garðabær: 5258500

The head of an institute or organization sees to counselling and support for their employees.

Seek assistance with the on-call child protection services at tel. 112 if incidents occur outside office hours or on weekends.

WEBSITES

Barnaheill	www.barnaheill.is
Barnasáttmálinn	www.barnasattmali.is
Blátt áfram	www.blattafram.is
DrekaSlóð	www.drekaslod.is
ForeldraHús	www.foreldrahus.is
Heimili og skóli	www.heimiliogskoli.is
Kvennaathvarfið	www.kvennaathvarf.is
Lögreglan	www.logreglan.is
Rauði krossinn	www.raudikrossinn.is
Saft	www.saft.is
Stígamót	www.stigamot.is
UNICEF	www.unicef.is
Umboðsmaður barna	www.barn.is
Vefur vitundarvakningar	www.stjornarradid.is/verkefni/felags-og-fjolskyldumal/malefni-barna/ofbeldi-gegn-bornum-fraedsluefni
Æskulýðsvettvangurinn	www.aeskulydsvettvangurinn.is

WORK PROCEDURE

IN THE CASE OF SUSPICION OF NEGLECT, ABUSE OR RISK BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN

1

1 ? SUSPICION OF NEGLECT, ABUSE OR RISK BEHAVIOUR

A child approaches an employee

The employee suspects unacceptable conditions, behaviour or instances regarding children

Suspicion of an employee being abusive or showing inappropriate behaviour

Suspicion of a parent or guardian fetching a child being under the influence of alcohol or other substances

2

2 ✍️ WRITING A STATEMENT OF CASE FACTS

It is important that the employee writes down all case facts as soon as possible in case of a potential report

3

3 👤 WHERE TO SEEK ASSISTANCE

An employee seeks assistance with a supervisor as soon as possible

If an employee cannot reach supervisor and a child is in danger, assistance can be reached at the family welfare department at tel. 525 8500 or at tel. 112 and inform the supervisor as soon as possible

If an employee feels that he/she cannot seek assistance with the supervisor then seek assistance with the family welfare department of Garðabær

4

4 ✉️ REPORTING

A supervisor is responsible for reporting a case to the family welfare department of Garðabær

Notification forms can be found on Garðabær's website under Stjórnsýsla - Umsóknir og eyðublöð - Félagsþjónusta - Barnaverndartilkynning. www.gardabaer.is/stjornsysla/stjornsyslan/eydublod

If incidents occur outside office hours or on weekends, please contact the on-call service of the child protection department at tel. 112

It is mandatory to report a suspicion of neglect, abuse and risk behaviour of children.

Family welfare department of Garðabær
tel. 525 8500
E-mail: fjolskyldusvid@gardabaer.is
On-call service: tel. 112