

# Welfare Policy / Child Protection Policy

## Introduction and Purpose

Star for Life Ukraine Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering Ukrainian youth through digital education and life skills training. Our mission is to provide a nurturing environment that fosters learning and growth, enabling young individuals to reach their full potential and contribute positively to society. We believe that every child has the right to a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment, free from harm and abuse.

The welfare and protection of children, particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, is at the heart of our work. We are committed to safeguarding the children we serve, ensuring their well-being, and upholding their rights as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This Child Welfare and Protection Policy has been created to provide clear guidelines and procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of children engaged in our programs. The primary purpose of this policy is to:

1. Establish a safe and positive environment for children.
2. Provide clear procedures for responding to and reporting concerns about a child's welfare.
3. Ensure that all staff, volunteers, and partners understand their responsibilities in relation to child protection.
4. Demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from harm and abuse.

By implementing this policy, we aim to create a culture of vigilance and proactive protection, where every member of our organization understands their role in safeguarding children and is equipped with the knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

## Definitions<sup>1</sup>

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

1. **Child:** Any individual under the age of 18, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. **Abuse:** Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. In the context of children, abuse can take various forms such as physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect.
  - **Physical Abuse:** Any non-accidental physical act inflicted upon a child. This may include hitting, shaking, burning, or otherwise harming a child.
  - **Emotional Abuse:** Any act or omission that harms a child's mental and social development, or that causes severe emotional harm. This includes, but is not limited to, constant criticism, humiliation, belittling, and ignoring a child.
  - **Sexual Abuse:** Any act where a child is used for sexual gratification. This includes, but is not limited to, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, or using a child for pornography or prostitution.
  - **Neglect:** The ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs, including food, clothing, hygiene, supervision, medical attention, education, and emotional care.
3. **Child Protection:** Measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence affecting children.
4. **Child Welfare:** The state of a child's well-being. Child welfare systems are designed to ensure that children are safe, healthy, and have their basic needs met.
5. **Staff:** Any individual who works part-time or full-time for Star for Life Ukraine, either as an employee, consultant, or volunteer.
6. **Partner:** Any organization or individual that works in collaboration with Star for Life Ukraine to achieve common objectives.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that these definitions are not exhaustive and may be expanded as necessary to ensure the comprehensive protection of children engaged in our programs.

## Scope

This Child Welfare and Protection Policy applies to:

1. **Staff:** All individuals who are employed by or work for Star for Life Ukraine, whether on a full-time, part-time, temporary, or permanent basis. This includes, but is not limited to, employees, consultants, interns, and volunteers.
2. **Partners:** All organizations, institutions, or individuals that have a formal/contractual relationship with Star for Life Ukraine. This includes, but is not limited to, partner organizations, contractors, suppliers, sponsors, and donors.
3. **Participants:** All children and young people who participate in any programs, activities, services, or events organized by Star for Life Ukraine or its partners.

This policy applies in all situations and contexts where staff or partners may have contact with children, either directly or indirectly. This includes, but is not limited to:

- During the implementation of projects or programs.
- During events or activities organized by Star for Life Ukraine or its partners.
- During visits to projects or programs by staff or partners.
- In all physical and digital spaces managed by Star for Life Ukraine or its partners.

The policy also applies to any situation where staff or partners represent Star for Life Ukraine, such as during meetings, conferences, training sessions, or on social media.

## Legal Framework

Star for Life Ukraine operates in accordance with the key laws and regulations related to child protection in Ukraine, as well as the international conventions to which Ukraine is a signatory. These include, but are not limited to:

1. **The Constitution of Ukraine:** Which guarantees the rights and freedoms of every child and provides for special protection by the state.

2. **The Law of Ukraine on the Protection of Childhood:** Which outlines the legal, economic, social, and organizational principles for the protection of children's rights.
3. **The Criminal Code of Ukraine:** Which includes provisions related to crimes against children, such as child abuse, exploitation, and neglect.
4. **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):** Which Ukraine ratified in 1991. The UNCRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world and sets out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion, or abilities.

This Child Welfare and Protection Policy aligns with these laws and regulations by establishing clear principles, procedures, and responsibilities for the protection of children. It aims to ensure that all activities carried out by Star for Life Ukraine respect and uphold the rights of children as outlined in the UNCRC and the national laws of Ukraine.

## Risk Assessment

Given the nature of Star for Life Ukraine's work, which involves direct interaction with children, there are several potential risks related to child welfare and protection. These include:

1. **Physical and Emotional Abuse:** This could occur in the form of bullying, harassment, or inappropriate behavior by staff, volunteers, or other children.
2. **Exploitation:** Children could be exploited for labor, sexual purposes, or other forms of abuse.
3. **Neglect:** This could occur if children's basic needs are not met during our programs, or if signs of neglect in their home environment are overlooked.
4. **Online Safety:** As our programs often involve the use of digital tools and online platforms, there's a risk of children being exposed to inappropriate content or online predators.

To identify, assess, and manage these risks, Star for Life Ukraine has implemented several measures:

1. **Staff Training:** All staff and volunteers receive training on child protection policies and procedures, including how to identify and respond to signs of abuse or neglect.

2. **Background Checks:** We conduct thorough background checks on all staff and volunteers to ensure they are suitable to work with children.
3. **Safe Environment:** We strive to create a safe and supportive environment where children feel comfortable to express any concerns or issues.
4. **Reporting Mechanism:** We have a clear and confidential reporting mechanism for any concerns or allegations of child abuse or neglect.
5. **Online Safety Measures:** We implement strict online safety measures, including secure platforms, privacy settings, and guidelines for online behavior.

These measures are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure their effectiveness in protecting the children we work with.

## Policy Statements and Procedures

### Policy Statements:

1. **Zero Tolerance:** Star for Life Ukraine has a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Any such behavior by staff, volunteers, or partners is unacceptable and will be dealt with promptly and seriously.
2. **Child-Centered Approach:** We believe in a child-centered approach where the welfare and safety of the child are paramount. All our programs and activities are designed with the best interests of the child in mind.
3. **Respect and Dignity:** We are committed to treating all children with respect and dignity, regardless of their race, color, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status, or ability.
4. **Right to Participation:** We believe that children have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. We strive to create an environment where children feel heard and valued.

### Procedures and Controls:

1. **Recruitment Checks:** All staff and volunteers undergo thorough background checks during recruitment to ensure they are suitable to work with children.

2. **Training:** Regular training sessions are conducted to ensure that all staff and volunteers understand our child protection policy and procedures.
3. **Reporting Mechanism:** A clear and confidential reporting mechanism is in place for anyone who suspects or witnesses abuse or neglect. All reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly.
4. **Response and Follow-Up:** In case of a reported incident, immediate action will be taken to ensure the child's safety. This will be followed by a thorough investigation and appropriate action against the perpetrator.
5. **Regular Reviews:** Our child protection policy and procedures will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain effective and in line with best practices and legal requirements.

## Roles and Responsibilities

1. **Staff and Volunteers:** All staff and volunteers are responsible for understanding and adhering to this child protection policy. They are expected to treat all children with respect and dignity, and to report any concerns or suspicions of child abuse or neglect immediately.
2. **Management:** The management team is responsible for ensuring that this policy is effectively implemented throughout the organization. This includes providing necessary resources, overseeing training programs, and ensuring that all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities under this policy.
3. **Board of Directors:** The Board of Directors is responsible for overseeing the organization's child protection strategy and ensuring that it complies with all relevant laws and regulations. The Board also holds the management team accountable for the effective implementation of this policy.
4. **Partners:** Our partners are expected to share our commitment to child protection and to adhere to this policy in all their interactions with the children we serve. We will work closely with our partners to ensure they understand and fulfill their responsibilities under this policy.

## Training and Awareness

1. **Induction Training:** All new staff members and volunteers will receive induction training that includes a thorough overview of our child protection policy. This training will ensure that everyone understands their responsibilities and knows how to identify and respond to child welfare and protection issues.

2. **Regular Training Sessions:** We will hold regular training sessions for all staff and volunteers to refresh their knowledge and keep them updated on any changes to our policy or relevant laws and regulations. These sessions will also provide an opportunity for staff and volunteers to discuss any concerns or issues they may have encountered.
3. **Specialized Training:** Staff members who work directly with children or who are involved in managing child protection issues will receive specialized training. This may include training on topics such as child development, identifying signs of abuse or neglect, and providing support to children who have been abused or neglected.
4. **Awareness Raising:** We will regularly share information and resources about child protection with our staff, volunteers, and the communities we serve. This may include newsletters, posters, or community meetings. Our goal is to create an environment where everyone understands the importance of child protection and feels confident to take action if they have any concerns.
5. **Online Resources:** We will provide access to online resources and materials for further learning and development in the area of child protection. This will allow our team to deepen their understanding and stay updated on best practices in child protection.

## Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

1. **Regular Monitoring:** We will regularly monitor the implementation of our child protection policy to ensure it is being followed correctly and is effective in protecting children. This will involve regular checks and audits of our procedures and practices.
2. **Evaluation:** We will evaluate the impact of our child protection policy on an annual basis. This will involve collecting and analyzing data on child protection incidents and responses, feedback from staff, volunteers, children, and their families, and any other relevant information. The evaluation will help us understand what is working well and where improvements may be needed.
3. **Policy Review:** We will review our child protection policy every two years, or sooner if there are significant changes to relevant laws or regulations, or if our monitoring and evaluation activities identify a need for changes. The review will be a comprehensive process that includes consultation with staff, volunteers, children, and their families.
4. **Updates and Changes:** Any updates or changes to our child protection policy will be communicated to all staff and volunteers promptly. We will



provide training on any new procedures or practices, and will update our resources and materials as needed.

5. **Feedback Mechanism:** We will establish a feedback mechanism that allows staff, volunteers, children, and their families to share their views and experiences related to our child protection policy. This feedback will be used to inform our monitoring, evaluation, and review activities.

## Reporting and Responding to Concerns

1. **Reporting Procedures:** All staff, volunteers, and partners of Star for Life Ukraine are required to report any concerns or incidents related to child protection immediately. Reports can be made to the designated Officer within the organization, or in their absence, to the highest-ranking official available. Reports should include as much detail as possible about the concern or incident, including the names of those involved, the nature of the concern or incident, when and where it occurred, and any actions taken so far.
2. **Confidentiality:** All reports will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Information will only be shared with those who need to know in order to take appropriate action. We will respect the privacy and dignity of all individuals involved, and will take steps to protect them from retaliation or harm.
3. **Response Procedures:** Upon receiving a report, the designated Officer within the organization, or in their absence, the highest-ranking official available will take immediate action to ensure the safety of the child or children involved. This may include removing the child from the situation, providing medical or psychological support, or involving law enforcement or child protection authorities if necessary.
4. **Investigation:** We will conduct a thorough and impartial investigation of all reports. This will involve gathering and analyzing evidence, interviewing those involved, and consulting with experts as needed. We will ensure that all investigations are fair, transparent, and respectful of the rights of all individuals involved.
5. **Follow-Up:** After the investigation, we will take appropriate action based on the findings. This may include disciplinary action against those found to have violated our child protection policy, changes to our procedures or practices to prevent similar incidents in the future, or other measures as necessary. We will provide support and assistance to the child or children affected, and will keep them and their families informed about the progress and outcome of the investigation.



## Implementation and Compliance

1. **Communication:** The Child Protection Policy will be communicated to all staff, volunteers, and partners of Star for Life Ukraine through various channels. This includes formal training sessions, staff meetings, and distribution of the policy document. The policy will also be made available on our website and in other public spaces as appropriate. We will ensure that everyone associated with our organization understands their responsibilities under this policy and the importance of child protection.
2. **Enforcement:** Compliance with the Child Protection Policy is mandatory for all staff, volunteers, and partners. Any violation of the policy will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or partnership. We will also report any illegal activities to the relevant authorities.
3. **Compliance Monitoring:** We will regularly monitor compliance with the policy through various means, such as audits, inspections, and feedback from staff, volunteers, children, and their families. Any concerns or non-compliance identified will be addressed promptly and effectively.
4. **Accountability:** All staff, volunteers, and partners are accountable for complying with the Child Protection Policy. Managers and supervisors have additional responsibilities to ensure that those under their supervision understand and comply with the policy.
5. **Review and Update:** We will review the Child Protection Policy at least once a year, or more frequently if needed, to ensure that it remains effective and relevant. We will update the policy as necessary to reflect changes in laws, regulations, or our operations, and to incorporate lessons learned from any incidents or concerns. All updates will be communicated promptly to all staff, volunteers, and partners.