

Zero Tolerance Policy on Child Abuse, exploitation, harassment, bullying, neglect, unsafe conduct, cyber exploitation, and digital misuse.

Appendices:

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- **Appendix B:** Guidelines for Talking and Listening to Children
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- **Appendix E:** Guidelines for Travel, Picnics, and Outdoor Activities
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Background

1. Vulnerability of Children:

Children are more vulnerable than adults to their living conditions and are disproportionately affected by the actions or inactions of society. Given the significant time children spend in schools, it is imperative that the school environment is positive, nurturing, and safe-especially for children with special needs.

2. Legal and Policy Mandate:

The Constitution of India and international conventions to which India is a signatory recognize and promote the rights, protection, dignity, and wellbeing of children. These rights are operationalized through various national laws and policies.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, recognizes every child's right to safety, protection, and a secure environment free from abuse and exploitation.

- Issues relating to:
- gender inequality,
- sexual harassment,
- bullying,
- abuse,

- neglect,
- discrimination,
- and exploitation
- require coordinated and proactive efforts among parents, caregivers, teachers, staff members, volunteers, administrators, and institutions.
- Saksham recognizes its legal, ethical, and institutional responsibility to establish preventive and responsive safeguarding mechanisms to protect children and vulnerable persons.

3. National Policy for Children, 2013:

This policy highlights the value of childhood and mandates the creation of a caring, protective, and safe environment for children, particularly within public spaces, ensuring protection from violence, abuse, neglect, stigma, discrimination, and deprivation.

4. Children's Participation:

It is crucial to provide children with safe avenues to express their concerns, fears, and suggestions regarding their own safety to foster a child-sensitive atmosphere.

5. Policy Oversight:

The Head of Institution/Programme Head shall be responsible for:

- implementation of this policy,
- awareness generation,
- staff orientation,
- monitoring compliance,
- and safeguarding coordination.

This policy shall be reviewed annually or earlier if required due to:

- legal changes,
- safeguarding concerns,
- organizational needs,
- or programme expansion.

Purpose

6. This Zero Tolerance Policy provides clear guidance to staff and stakeholders about expected codes of behavior regarding child protection. It reaffirms Saksham's commitment to good practice and effective procedures that prioritize the child's needs in all child protection matters.

Introduction

7. Scope:

This policy applies to all teaching and non-teaching staff.

- consultants;
- interns;
- caregivers;
- transport staff;
- vendors;
- visitors;
- and partner organizations associated with Saksham.
- The policy applies across:
 - schools,
 - training centres,
 - offices,
 - outreach programmes,
 - transport services,
 - residential activities,
 - camps,
 - events,
 - online platforms,
 - and field activities.

8. Core Elements:

- **Prevention:** Establish a positive, inclusive ethos where children feel safe and valued, imparting knowledge about personal rights and responsibilities.
- **Protection:** Adhere to established procedures and provide training to staff to enable sensitive, appropriate responses to concerns.
- **Support:** Provide support and counseling to both students and staff affected by abuse.

Governing Principles

9. The Child Protection Policy is guided by the following fundamental principles:

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- **Best Interest of the Child:** The child's well-being is the primary consideration in all decisions. Institutions responsible for children must maintain established standards in safety, health, and supervision.
- **Safety:** All measures must safeguard children from harm, abuse, neglect, and maltreatment under institutional care.
- **Equality and Non-Discrimination:** Every child must receive equal treatment regardless of gender, religion, caste, class, place of birth, disability, etc. Stigmatizing language is strictly prohibited.
- **Confidentiality:** The child's right to privacy will be strictly maintained, particularly in cases of abuse.
- **Participation:** Children have the right to be heard and to participate in decisions affecting them, with considerations for their age and maturity.
- **Simplicity:** All abuse-prevention measures should be practical and easily implementable.
- **Zero Tolerance:** Saksham enforces zero tolerance for child abuse:
 - child abuse,
 - exploitation,
 - harassment,
 - bullying,
 - neglect,
 - and unsafe conduct.

Institutional Commitment

10. Recognizing the value of high self-esteem, confidence, peer support, and access to trusted adults, Saksham is committed to:

- Establishing an environment where children feel secure and are encouraged to speak up;
- Ensuring students know which adults to approach for help;
- Including activities in the curriculum that empower children to protect themselves against abuse;
- Implementing robust anti-bullying measures;
- Providing clear staff codes of conduct;
- Maintaining a Special Educational Needs Policy; and
- Supporting student forums and clubs that foster resilience and self-confidence.

11. Saksham shall maintain effective coordination with:

- parents/guardians,
- local authorities,
- child welfare agencies,
- medical institutions,
- counsellors,
- and law enforcement agencies wherever required.

Recruitment Process

12. To maintain a safe environment:

- No individual with a criminal history involving abuse, exploitation, violence, harassment, or child-related offences shall be engaged.

- All selected personnel shall provide:

- identity proof,
- address proof,
- references,
- and qualification documents.

- HR/Administration shall conduct background verification including police verification where applicable.

- All appointments shall remain provisional pending satisfactory verification.
- A copy of the Child Protection Policy shall be provided during induction.
- Any person accused under POCSO, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act), or similar legislation may be suspended or removed pending inquiry.

Roles and Responsibilities

13. Head of Institution/Programme Head:

The Head of Institution/Programme Head leads implementation, providing internal advice, ensuring staff awareness, delegating responsibilities, managing referrals, liaising with agencies, overseeing training, and annual policy review.

14. Child Abuse Monitoring Committee (CAMC):

A committee including the principal, one teacher, two students (one male, one female), and one parent will monitor policy enforcement. Committee details shall be displayed prominently.

15. Teachers / Employees & Volunteers:

Employees, Teachers, Volunteers, Consultants, and Associated Personnel are responsible for

policy implementation, identifying and reporting signs of abuse, supporting affected students, and maintaining awareness of procedures and designated safeguarding staff.

Types of Abuse Addressed

16. Physical Abuse:

Includes hitting, shaking, poisoning, burning, suffocating, or other deliberate physical harm.

17. Emotional Abuse:

Entails persistent emotional maltreatment harming a child's development, including bullying, overprotection, or belittling.

18. Sexual Abuse:

Involves forcing or enticing a child into sexual activities, including non-contact abuse and exposure to exploitative material.

19. Neglect:

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or emotional needs, including inadequate provision of food, shelter, supervision, or medical care.

20. Digital Abuse & Cyber Exploitation

Includes:

- cyberbullying,
- online grooming,
- inappropriate digital communication,
- misuse of photographs/videos,
- online harassment,
- sharing explicit content,
- and unauthorized sharing of personal information.

Detailed symptoms and indicators are provided in Appendix C.

Confidentiality

21. All child protection matters must be treated confidentially, with information shared only with necessary professionals and the designated safeguarding staff. All records are to be stored securely.

Capacity Building

22. Saksham will develop a standardized teacher training module covering recognition of abuse, child engagement, safe environments, and legal mechanisms.

23. Training will encompass relevant legal frameworks and protocols.

24. Training materials must be simple and provided to all individuals in positions of authority over children.
25. Modules and materials will be updated annually, and refresher courses will be compulsory.
26. Full-day orientation sessions on Child Protection issues will be conducted for all new staff and volunteers within one month of joining.
27. Members responsible for handling safeguarding complaints, disciplinary actions, investigations, or referrals shall receive specialized safeguarding and child-sensitive response training periodically.

Special Measures

26. The following security measures shall be adopted:

- Two duty teachers (in rotation) shall supervise school gate procedures before and after school hours.
- Strict access control for outsiders shall be enforced.
- Internal Complaints Committee, Grievance Redressal Committee, and CAMC shall handle reports of abuse or harassment.
- Complaints/Suggestion boxes shall be installed at prominent locations for student use.
- Names and contact numbers of designated child protection staff and helpline (e.g., 1098) shall be displayed prominently.
- A summary of the Child Protection Policy will be posted in the school's main reception area.

Basic Guidelines for School Transport

Refer to **Appendix D**.

Guidelines for Travel, Picnics, and Outdoor Activities

Refer to **Appendix E**.

Appendix A

Post Occurrence Intervention

1. The school shall maintain ready contact details of local police, hospitals, the Special Juvenile Police Unit, and the Child Welfare Committee.
2. If an offence is reported or suspected, the information must be communicated to the CAMC, who will appoint a suitable adult to counsel the child.

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3. Within 24 hours, the child's emergency contact or guardian will be notified, and reporting procedures explained.
4. In case of emergencies, the school will ensure prompt medical attention.
5. Forensic procedures, if needed, must be accompanied by a responsible, trusted adult.
6. CAMC will report offences as per the procedures under the POCSO Act and related rules.
7. Reports to the police or relevant authorities will be filed as necessary, accompanied by recommendations for counselling.
8. CAMC is responsible for filing any FIR, with copies maintained in school records.
9. The school is liable for any breach of a child's identity and confidentiality during reporting.
10. Child statements within the school must be recorded in a comfortable environment.
11. Pending inquiry, the accused will be suspended; the welfare of the child remains paramount.
12. The inquiry shall commence within 24 hours and conclude with actionable recommendations.
13. CAMC will prepare and disseminate a report to the school, parents/guardians, and management immediately after the inquiry.
14. The redressal process will not ordinarily exceed 15 days.
15. Reporting and referral systems shall connect with relevant local child protection services, emergency support systems, legal authorities, medical services, counselling providers, and rehabilitation agencies wherever required.

Appendix B

Guidelines for Talking and Listening to Children

- Be accessible, listen carefully, encourage open communication, take disclosures seriously, and inform the child of the need to share information when necessary.
- Never investigate, promise confidentiality, make assumptions, confront alleged perpetrators, or withhold information from the principal.
- Record details factually, noting who was present, time, date, and exact words used by the child. Sign and submit records promptly.

- Avoid prompting, probing, or asking leading questions. Use minimal prompts only if required.
- Consider the environment, your body language, and prepare to handle disclosures sensitively.

Appendix C

Signs and Symptoms of Abuse and Neglect

- **Physical Abuse:** Unexplained bruises/injuries, fear of parents, flinching, withdrawal.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Neurotic behaviors, developmental delay, fearfulness.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Physical signs in genital area, knowledge inappropriate for age, nightmares, running away, secrecy, self-harm.
- **Neglect:** Poor hygiene, constant hunger, underweight, tiredness, frequent absences.
- **Bullying:** Unexplained injuries, mood changes, avoiding school, loss of property, behavioral changes.

Note: These indicators are not definitive and must be considered collectively with professional assessment.

Appendix D

Basic Guidelines for School Transport

1. At least one female teacher/guard shall be present in the vehicle until the last child is safely dropped.
2. Emergency helpline numbers and contact details of responsible staff shall be clearly displayed inside the vehicle in accessible formats.
3. A one-page summary of the Child Protection Policy and reporting mechanism shall be displayed inside all school/organization vehicles.
4. Reports of bullying, harassment, abuse, or inappropriate conduct during transport shall be acted upon immediately.
5. Children shall only be handed over to authorized caregivers/parents at designated stops. Transport staff shall maintain updated emergency contact information.
6. All drivers, attendants, and transport personnel must undergo background verification and orientation on child safeguarding practices.
7. Vehicles not in use shall remain locked and keys shall be kept securely with authorized administration personnel.

8. Vehicles shall maintain:
9. First aid kits
10. Emergency contact list
11. Fire extinguisher (where applicable)
12. Basic accessibility support for children/persons with disabilities
13. Drivers and attendants shall maintain respectful and professional conduct with all children and beneficiaries.
14. No unauthorized individual shall be permitted inside organizational vehicles during transportation of children.
15. Vehicle movement records and attendance logs shall be maintained for all regular transport services.

Appendix E

Guidelines for Travel, Picnics, and Outdoor Activities

- a)** Written consent from parents/guardians shall be mandatory for all outings, tours, camps, and exposure visits.
- b)** Participation in activities shall remain voluntary and non-discriminatory.
- c)** Adequate male and female staff/caregivers shall accompany participants, with responsibilities clearly assigned in advance.
- d)** Complete travel details including:
 - destination,
 - route,
 - timings,
 - accommodation details,
 - emergency contacts,shall be communicated to parents/guardians beforehand.
- e)** Safety instructions, emergency protocols, and helpline numbers shall be shared with all participants before departure.
- f)** Local transport, safety, and child protection regulations shall be strictly followed throughout the activity.
- g)** For outstation programmes, at least one female staff member/caregiver must accompany mixed or girls' groups.
- h)** Overnight stays and late-night travel should be avoided wherever possible.
- i)** Participant attendance and movement records shall be maintained throughout the activity.
- j)** Emergency medical support arrangements shall be identified in advance.

- k) Staff shall ensure that no child or vulnerable participant is left unattended at any point during the program.
- l) Accommodation arrangements shall ensure:
 - safety,
 - privacy,
 - appropriate supervision,
 - separate arrangements for boys/girls where required.
- m) Photography and videography during activities shall follow the Media & Consent Guidelines of the organization.
- n) All participants shall adhere to the organizational Code of Conduct during travel and events.
- o) All travel and outdoor activities shall comply with the transport safety provisions outlined in Appendix D

Appendix F

1. Personnel shall not:

- offer money,
- gifts,
- special favors,
- or preferential treatment

in exchange for inappropriate, exploitative, humiliating, or unethical behaviour from children.

2. Personnel shall not:

- ask children to perform personal or domestic work unsuitable for their age,
- engage children in labour interfering with education or recreation,
- or place children in exploitative situations.

3. Personnel shall avoid:

- isolated or secret interactions with children,
- unnecessary one-to-one meetings in closed spaces,
- and behaviour that may be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

4. Personnel shall ensure that:

- their conduct remains transparent,
- interactions remain observable where possible,
- and child safeguarding standards are maintained during all programmes and activities.

5. Children shall never be:

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- photographed in vulnerable situations,
 - recorded in degrading or submissive conditions,
 - or portrayed in ways compromising dignity, safety, or privacy.
- 6.** Personnel shall proactively identify safeguarding risks and immediately report unsafe situations, misconduct, or policy violations.

7. Violation of the Child Protection Policy or Code of Conduct may result in:

- disciplinary action,
- suspension,
- termination of employment/engagement,
- reporting to authorities,
- and legal proceedings wherever applicable.

8. All personnel must comply with:

- applicable child protection laws,
- safeguarding regulations,
- organizational policies,
- and international child rights principles including UNCRC.

9. Declaration

I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct of Saksham.
- I agree to comply with all safeguarding standards and reporting procedures.
- I understand that violations may result in disciplinary and legal action.

Appendix H

Child Safeguarding Incident Reporting Format

Purpose

This format shall be used for reporting:

- child protection concerns,
- abuse,
- exploitation,
- harassment,
- bullying,
- neglect,
- unsafe conduct,

- digital misuse,
- cyber exploitation,
- or suspected safeguarding violations involving children.

All reports shall be handled:

- confidentially,
- sensitively,
- promptly,
- and in the best interest of the child.

Section 1: Reporting Information

Particulars	Details
Date of Report	
Time of Report	
Mode of Reporting	Verbal / Written / Email / Phone / Online / Other
Name of Reporting Person	
Designation/Role	
Department/Organization	
Contact Number	
Email Address	

Section 2: Child Information

Particulars	Details
Name of Child	
Age	
Gender	
Address	
School/Programme Name	

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Parent/Guardian Name	
Parent/Guardian Contact Number	
Disability/Support Needs (if any)	

Section 3: Incident Information

Particulars	Details
Date of Incident	
Time of Incident	
Location of Incident	
Nature of Concern	
Type of Abuse/Concern	Physical / Emotional / Sexual / Neglect / Bullying / Digital Abuse / Other
Was the Incident Witnessed?	Yes / No
Names of Witnesses	
Name(s) of Alleged Person(s) Involved	

Section 4: Detailed Description of Incident

Provide factual details regarding:

- what happened,
- observations made,
- statements provided,
- behavioural indicators,
- and immediate concerns.

(Use exact words wherever possible and avoid assumptions or personal opinions.)

Section 5: Immediate Action Taken

Action Taken	Details
Child Moved to Safety	
Medical Support Provided	
Emotional Support/Counselling Arranged	
Parent/Guardian Informed	
Authorities Informed	
Emergency Measures Taken	
Referral Services Contacted	

Section 6: Safeguarding & Reporting Escalation

Particulars	Details
Reported To	
Safeguarding Committee Informed	Yes / No
Police/Authority Informed	Yes / No
Date of Escalation	
FIR/Complaint Number (if applicable)	
Follow-Up Required	

Section 7: Risk Assessment

Assessment Area	Details
Immediate Risk to Child	
Risk to Other Children	

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Safety Measures Required	
Additional Monitoring Required	

Section 8: Follow-Up & Closure

Particulars	Details
Follow-Up Actions Planned	
Counselling/Support Arranged	
Date of Review	
Case Status	Open / Under Review / Closed
Closure Remarks	

Section 9: Confidentiality & Record Handling

1. All safeguarding records shall remain confidential.
2. Information shall only be shared with:
 - authorized safeguarding personnel,
 - legal authorities,
 - or professionals directly involved in the response process.
3. Unauthorized disclosure of information is prohibited.
4. Records shall be securely stored according to organizational and legal requirements.

Section 10: Declaration

I confirm that the information provided above is accurate to the best of my knowledge and has been recorded responsibly and confidentially.

Signature of Reporting Person: _____

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Date: _____

Received By:

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Date: _____

Monitoring, Partnerships & Compliance

27. Saksham shall establish systems to monitor adherence to this policy through:

- periodic review meetings,
- safeguarding audits,
- incident monitoring,
- training records,
- supervision mechanisms,
- and compliance assessments.

28. All incidents, allegations, complaints, safeguarding concerns, and actions taken shall be:

- documented,
- securely maintained,
- periodically reviewed,
- and monitored for corrective action.

29. Where Saksham works with:

- partner organizations,
- vendors,
- consultants,
- schools,
- or external agencies,

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minimum safeguarding requirements shall be incorporated into written agreements wherever applicable.

Saksham recognizes child safeguarding as an essential requirement in organizational partnerships, programmes, collaborations, and service delivery mechanisms.

30. Where feasible, Saksham may support:

- safeguarding orientation,
 - awareness,
 - policy strengthening,
 - and capacity-building initiatives
- for partner agencies and associated stakeholders.

End of Policy Document

Approved by

Saksham

