



Safeguarding Policy

Our Safeguarding policy is part of our commitment to prevent and protect children, young person and vulnerable adults from any form of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation and promoting environments where their rights are upheld.

It is a primary focus across all our programs and communication.

SAFEGUARDING POLICY DETAILS			
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Approved By	Executive Director	Reviewed on	14.02.2024
Owner	HR Department	Next Review Date	13.01.2027

1. Introduction

Udayan Care is committed to achieving and operating by the best standards in all aspects of its engagement. As a rights based organization we aim to deliver the highest degree of safety and protection to our children, youth and all vulnerable adults engaged in Udayan Care in any form.

We stand fully committed to safeguarding our children, young persons and vulnerable adults from unintended/intended harm and ensure a healthy environment with adequate and appropriate safeguarding systems, processes and leadership in place. We stand committed to ensuring a zero tolerance towards any form of safeguarding concern.

This policy lays out the commitments made by Udayan Care, and informs staff and associated personnel of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

We believe that everyone has a right to live in an environment that is free of any form of fear or actual abuse, violence, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation. Our Safeguarding policy covers all activities that Udayan Care as an organization undertakes to ensure that all children, young persons and all members of the staff, interns and volunteers and other stakeholders and operations are protected. Hence, our Safeguarding standards include prevention, reporting, responding and awareness as the essential four pillars of our policy.

We also strongly believe that it is everyone's responsibility to make sure that children, young persons and vulnerable adults are cared for, protected and that their rights are upheld at all points of time

2. Policy Statement

Udayan Care shall always remain committed to prioritizing the best interests of all children and young persons who we come into contact with, by proactively keeping them safe through preventive efforts and shall always immediately report and respond to all concerns and disclosures.

Udayan Care shall always ensure that systems and mechanisms are put in place and stringently implemented to raise awareness, ensure prevention, establish reporting and secure best and timely responses.

3. Scope

This policy is applicable to everyone acting on behalf of, or representing Udayan Care, including all staff, volunteers, interns, trustees & advisory board members, consultants, mentors or core committee members, alumni, supporters, vendors, partners, donors,

collaborators or visitors to projects.

Anyone who fails to uphold this policy shall be subjected to disciplinary action and/or termination of employment/contract or other remedies and be bound by the laws as applicable.

It applies to all children and young persons under all our programs, regardless of any considerations, including socio-economic status, gender, disability, ethnicity, caste, religion, or living situation who come in contact with any person as mentioned above.

It is crucial that every person connected with Udayan Care (permanent full-time/ part-time/ contractors/volunteers/interns/mentor/trustees/vendors etc.) understands the commitment to safeguarding, as well as his or her own role and responsibilities in ensuring its implementation.

This policy applies to all programs and all facilities of Udayan Care.

4. Guiding Principles

This policy draws on various international and national policy and legislations, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child, 1989, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) of Children Act, 2015 and its Model Rules of 2016 and the POCSO Act of 2012 and its accompanying Rules.

The underlying principles that inform this policy are

- The integral right of all children, young persons and adults to live a life of respect and dignity and freedom from any violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation or the fear of it.
- The 'best interests of the child' is our guide for all safeguarding concerns and protection process. In cases of conflicting interests, priority shall always be given to the rights of children and young persons.
- That all children and young persons have a right to participate and speak up against all forms of abuse, acting as agents of self-protection and the protection of their peers.
- That the responsibility to ensure children and young persons safeguarding is a collective one and lies with everyone in society.
- That Udayan Care will always adopt a proactive approach towards safeguarding all children, young persons and vulnerable adult it comes in contact with.
- That all partners, collaborators, donors and stakeholders we work with have to commit to our minimum standards of protection and safeguarding principles.

5. Key Pillars

An open and responsive culture in all Udayan Care spaces is essential to break the silence and taboo of disclosing, reporting and addressing the stigma associated with any safeguarding concern.

- a. Awareness: Raise awareness of child abuse and its risks
- b. Prevention: Provide guidance on how to safeguard children from abuse
- c. Reporting: Set up and adhere to a clear and simple reporting procedure
- d. Responding: Ensure clear action is taken in all cases of disclosure or reporting

5a. Awareness

An open and responsive culture in all of Udayan Care spaces is essential to break the silence and taboo of disclosing, reporting and addressing stigma associated with abuse. Awareness measures will follow the following basic considerations:

- Everyone connected to Udayan Care must understand child rights in all its implications.
- Regular opportunities for children to voice concerns through safe spaces and platforms are created to allow any protection concerns to be shared and addressed at the earliest.
- Roles and responsibilities regarding creating awareness on safeguarding shall be clearly defined and communicated.
- This policy shall be an integral part of the induction and orientation of all employees, volunteers, donors, partners and other collaborators and stakeholders. All employment contracts and codes of conduct signed by representatives of the organization shall refer to the child protection and this safeguarding policy.
- All staff members are provided with orientation regarding the Safeguarding Policy during the first week of their employment.
- Information on all policies of the organization are available in appropriate formats and languages that can be easily accessed by staff and other associates.
- Advocacy, training and capacity building work with children, young persons, vulnerable adults and communities, awareness is created to strengthen child protection systems.

5b. Prevention

We strongly believe that prevention is the key to a strong and healthy workplace and ensuring good practices that give first priority always to protecting and upholding the rights of children, young persons and vulnerable adults is the key to minimize risks and ensure their well-being. Our efforts on prevention also include measures that promote children and young persons' active participation as active agents in ensuring their own protection.

- Measures are taken to ensure and enable children and young persons to assume roles in their own development and protection. They are encouraged to participate in all matters affecting their lives and are involved in taking decisions for their life.
- Each child is offered individual development opportunities tailored

to her or his needs and potential.

- Everyone at Udayan Family may have access to peer counseling services when needed as a measure of self-care.
- Prevention from harm is ensured through
 - i. A strong safe recruitment and selection process: Child-safe screening procedures will be implemented during hiring personnel, particularly personnel working directly with children and young persons.
 - ii. All potential applicants shall be made to disclose any previous criminal record. This is accomplished through providing a police verification and any other appropriate measure, including cross-checking of references.
 - iii. A declaration agreeing with this Policy shall be signed by everyone engaged at Udayan Care before start of the engagement.
 - iv. CIRCA values and Code of Conduct for all employees: Udayan Care's CIRCA values of Compassion, Integrity, Respect, Competency and Accountability, strongly reinforce the safeguarding principles in our day-to-day work and work culture.
 - v. The organizational Code of Conduct is implemented strictly (Annexure)
 - vi. Training and capacity building shall be stakeholder and role appropriate for all stakeholders around principles of safeguarding and code of conduct. All care-staff receive training and support to put child development activities into action.
 - vii. Udayan Care's trustees, conveners, mentors, and board members, employees, staff, interns, consultants and volunteers receive training on child rights, protection and safeguarding norms and sensitizing them to the special needs of abused Children with disabilities and special needs children as part of their induction program and through refresher sessions. Those coming in direct contact with children regularly are provided with regular briefing on safeguarding.
 - viii. Developing age-appropriate modules/materials on personal safety of Children (including modules/materials on body parts, online safety, protection from Child abuse and services available for the protection of Children)
 - ix. Conducting regular sessions on personal safety with children and youth, including the children's committee in the Udayan Ghars
 - x. Orienting all volunteers, interns, consultants and employees on observation skills, noticing and detecting the warning signs of child abuse among children, with a particular focus on children with disabilities and special needs children;
 - xi. Creating a barrier-free environment in all its premises so that children and persons with disabilities are able to operate with dignity and autonomy;
 - xii. Putting in place systems to reinforce principles of Child protection among the organizations' representatives;

5c. Reporting

Our **zero-tolerance policy** means we take all safeguarding concerns and disclosures raised seriously, be it in any program, and that appropriate action is initiated at the earliest, without delay. Udayan Care has defined clear reporting and responding procedures, internal communication lines, and the roles and responsibilities of all people involved.

- A **Child Protection Team** is in place at Udayan Ghar and Aftercare program (Alternative Care program), headed by the program head with well-defined reporting procedures as laid down in the Child Protection Policy.
- A standing Child Protection Team shall be constituted to look into all aspects of child safeguarding in all other projects where children are directly being contacted (AOP, USF, Reintegration, state demonstrable projects)
- At the head office (HO), the **Safeguarding Committee** is a standing group to support and monitor all programs/facilities and spaces and is headed by the Executive Director (ED) or the Managing Trustee in the absence of the ED.
- Confidentiality is of utmost importance when dealing with all disclosures and concerns and all information is to be handled with sensitivity. Efforts are taken to make the person disclosing abuse or concern feel safe and aware of their rights.
- Every staff is obliged to immediately provide any information he or she has regarding any apprehension or threat or a likelihood to a member of the Child Protection Team, IC under POSH or Safeguarding Committee. Any adult who withholds information or covers up any kind of abuse is considered an accomplice.
- Any other person who gives information regarding abuse must be made aware that if he or she reports the case, information about the alleged abuse will be shared only with those authorized to have access to this information, i.e. child protection team and other persons involved.
- Any person making a disclosure is fully supported and protected.
- All procurees follow the principles of fair justice and are given adequate opportunities of representation.
- Any allegation against the person on the Child Protection Team, IC or Safeguarding Committee, will be excluded from handling the concerned case.

Members of these committees are trained and made aware of their role and responsibilities through periodic sessions and refresher sessions.

- All cases and processes are documented and monitored closely.
- Children and young persons across all programs shall be closely engaged to participate and contribute to the design, implementation and evaluation of safeguarding norms and policies.

5d. Responding

All safeguarding concerns and disclosures are taken seriously, without exception and in all programs, and are responded to in appropriate and effective ways. We ensure that there is always a response, regardless of whether the abuse committed is considered large or small. Our response must always guarantee that a transparent and fair procedure is followed, so that the rights of everyone involved are protected. Safeguarding is identified as a specific goal in all program designs.

1. In all cases of concern and disclosure, the focus is placed on safeguarding and protecting the survivor, healing measures are provided, and the protection of all persons involved is guaranteed. The affected person shall remain the first priority and supported with psycho-social and counseling measures, medical treatment, if needed and legal assistance in all forms. All such services shall be of the best quality and be closely monitored during its implementation.
2. In all cases of disclosure, legal steps are taken in accordance with the guidelines prescribed in law.
3. Decisions and actions are taken quickly and timely by respective Committees at all levels, following due diligence and processes.
4. Records and documentation on responding process are maintained at concerned chapters as well as the Head Office.

6. Use of data, photographs, videos and stories

- In the use of any information, story, photograph, image, video, quote or story, respect for safety, confidentiality, consent that is informed, privacy and dignity shall be ensured.
- Ethical use of all the above materials shall be ensured in all communication and social media platforms, websites, newsletter, annual reports, publications, event reports etc.
- Written consent in the language understood by the stakeholder shall be taken in all cases.
- Any information about a child's history, medical condition and family background has to be stored carefully and confidentially at Udayan Care. These data are to be handled with discretion. Children or caregivers may not always be aware of a specific form of emotional abuse which might occur in fundraising, public relations or communication. Access to all such data is done as per procedures, with approvals documented in writing.
- We blur the picture or mask the face if we are using pictures/images that reveal the identity of the child/young person. Group images are always preferred over individual ones.
- Name change is done always to maintain confidentiality.
- We follow the photography policy of Udayan Care for capturing images of the children.
- The research and ethical protocol of Udayan Care guides the process and systems on all consent, data collection and records maintenance.

7. Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing outlines what individuals should do if their concern is not responded to in ways that prioritize their best interests.

1. Udayan Care takes all safeguarding concerns and disclosures extremely seriously, prioritizing the well-being of children, young persons, and vulnerable adults.
2. Our whistleblowing policy highlights our stance on protecting and supporting anyone who whistle-blow in good faith.
3. Where an individual or organization believes that good practice has not been adhered to, they are advised to contact the Executive Director or the Managing Trustee.

8. Key Stakeholders

We strongly believe that a safe, healthy and enabling environment that is free of all forms of harm and the risks associated with it, is integral to the work culture of Udayan Care and that our core work is to build a community and society where child protection and safeguarding them, young persons and all vulnerable sections of society, is a responsibility that every citizen must take ownership of. Our key messages stakeholderwise is given below:

8a. Children (below 18 years of age)

- Every child has a right to grow up in a harm free safe environment at all times
- There is complete zero tolerance to any form of harm or abuse to children and the strictest action shall be taken for any such violation
- Every child has a right to participate, share and express any concern on their safety or possible threat of harm
- Every child must be encouraged to participate in contributing to ensuring safety of children

8b. Young adults (18 years of age or older under our programs)

- Every young person has a right to continued care and protection and hone their full potential in a harm free safe environment at all times
- There is complete zero tolerance to any form of harm or abuse of young persons and the strictest action shall be taken for any such violation
- All young persons have a right to participate, share and express any concern on their safety or possible threat of harm and to participate in contributing to ensuring safety of children and others as contributors in society

8c. Vulnerable Adults

- Any adult who is part of Udayan Care and is vulnerable in terms of gender, caste or class, has a right to work and perform tasks with dignity and harm free environment as part of the organizational values.

- No one should suffer in silence and every voice that discloses any form of abuse, harm or exploitation shall be supported and protected at all times.
- Every person and every voice counts and our systems and processes encourage participation and contribution at each level.

8d. Persons working directly with children and young persons (Social Workers/ Counselors/ Coordinators, Caregivers)

- Being vigilant and actively listening to children and ability to recognize early signs is critical to your role.
- Safeguarding is your principal responsibility and ensuring implementation of all aspects of this policy is your prime duty

8e. All staff, Program Managers/ Core Committee Members/ Mentors

- Each team member plays an important role in making sure all stakeholders are involved and this policy is implemented strictly
- Everyone has the full support in applying positive and participatory processes and ensuring monitoring of this policy on the ground.
- Everyone is a role model and are listened to.
- Everyone must listen to children and pay attention to possible signs of abuse; take your responsibility and be there for them when they need your support!

8f. Donors/ Visitors/ Volunteers/ Mentors/Contractors etc.

- Protection is everybody's responsibility and as part of the Udayan Family, you play an important role in ensuring implementation of this policy.
- No one is above the law.

9. Communication of this Policy

- All efforts will be taken to widely disseminate this policy with all stakeholders
- The Safeguarding team lead (see names below) has the prime responsibility of ensuring the dissemination, implementation and monitoring of this policy
- All department heads have the responsibility of communicating and training their teams on this policy. On the importance of encouraging reporting and process for reporting. This will include all volunteers and interns and partners they work with.
- This policy must be included as part of the induction and orientation session of all new employees, interns, volunteers, donors or partners
- Any changes in this policy shall be communicated to all department heads for cascading to their team members and chapters
- A copy of this policy is to be displayed at the main office and all chapters, skilling centres, Udayan Ghars, aftercare homes etc. in child friendly formats and languages that are understood by them

10. Breach of this Policy

Any breaches of this policy will be taken extremely seriously and may result in consequences that include dismissal from service, termination of partnership, withdrawal of contract and/or legal action.

11. Monitoring and Review of this Policy

- Regularly monitoring and updating this safeguarding policy and procedures will be undertaken in line with changes to our organization and/or programs, national and international legislation and best practice.
- The Executive Director and Safeguarding Lead Member are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness and reviewing the implementation of this policy, considering its ongoing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness. Any amendment has to be approved by the Managing Trustee or in the absence the board of trustees.
- The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at Udayan Care has the collective responsibility of the implementation and monitoring of this policy and for bringing best practices that encourage safeguarding at all times
- This policy will be reviewed once every three years or earlier if there is a relevant change in the organization or national legislation.

12. Responsibilities of Safeguarding Committee

- Lead on the development and implementation of safeguarding policies, procedures and guidance that proactively keep children safe and respond to concerns and disclosures
- Stay up-to-date with local safeguarding legislation and procedures, and best practice in safeguarding
- Be visible: make sure everyone knows you are the Chairperson/member and how to contact you with questions or concerns and also ensure IEC materials are developed and disseminated as awareness measures.
- Promote awareness of good safeguarding practices amongst colleagues including regularly at meetings. Including on recruitment, risk assessments, induction and supervision, capacity building, creating safe and inclusive environments that empower children to meet their full potential.
- Make the Code of Conduct visible to everyone
- Lead on safeguarding concerns and disclosures in line with the Udayan Care's safeguarding policy; make sure all cases are followed up until children's needs are met and the case closed
- In line with the safeguarding policy, notify the Executive Director as soon as possible after learning of any disclosure requiring reporting to external child protection agencies or; b) any allegations relating to staff, volunteers, trustees, visitors or contractors; and/or c) any other issue likely to impact reputation of the organization.

If someone is in immediate danger, contact the police on 112 or Ms. Anjali Hegde, Executive Director, Udayan Care on her email: anjali.hegde@udayancare.org

[The Safeguarding Committee comprises of:](#)

Name	Designation
Executive Director	Chairperson
Trustee	Member
Head of USF	Member
Head of ITVT	Member
Head of HR	Member