

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION NIGERIA

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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CHILD AND YOUNG PERSONS SAFEGUARDING POLICY OF THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC) 2024.

POLICY OVERVIEW:

The National Human Rights Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission) as a governmental institution saddled with the responsibility of ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights of all persons residing in the country believes in safeguarding the rights of children who come in contact with its work force.

Vision of the Commission: The Commission is committed to institutionalizing the observance, promotion and protection of human rights of everybody by encouraging national values based on the principles of democracy, good governance and respect for the rule of law.

1.0 Policy Title: Safe guarding Policy Statement This safeguarding policy is developed to safeguard children and young persons who come in contact with the Commission's staff and shall be applied alongside all the Commission's organizational policies, procedures and standards -and laws which gives the Commission the mandate to protect, promote and enforce Human Rights of all Persons including children. The Commission considers children a very vulnerable group which needs special protection to reach their potentials in life through advancement of their rights.

The-Commission recognizes-that to effectively carry out this mandate of advancing the rights of children, it must have a safeguarding policy in place, This policy is necessary to advance the rights of, all children who come in contact with the Commission to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to them and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect and also promoting safe environment. This safeguarding policy sets out the standard, practice and guidelines as well as prohibited actions and practices which has potentials of harming children or young persons as it seeks to develop a culture of pro-active approach towards preventing and mitigating harm while encouraging prompt and early interventions and response.

PREVENTION

The Commission realizes the risks of child abuse that are likely to occur within the Commission and accepts that it must take steps to prevent any form of child abuse or exploitation. This may arise while its staff saddled with the responsibility of working with children in a bid to protect and promote their rights do so. This relate to other members of staff and persons who are associated with it in one way or the other and may not necessarily have any dealings with children within the Commission see the need to prevent child abuse or exploitation outside the Commission.

To work towards preventing child abuse and exploitation and safeguarding same, the Commission will ensure that its entire staff is conscious of child safeguarding and the policy is strictly adhered to in all that it does.

1.1 PURPOSE AND AIM OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- Collaboration and partnership: Working with partners to ensure a coordinated and effective response to child safeguarding concerns,
- Monitoring and reporting: Establishing mechanisms for reporting and monitoring child safeguarding concerns, including incidents of abuse or exploitation.
- To protect children and young persons who use the services of the NHRC from harm and ensure they are treated with dignity and their human rights protected. This includes children who use the services of the Commission.
- To provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young persons and their families, with the over-reaching principles that guide the Commission's approach to child protection.
- Build capacity of NHRC staff on child treatment protocol in Human Rights.

SCOPE

This policy shall apply to anyone working on behalf of the Commission, including paid staff, council members, volunteers, National Youth corps members, security, Interns, consultants, contract workers, external service providers and persons recruited on special agreements. This policy covers all children under the age of 19.

CONTEXT (LEGAL FRAME WORK)

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidelines that seeks to protect children in Nigeria. Child Rights Act 2003, Violence against persons prohibition Act 2015, NHRC ACT 1995 (Amended), Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child and other national, regional and international laws to which Nigeria is a party.

POLICY STATEMENT

- The Commission believes children and young persons should never experience abuse of any kind.
- The Commission believes everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young persons to keep them safe and practice in a way that protects them and uphold their fundamental Human Rights.
- The Commission will give equal priority to keep all children safe regardless of their age, disability, gender, race, religion, belief, social status or background.
- The Commission will regularly review and update its child safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure they remain effective and aligned with best practices and child treatment protocol.
- The Commission has zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation and will take prompt and decisive action in responding to allegations or concerns.
- The Commission will maintain confidentiality in handling child safeguarding concerns, while also ensuring that information is disclosed to relevant authorities and stakeholders as necessary to protect the child's safety and well-being.

1.2 RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

All prospective employees, volunteers, interns, and partners of the Commission will be required to sign a declaration of criminal conviction as part of the application process in the Commission.

1.2.1 For all applicants, three reliable character references from respectable persons shall be required.

1.2.2 During the interview process applicants will be asked about previous work with children and their identity verified by attestation letters from respected members of their communities.

1.2.3 All staff, council members, volunteers and partners will receive training about the Commission's child protection policy. They will be given a copy of the policy and will be required to sign a declaration that they have received, read and understood it.

1.2.4 The Commission will appoint and train focal point officers at the Headquarters and state offices that will be responsible for all child rights issues within the Commission.

1.2.5 All interns and volunteers of the Commission will be monitored by the focal point officers at state offices where they are assigned to ensure that they adhere to the Commission's child safeguarding policy and that confidential information concerning children is not misused. Where there are concerns, these officers should inform the Director, Human Resources who will investigate further.

1.2.6 A regular Training plan will be developed for staff to meet up challenges considering the dynamic nature of child abuse happening in the society.

1.3 CODE OF CONDUCT

1.3.1 Any person handling a child shall allow the child to express his/her self on any decision that will affect him/her.

1.3.2 All staff shall not employ a minor as house help.

1.3.3 All persons responsible for handling cases concerning children shall be of good behaviour particularly On terms of language expression and attitudinal conduct.

1.3.4 Children shall not be exposed to drugs, alcohol or any other harmful substance and pornographic materials.

1.3.5 All staff, volunteers, interns and visitors will be required to dress decently and desist from the use of vulgar/swear words and must be culturally sensitive whenever in the presence of children.

1.3.6 For no reason will a child's identity whether in name or picture be made available to the media.

1.3.9 No staff shall be alone with a child except in an emergency. At every given time, at least two (2) staff should be present with a child.

1.3.8 On no account will a staff be left alone in a secluded or enclosed space with a child.

1.3.9 No male staff should be allowed to handle a female child alone and vice versa.

1.400 Any violation of the code of conduct will result in disciplinary measures being taken.

Guarding Principle: The Commission recognizes that:

Decision Making: The welfare of children and young persons is paramount in all its work and in all decision making concerning the child.

Promoting Welfare: Working in partnership with children, young persons, their parents, caregivers and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of children and young persons.

Vulnerability: Some children are additionally vulnerable because of physical, emotional, psychological, socio-economic, cultural and environmental, digital factors.

Additional Vulnerability: Extra Safeguards measures may be taken to keep such children who are additionally vulnerable safe from abuse,

Safety: The Commission will seek to keep children and young persons safe and provide a supportive environment to prevent all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. Ensuring that the Commission provides a safe environment for children within its premises as well as staff and volunteers by applying health and safety measures.

Views: Valuing them by listening to and respecting them and their views.

Nomination of Protection lead: Appointing a nominated child protection lead a deputy child protection lead and a council member committee on child protection under the women and children committee.

Code of conduct: Adopting child protection and safe guarding best practice through our procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers.

Do no harm. Any actions taken in the interest or to safeguard children or young persons must be guided by human rights principles in order not to cause further harm or distress to them (such as re-victimizing or re-traumatizing).

Management of staff: Provide effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and behavior codes confidently and competently.

Recruitment: Recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers consciously and meticulously to ensure all necessary steps are taken to check their background and all necessary information and security safety measures taken.

Confidentiality: Recording and storing and using information professionally and securely to ensure confidentiality, personal data on any child must be kept including their family. This data can be disclosed only to people authorized.

Sharing of information: Information on safeguarding and good practice should be shared-with the populace especially with children and families of victims through IEDS and other means of dissemination of information.

Allegation Management: Information regarding any allegation against staff and volunteers should be managed appropriately and adequate measures put in place to manage the situation in a way that discourages future occurrence and further harm.

Treatment of complaints: Ensuring that there is a robust and effective complaints treatments and whistle blowing measures in place to ensure all complaints are treated promptly.

Respect For Each Other: The Commission commits to building a safeguarding culture among its staff and volunteer, children and young persons and their families to ensure they treat each other with dignity and respect and are comfortable to share victim/survivor-centered approach. The need and rights of victims who come to the Commission must be handled in such a way as to do no further harm to them.

They have the right to be listened, believed and supported in a way that encourages them to speak out their minds. They need empathy and have a right to be involved in decision affecting them.

Consent: It is important that consent must always be sought from victims/survivors. No victim/survivor must be compelled or required to disclose their experiences against their wishes. It is necessary that in the case of children there should be a balance between consent and their best interest. Age-appropriate approach to ensure they are able to make informed decisions.

Compliance with the law: All staff and volunteers must ensure compliance with local, regional and international Child Protection laws.

1.4 COMMUNICATION

An open and clear channel of communication will be made. Staff of the Commission handling complaints that involve children will be required to consider the different communication needs and methods of those involved children, young persons and parents.

Children and parents will be informed on why certain procedures are taken in dealing with children and where they have questions such will be answered by the staff of the Commission handling their matter.

Child safeguarding risk assessments will be undertaken whenever a new programme/project that involves children is designed.

Training and Awareness

1. All staff of the Commission must receive appropriate Training and orientation on this safeguarding policy.
2. Staff with direct or specific responsibilities for care of children must receive advanced training to enable them discharge their duties effectively.
3. All volunteers, contractors, interns, visitors to the Commission must be made aware of the safeguarding policy.
4. Parents, guardians as well as children must be made aware of the safeguarding policy of the Commission.
5. The Commission will provide regular training and capacity building programs for staff, partners and stakeholders.

1.5 CHANNELS OF REPORTING COMPLAINTS AND INCIDENTS

1.5.1 The Commission has different channels of reporting complaints of violations. With this existing channel, the Commission must encourage specific child friendly reporting channels, including anonymous reports.

1.5.2 All reports of violation must be taken seriously and investigated. Irrespective of the victim, the perpetrator or how much time has lapsed. No incident must be swept under the carpet.

1.5.3. Persons who make reports must be protected and supported in such a way that gives them confidence in the Commissions ability to keep confidentiality.

1.5.4. When or if an incident happens within the Commission, the staff must promptly report such incident to the appropriate officers and it must be immediately investigated.

RESPONDING

1.6.1 Staff of the Commission must respond promptly and professionally to any reported incident of abuse against children whenever they become aware of it.

1.6.2. Age appropriate words must be effectively used at all times to get the child to understand and give the right response. Whenever appropriate a child counsellor can be invited to be part of the investigation.

1.6.3 All persons found guilty of abuse, neglect or other misconduct irrespective of their position or relationship with the victim must be made to account in accordance with the laws. Cases of criminal conduct must be reported to authorities for prosecution.

1.7 PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING COMPLAINTS

1.7.1 Where there is an allegation of child abuse /exploitation, the officer of the Commission or intern and volunteers against whom such allegations are made will be asked to discontinue work on the complaint involving the child in question or be separated from the child depending on the seriousness of the complaint.

1.7.2 The allegation will be investigated by a committee that will be set up by the Executive Secretary of the Commission and if necessary, the case shall be Referred to any statutory authority e.g. The Police.

1.7.3 Where it is found that the allegation is true, the officer will face appropriate sanctions as recommended by the committee set to investigate.

1.8 RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A designated child safeguarding focal officer well trained with years of experience working on child rights will be further trained and designated as focal point at the Commission's Headquarters, and state offices.

They will be saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that the policy is implemented and its provisions complied with at the Headquarters and the various state offices, They will also be responsible for ensuring that the Commission's partners work within its child safeguarding policy.

1.8.1 The headquarters of the NHRC must take responsibility to ensure that the safeguarding principle is adhered to by all staff members and those who visit the Commission.

1.8.2 The state officers of the Commission and all complainants, visitors, and stakeholders must take responsibility to ensure that this safeguarding policy must be strictly applied in order to give all children and young persons respect of their rights and dignity.

Contact details,

Focal safeguarding officer
officer

Deputy Focal safeguarding

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Email:

Phone Number:

Date:

Date of next review:

Approval:

Signature:

Date:

The Commission is committed to reviewing its policy at a minimum of every 2 years.

This policy takes effect
from

Date