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American School of Antananarivo

Child Protection Handbook

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American School of Antananarivo

Guiding Statements

Vision

Your best self for a better world

Mission

We are an inclusive and caring community that embraces diversity. We nurture inquiry, integrity and innovation to prepare for future challenges.

Values

- Creativity: we imagine, innovate and create in order to express ourselves and solve problems
- Open-mindedness: we engage with new ideas, appreciate multiple perspectives and care about others
- Inquiry: our curiosity and questions drive our learning
- Passion: we are enthusiastic about and find joy in what we do; we view setbacks as opportunities for reflection and growth
- Balance: we create harmony between our responsibilities and participate in activities that bring us fulfillment and emotional and physical health.

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Introduction

The American School of Antananarivo takes the responsibility for care of all of our students very seriously. We strive to provide a safe and supportive environment, so that all students can maximise their learning. Our policies and procedures on child protection stem directly from our school's guiding statements and mission. Madagascar is a signatory of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Furthermore, Malagasy law clearly outlines the rights and protection of children (LOI N° 2007-023 du 20 août 2007 sur les droits et la protection des enfants). These documents provide the background for establishing a set of clear ASA policies, procedures and guidelines for dealing with child protection. Child abuse and neglect are violations of children's human rights and can impede their intellectual, physical, social and emotional development.

United Nations Convention on the Rights Of the Child:

Article 19: Protection from Abuse and Neglect

“The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.”

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child:

Article 16: Protection Against Child Abuse and Torture

“State Parties to the present Charter shall take specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse”.

The framework outlined in this document seeks to guide ASA’s faculty, staff and families in matters related to the health, safety and care of children in attendance at our school. It includes definitions, steps and procedures in dealing with sensitive issues, and aligns our school procedures with the ASA Board of Trustee approved policies on child protection.

The appendix to the Board policy defines a very clear set of standards based on the following principles:

- All school employees have a duty to provide a safe environment for children
- Anyone working with children must be screened, trained and qualified.
- Any concerns must be reported immediately.
- Education and empowerment are key factors in keeping students safe.

Schools have a special role in society as protectors of children. Faculty and staff, who observe and interact with children over time, are in a unique position to identify children who are in need of help. This framework outlines a set of protocols that is supported by worldwide best practice and which coordinates clear and consistent procedures associated with keeping our students safe.

ASA Board Policy on Child Protection

(June 2017 update)

Children should be treated with respect and dignity at all times. We recognize that children are potentially at risk of abuse by others, including physical and sexual maltreatment, as well as exploitation and emotional neglect.

The School believes that every child has the right to be protected from such harm, and accordingly if the School discovers that a child is in jeopardy, it has an obligation to do whatever is in its power to protect the child. The options may range from advice and counseling with those concerned, to the notification of employers, embassies and law enforcement agencies.

Within the universally accepted norms of human rights framework, culture, religion or tradition can never be invoked to condone any form of violence against children.

Appendix

1. All school employees have a duty to provide a safe environment for students.
2. The School shall conduct a comprehensive verification of previous employment of any applicant. This includes references being checked by phone, skype or through a professional email address.
- 3 . Any behavioral concerns about employees must be investigated and documented.
 - There is a formal protocol for investigation of any behavior that is a cause for concern
 - The outcome of any investigation will be documented and included in the employee's file
4. If an employee knows or suspects that a child is being abused, either at school or beyond the campus, then he/she must inform the appropriate Principal or Counselor immediately.
 - A comprehensive inquiry will be conducted by a Response Team including at least one counselor and administrator
 - Findings will be reported to the Director in writing who will act according to the evidence
 - Disciplinary consequences may be internal (employee dismissal) and/or external, including informing relevant embassies, employers and law enforcement agencies
 - If the employee who reported the concern did so in good faith, there can be no retaliation against said employee if the concern is not justified
 - At all times, the welfare of the child/ren involved takes highest precedence
5. Education and empowerment are key factors in keeping children safe.
 - The school will, in a developmentally appropriate manner, make children aware of their right to social and emotional health, and to make their decisions about their bodies
 - The school must have a clear policy statement on internet use
 - The school must educate children about their rights and responsibilities as digital citizens

Child Protection: Key Definitions and Indicators

For the purposes of this document, a child is any person under the age of 18 or any person enrolled at ASA as a full time student.

Abuse: According to the World Health Organisation, “Child maltreatment, sometimes referred to as child abuse and neglect, includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, development or dignity.” Within this broad definition, four subtypes can be identified: neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse.

Neglect: failure to provide for a child’s basic physical, medical and or psychological needs.

Examples:

Physical: Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing or lack of appropriate supervision- this would include failure to provide proper adult guardianship such as leaving children unsupervised at home for any extended period of time.

Medical: Failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment.

Emotional: inattention to a child’s emotional needs and failure to provide psychological care.

Possible Indicators:

- Child is unwashed or hungry
- Stealing or scavenging compulsively
- Frequent tardiness or absence
- Acute fatigue
- Parents do not respond to communications from school
- Child does not want to go home
- Parents are disinterested in child’s academic performance

Physical Abuse: is causing internal or external physical injury, not by accidental means.

Examples: Hitting, kicking, shaking, suffocating, burning, biting.

Possible Indicators:

- Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts or fractures on any part of the body.
- Injuries that regularly appear after absences.
- Unexplained burns or burns with a pattern.
- Injuries inconsistent with the information given by the child.
- Fear of going home, or anxiety about being in certain places.
- May flinch if touched unexpectedly.
- Extremely aggressive or withdrawn.
- Poor sleeping patterns, frequent nightmares, poor attendance.
- Poor memory and concentration

Emotional Abuse: is a pattern of behavior where a child is subjected to continuous and hurtful verbal abuse, which disregards a child’s emotional well-being.

Examples:

Excessive criticism, constant disapproving, belittling, excessive teasing, severe humiliation, negative comparisons, insults, put downs, harmful threats, inappropriate expectations, verbal assault.

Possible Indicators:

- Fear of failing
- Fear of consequences, can lead to lying
- Mood swings, withdrawal or aggressiveness
- Mental or emotional developmental lags
- Social isolation
- Low self-esteem, depression
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints(e.g. headache , nausea, abdominal pain)
- Bedwetting and or diarrhea
- Reports of humiliation, or intimidation and bizarre punishments.

Sexual Abuse: is any act where an adult or a more powerful person includes a child in a sexual activity. Typically this occurs to satisfy the needs of the person in power. It can be consensual or not, and many cases of sexual abuse are done by a family member or someone the child knows and trusts, therefore children can be groomed, blamed, or manipulated to keep secrets.

Examples:

Penetrative or non-penetrative sexual acts, sexual intercourse, anal or oral sex, touching of genitals or breasts, the showing of private parts by an adult, forcing a child to watch sexual acts or pornographic material, developmentally inappropriate conversations about sexual content, the exploitation of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices.

Possible Indicators:

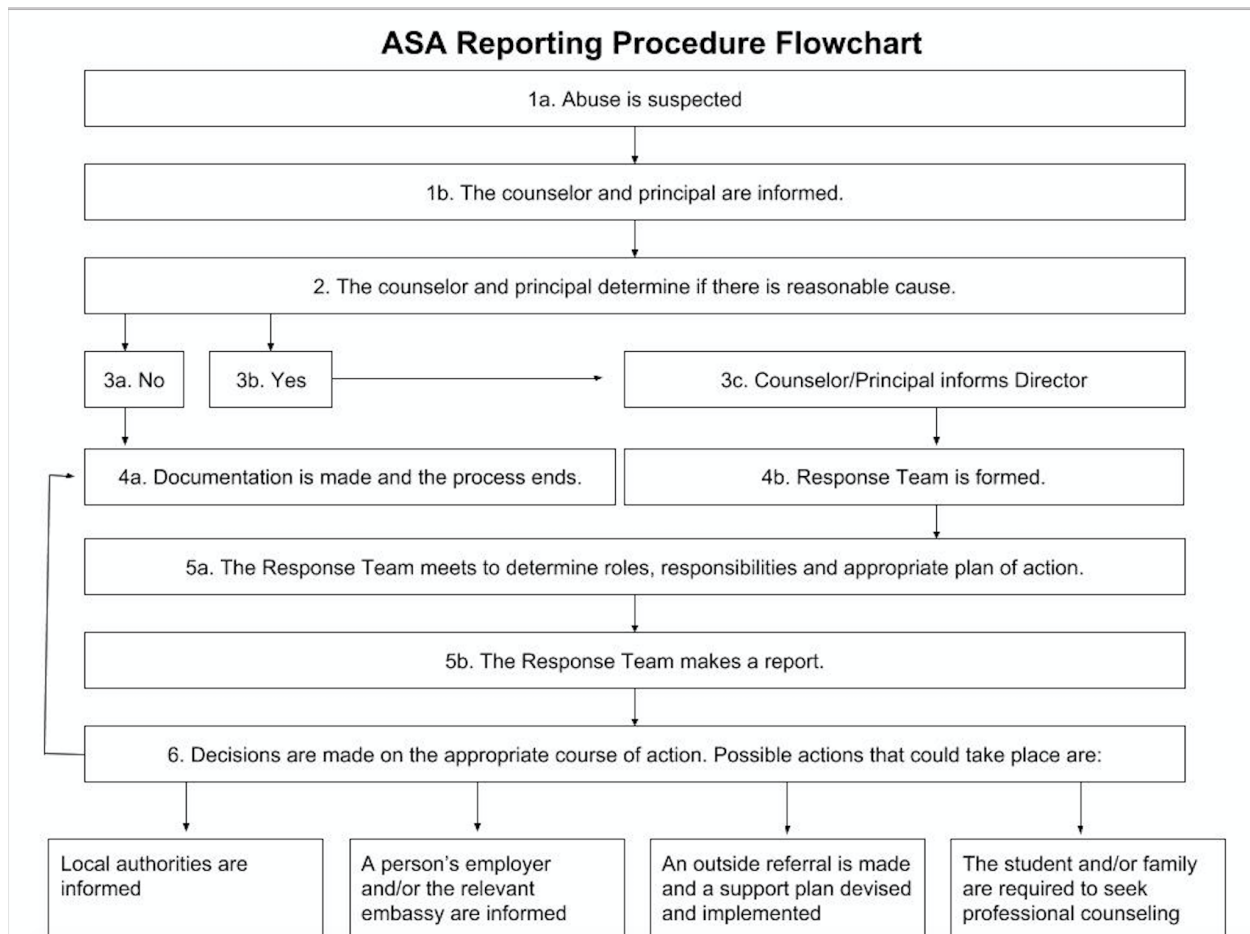
- Sexual knowledge, behavior or language not appropriate to age level
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Sexually transmitted infection in a child of any age
- Frequent urinary tract infections
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital or anal areas.
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Extremely protective parenting
- Having secrets that they cannot tell anyone about
- Reluctance to change into PE clothes, fear of bathrooms
- Behavioural/emotional disturbances

Behavioural indicators across these subtypes of child abuse in and of themselves do not constitute abuse or neglect. However, together with other indicators and concerns they do warrant a referral to the counselor and/or divisional Principal for investigation.

Child Abuse Reporting

All employees at ASA have a duty and a responsibility to act if they have reasonable cause for concern about a child's welfare. If an employee suspects or encounters evidence based upon indicators of abuse, he or she must report this information to the counselor and or/Principal within 24 hours of the initial concern. The following flowchart explains the procedures to be followed.

Reporting Procedure Flowchart



Steps in the Reporting Procedure

Step 1a: A member of staff has reason to suspect abuse

Step 1b: The member of staff informs either the counselor or principal as soon as possible.

Step 2. The counselor and/or principal will take initial steps to gather information about the reported incident and determine reasonable cause. All follow up activities will be conducted confidentially and documented factually.

Step 3: If reasonable cause is not determined, and further information is not needed, documentation is made and the process ends. If reasonable cause is determined and further information is deemed necessary, the counselor/principal informs the Director.

Step 4: A Response Team is formed. Members of the team may include 3 or more of the following people: the school counselor(s) most directly working with the student(s) involved, the divisional principal, the school doctor, the director, and/or other members as may be deemed necessary.

Step 5a: The Response Team meets to determine roles and responsibilities as well as an initial action plan.

Step 5b: Once more information has been gathered, the Response Team re-convenes and determines an action plan based on the information gathered. The action plan could include one of the following possible actions: report to authorities, family meeting, reporting to employer/Embassy/Consulate, outside mental health referral, support for family/child in school.

Step 6: Specific actions that MAY take place include:

- Discussion between counselor and student to clarify initial information
- Observations of the student by teacher, counselor, doctor or a consultant therapist
- Evaluation by the school doctor
- Meet with family members to present and discuss the situation
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling
- Notification to the sponsoring employer/welfare office of home country/ Embassy
- Consultation with school attorney or family law specialist
- Consultation with local authorities

Reporting to Local Authorities

ASA has a legal as well as ethical obligation to report cases of child abuse to Malagasy authorities. We have contacts at the following offices, to whom we will report:

- Service Central de la Police des Mœurs et de la Protection des Mineurs (Central Service of Morality Police and Protection of Minors).
- Division de la Police des Mœurs et de la Protection des Mineurs (Division of Morality Police and Protection of Minors).

Guidelines for Documentation

Keeping a record of concerns and any action that is undertaken is essential because:

1. It helps schools identify causes for concern at an early stage. Often it is only when a number of seemingly minor issues are taken as a whole, that a safeguarding or child protection concern becomes clear.
2. It helps schools monitor and manage its safeguarding practices. In any inspection it will be important to provide evidence of robust and effective safeguarding procedures.

Documentation will include:

- The name and title of the person writing the notes. All records should be dated and signed with the name of the signatory clearly printed.
- Records should be factual. In a case where disclosure is made, a child's own words should be used as far as possible.
- An assessment of need.
- A plan for the future which includes services provided or recommended, and suggested follow up procedures.
- All correspondence: emails, notes, letters, notes from conversations.

Confidentiality:

- Confidentiality must be adhered to and sensitive data protected throughout the process.
- It is important to make it clear to students that any disclosure they make may need to be shared with other professionals to protect them or others from harm.
- All records of child protection concerns, disclosures or allegations are to be treated as sensitive information and should be kept together securely and separately from the child's general school records. The information should be shared only with those who need to have it in order to take appropriate steps to safeguard the student, or to enable them to carry out their duties.
- Child protection records must be stored in a secure cabinet, accessible through the designated administrator/counselor. The student's general school record file should be marked to indicate that a child protection file exists.

Parental Responsibilities

Parents are expected to:

- Support the school's Child Protection Policy and Procedures and follow behaviour guidelines as set out in the handbook.

- Share in the responsibility to bring any child safeguarding concerns directly to the attention of the school.
- Reside with their child at all times (at least one parent), inform the school of any temporary absences and provide appropriate guardianship during these times. During parent absences the school must be informed in writing as to who will be responsible for the student. Domestic helpers do not qualify as guardians.
- Notify the school of a change of address or telephone number.
- Inform the School Doctor of any significant change in the health status of the student(s).

Training

Faculty and staff will be trained on a regular basis (at least annually) with regards to how to identify and report abuse and neglect. This document will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure that it keeps up to date with best practice and with the latest training.

Education

In Elementary School, children will be taught that healthy relationships are safe and respectful and that we are all responsible for recognizing and promoting safe and respectful relationships.

In the Middle and High Schools students will be educated about issues related to their personal health, and assisted to develop the skills necessary to make good decisions about their health and safety. As students work to become ‘successful, productive, and positive members of their local and global communities’ they will understand that:

- Personal choices related to health promotion and disease prevention will enhance their health
- The influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors affect behaviours
- Practicing healthy behaviours can help them avoid or reduce health risks
- Advocating for personal, family and community health promotes healthy behaviours and choices.

References and Sources

The American School of Antananarivo acknowledges and appreciates the support of the following individuals, schools and organizations whose publications and ideas have assisted in the production of this booklet.

American School Counselor Association - <https://www.schoolcounselor.org>

International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children - <http://www.icmec.org/education-portal/>

International School Manila

International School Tanyanika -

http://www.istafrica.com/uploaded/documents/All_School/2015-16/Child_Protection_at_IST.pdf

International Taskforce on Child Protection -

http://www.cois.org/page.cfm?p=1898&_cldee=dG96ZWRAaXNtYW5pbGEub3Jn&urlid=3

Shanghai American School -

<https://www.saschina.org/en/academics/child-protection-policy-at-sas>

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child -

<http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf>