



MAHER-RISING TO NEW LIFE

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

RIGHT TO LIVE FREE



POLICY STATEMENT

Every child deserves a happy childhood and opportunity to lead dignified life safe from violence, exploitation, neglect, deprivation and discrimination. Maher recognize and believes that the welfare of children and young people is best secured through love, care, protection and all the essentials and also comprehend them in every situation. Maher is committed to the principle that all children regardless of all dimensions and layers of discrimination are entitled to their rights as defined by the constitution of India, including equal rights to protection from all kinds of abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect.

Every home of Maher stands for its commitment and responsibilities towards safeguarding children and to protect them from all kinds of harm and abuse, keeping the best interest of the child in perspective. It also makes clear that any form of harm and abuse of children is unacceptable and non-negotiable to Maher, and any violation of the policy, whether intention or unintentional, will invite appropriate disciplinary action and judicial procedure as per this policy.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to give rights and safeguard to the children who are sheltered at Maher.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child: By “Child” we mean **any person under the age of 18 years.**

Child Abuse: When a child below the age of 18 years is maltreated by anyone, which causes physical, emotional, sexual or psychological harm or injury to the child.

CATEGORIES OF CHILD ABUSE

I. **Physical Abuse:**

Physical abuse is the inflicting of physical injury upon a child. This may include burning, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating or otherwise harming a child.

II. **Sexual Abuse:**

Sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual behavior with a child. It includes fondling a child's genitals, making the child fondle the adult's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism and sexual exploitation. Sexual abuse also includes non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

III. **Emotional Abuse:**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It

may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment, though it may occur alone

IV. Neglect or Negligent Treatment:

It is the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational, or emotional. Physical neglect can include not providing adequate food or clothing, appropriate medical care, supervision, or proper weather protection (heat or cold). It may include abandonment. Educational neglect includes failure to provide appropriate schooling or special educational needs, allowing excessive truancies. Psychological neglect includes the lack of any emotional support and love, never attending to the child, substance abuse including allowing the child to participate in drug and alcohol use.

APPLICABILITY OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to members of Maher include management members, staff, house-mothers, caretakers, volunteers and interns. It also covers consultants and visitors.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- I. All children are treated with respect and dignity, and they are protected from all forms of abuse
- II. The situation of all children must be improved through promotion of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes the right to freedom from abuse and exploitation
- III. Truth, transparency, and fairness in all interactions and in distribution of resources.
- IV. We have a commitment to protecting children with/ for whom we work
- V. Unconditional love, respect and social justice for all, regardless of caste, class, gender or faith.
- VI. Strongly condemn all forms of child abuse and exploitation, be it within or outside of our organization.
- VII. Transparency is maintained in everything and we allow the children in sharing the responsibly through Children's Parliament.
- VIII. Zero tolerance towards child abuse.

CODE OF CONDUCT

DO'S:

- Respect the privacy and dignity of every child.
- Follow the values of Maher which are respecting every human rights, serving beyond self, spreading love and kindness to every child, "Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam" which means "The world is one family".
- Be conscious and sensitive towards making appropriate arrangements for the special needs of children, particularly physically and mentally challenged children.
- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well.
- Be sensitive towards children's age, sex, ethnicity, background, sexuality, religion, etc.
- Promote the human rights, safety and wellbeing of all children in Maher.
- Create / enable an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns of abuse and rights.

- Handle all sensitive child data and information with adequate care, caution and confidentiality; to be shared in public only after written permission of a Maher authority.
- Ensure that children are not exposed to unsuitable material either in print or on the internet, including material having sexual connotations.
- Be sensitive to the issues of gender and socio-cultural issues
- Identify and mitigate risks to children's safety and wellbeing as required by Maher risk assessment and management policy or process.

DON'TS:

- Engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child.
- Engage in any activity that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child.
- Engage in any behavior in a manner that is viewed as offensive, sexually provocative, overt or otherwise.
- Engage in any form of substance abuse (alcohol/smoking/drugs/tobacco, etc) in the presence of the children.
- Shower or bathe with children or assist with any personal care activity that children may be able to conduct themselves.
- Disclose the identity and /or personal information of children
- Display or distribute images of children without informed consent from children and appropriate authority of Maher
- Discriminate against a child, or show differential treatment to some children to the exclusion of others. Taking views of specific children, like during any research study, must be pre-approved.
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- Take images /videos 'in secret' or in situations that may be viewed as being secretive.
- Pass on gifts to children other than as part of specific programs designed and approved by Maher appropriate authority.
- Have social contact with children through any medium, online or offline, until unless it is approved by Maher management.
- As per the new government rules, taking and uploading pictures, videos on social media of any child at Maher is not permitted.
- Watch pornography in front of children and /or show pornographic images and videos to children.
- Share their own personal contact details and mobile numbers with children without prior permission of appropriate authority of the organization
- Refrain from asking children to undertake personal jobs or errands or asking children to do tasks that should be done by adults
- Take children to their home/ residence or any other private space for the day or night and /or share a room with a child alone. Any emergency accommodation like medical attention must be approved by Maher appropriate authority.
- Patronize any service that employs children
- Employ any child (as defined in the policy) in any official as well as personal space.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE POLICY

- I. It is the responsibility of Maher staff to ensure that concerns are reported and that issues raised are listened to and handled appropriately by the representative who is in charge of management of this Policy. It is neither the responsibility of the staff to establish all the necessary details from the child, nor to establish the truth.
- II. Any child protection concerns regarding a Maher member should be communicated to the Directors of Maher who shall cause an investigation into the matter. Disciplinary action shall be taken against the concern member if found guilty. Where the matter is of non-compounding in nature, it will be intimated to the police. While refereeing the concern, Maher ensures that the best interest of the child is always the overriding concern
- III. Maher shall maintain full confidentiality about child protection concerns and its investigation. However, appropriate information will be given to those who have a Right and a need to know.
- IV. When child abuse or exploitation is reported, an appropriate investigation process will be followed and conducted as approved by the higher authority – who may construct a team and may consult with legal operations and / or the authorities if appropriate, and steer the investigation process accordingly.
- V. Internal investigation will undertake a confidential, thorough, impartial and prompt process. Maher will not tolerate any form of coercion, intimidation, reprisal or retaliation against anyone who reports any form of abuse or exploitation, provides any information or other assistance in an investigation.

AUTHORIZATION

This policy will be reviewed every year and necessary amendments will be taken place as and when required.

DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

To be signed by all Maher staff, volunteers. A copy will be kept on file in all the Houses.

I declare that:

1. I have read and understood the Maher Child Right and Protection Policy
2. I will work within the procedure as laid out in the Maher Child Right and Protection Policy
3. I have not been accused or convicted of any offence involving physical or sexual abuse of children or young people.
4. I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding the abuse of children while engaged in Programme, activities, the allegation will be thoroughly investigated in cooperation with the appropriate authorities.

Signature: _____

Date: _____