



POLICY AND PROCEDURES OF THE "WOMEN'S CENTER UŽICE" ON CHILD SAFETY AND PROTECTION

November, 2019



1. INTRODUCTION

MISSION of "the Women's Center Užice"

We are an organization dedicated to improving the rights and position of women in all spheres of life and work, with a special focus on economic empowerment and the provision of services to women in situations of violence.

VISION of "the Women's Center Užice"

The Women's Center of Užice wants to become a leading organization on the territory of the Zlatibor administrative district in the field of protecting women from gender-based violence and female social entrepreneurship.

The goal of the organization

Improving the position and quality of life of all women, especially women from vulnerable and marginalized social groups through:

- o Making the women's issue visible in the local environment;
- o Raising women's awareness of their rights, potential and position in society;
- o Providing support to women in achieving their rights, potential and improving their position;
- o Connection with other women's NGOs and inclusion in Networks of organizations dedicated to the advancement of women's human rights

Values and principles

It is extremely important for the organization to have the values they stand for respected through their activities, their values being:

1. Trust of female clients
2. Principles of combating violence against women
3. Respect for women's human rights and fight against discrimination
4. Values derived from membership in other networks and alliances
5. Work on standardization and licensing of services
6. Common values of all members and activists of the organization

Along with these values, the most important principles by which the organization and its members are guided in their work and for which they stand are:

- Support and solidarity
- Social justice
- Culture of non-violence and empathy
- Respect for personality and respect for diversity

- Equality of members of the organization
- Transparency and open communication
- Professionalism and high quality standards
- Respect for feminist principles in work
- Dedication, responsibility and perseverance in work
- Services are free for users

At the "Women's Center Užice" we are committed to constant development, but also to the revision of our own policies, practices, approaches and programs in order to contribute in the best possible way to the development of Serbia as a fair and open society, whose citizens start initiatives to improve their own communities in an active and responsible way.

The policy for the safety and protection of children¹ of the "Women's Center of Užice" represents an additional value to the general values and principles mentioned above. It serves as a binding guideline for the entire staff of the "Women's Center of Užice", male and female consultants, members of the Board of Directors, partners, interns and volunteers, as well as donors and business partners who have contact with children through any activity or program of the "Women's Center of Užice". The goal of creating the Policy for the safety and protection of children is to protect children from possible abuse.

The policy for the safety and protection of children of the "Women's Center of Užice" will contribute to the safety and security of children involved in the activities of the Center's staff, children who are influenced by the center's human resources (staff, consultants, members of the Management Board, partners, interns) volunteers as well as donors and business partners), as well as on practice and programs.

A. Principles

The policy of the "Women's Center Užice" for the safety and protection of children is based on the standards of Keeping Children Safe, the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights, as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on Children's Rights on the participation of children in armed conflicts, as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on Children's Rights on child trafficking, child prostitution and child pornography. Furthermore, the Policy for the safety and protection of children of the "Women's Center Užice" is based on and created in accordance with the domestic legislation of the Republic of Serbia, the General Protocol for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect², the Family Law, the Law on Social Protection, the Law on Financial Support for Families with Children, the Law on Health Care, the Law on the Education Foundations, the Law on the Primary Education System Foundations and the Law on the Secondary Education System Foundations. In addition, the Policy for the Safety and Protection of Children of the "Women's Center Užice" respects the work of

¹ Children to the age of 1

² www.minrzs.gov.rs



the Council for Children's Rights of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (2002), the Subcommittee for Children's Rights within the work of the Committee for Gender Equality of the National Assembly (2005), as well as the educational institutions of the Ombudsman, one of whose deputies is in charge of children's rights. The "Women's Center of Užice" will act in accordance with the above-mentioned documents and will respect the mandate of all the above-mentioned institutions in the case of child abuse.

Principles supported by the "Women's Center Užice" Policy for the Safety and Protection of Children are:

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse
- Everyone has a responsibility to support child protection
 - The staff of the "Women's Center Užice", male and female consultants, members of the Board of Directors, partners, interns and volunteers, as well as donors and business partners, are obliged to take care of the children they work with, who they are in contact with and who they influence by their work and activities
 - If the staff of the "Women's Center Užice", male and female consultants, members of the Board of Directors, partners, interns and volunteers work with partners, then they have an obligation to help partners create policies that ensure the safety and protection of children.
 - All activities related to the safety and protection of children are done in the best interest of the child

B. Definitions and terms

What is child protection?

"Women's Center Užice" has the responsibility to ensure that staff, male and female consultants, members of the Board of Directors, partners, interns and volunteers do not harm children, i.e. do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any suspicion that the organization has regarding the safety of children in the communities in which it works is reported to the appropriate services.

"*Do no harm*" refers to the responsibility of the "Women's Center of Užice" to "do no harm" or to minimize harm that could be caused by mistake as a result of an inappropriate program.

Definitions of infringement of rights

Physical abuse of a child is that which leads to actual or potential physical injury as a result of some interaction or lack of interaction, which falls under the reasonable supervision of a parent, or a person in a position in which he has responsibility, power over the child or his trust (WHO, 1999). It includes a wide range of activities such as hitting, beating, kicking, pulling hair, biting, suffocating, shoving, burning, poisoning, strangling, tying with a string or chain, forcing a child to remain in a position that causes pain or is humiliating as punishment, threat with a knife or gun etc. It can manifest itself



as an isolated incident or repeated activity of a chronic nature. Corporal punishment of a child in order to correct or control behavior is also considered child abuse.

Sexual abuse: forcing or encouraging a child to participate in sexual activities that the child does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include but is not limited to rape, oral sex, penetration or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching. It may also include forcing children to view or create sexually explicit images, as well as forcing children to view sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Child sexual exploitation: a type of sexual abuse where children are involved in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, housing, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs. It usually involves the child being manipulated and coerced, which can include socializing with children, gaining their trust, and subjecting children to drugs and alcohol.

Sexual exploitation of a child manifests itself in different ways. It may involve an older offender exercising financial, emotional and physical control over the young person. It can be a group of peers who manipulate and force the victim into sexual activity. It may also include organized networks of perpetrators who profit financially from the trafficking of young victims who have been abused in sexual activity.

Neglect: In relation to the context, resources and circumstances, neglect refers to the constant failure to meet the child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which can lead to serious deterioration in the child's health, that is, physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. It includes failure to properly supervise and protect the child from harm, and failure to provide food, shelter, and safe living/working conditions. It can also include neglect of the mother during pregnancy due to drug or alcohol abuse, as well as neglect and mistreatment of a child with a disability.

Emotional abuse: persistent emotional abuse that affects a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse includes restriction of movement, humiliation, insults, bullying (including cyberbullying), as well as threats, intimidation, discrimination, ridicule and other forms of hostile and rejecting behavior that is not physical violence.

Labor exploitation: exploitation of a child in work or other activities that benefit others, to the detriment of the child's physical and mental health, education, moral and social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labor.

C. Scope

This policy applies to the staff of the "Women's Center Užice", male and female consultants, members of the Board of Directors, partners, interns and volunteers.

Staff includes:

- staff

- all male and female volunteers and trainees

Associates include:

- all persons under the contract, e.g. consultants
- male and female members of the Management Board,
- all male and female partners including those from the local community
- male and female interns and volunteers

2. Prevention

Protection of children from abuse and protection of children's rights will be implemented through the following steps:

A. Risk assessment/risk mitigation

A risk assessment of all operational programs of the "Women's Center of Užice" as well as project activities will be carried out. A risk mitigation strategy will be developed, which will minimize risks to children, and be incorporated into the design, implementation and evaluation of programs, operations and activities involving or affecting children.

B. Safe employment procedures

Staff, male and female consultants and volunteers will be employed with clear job or role descriptions that will include a statement of the responsibilities of the position or role to comply with the organization's child protection policy requirements.

All interviews will include a discussion about child protection and the organization's commitment to this issue, as well as the candidate's understanding of this issue.

"Women's Center Užice" will apply the highest standards when recruiting and checking potential employees throughout the organization. Their understanding of child protection will be tested. When being hired, they will be asked to confirm that they have not been convicted and that no criminal proceedings are being conducted against them, as background checks are an important part of our employment policy.

"Women's Center Užice" acts in accordance with the **Checklist for recruitment and selection of staff (Annex 2)**.

C. Code of conduct

"Women's Center Užice" introduces the Code of Conduct in the work of the center.

The staff of "Women's Center Užice", male and female consultants, members of the Management Board, partners, interns and volunteers are obliged to accept the Code of Conduct if they are employed and/or start their work, consulting contract, or partnership



with "Women's Center Užice". If the Code is violated and if it is not followed in its entirety, "Women's Center Užice" will apply adequate measures. (Section IV Reporting/Responding to Suspicious).

The policy for the safety and protection of children of the "Women's Center of Užice" and the Code of Conduct should be respected in the workplace and outside it. This involves adopting appropriate behaviour and reporting suspicions of child abuse both at work and outside work.

The Code of Conduct of the "Women's Center Užice" is attached in **Annex 3**.

D. Education/ training

Male and female consultants, members of the Management Board and partners will be familiar with the Policy for the Safety and Protection of Children of the "Women's Center Užice" and child protection measures and their responsibilities according to the procedures, upon engagement in the organization.

The staff of the "Women's Center of Užice", male and female interns and volunteers are obliged to undergo training on child protection that will help them understand why it is necessary to protect the interests of the child and to become fully familiar with the procedure for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect .

The staff of "Women's Center Užice" must be familiar with the members of the internal Child Protection Policy Team of "Women's Center Užice", who are responsible for receiving reports or complaints, as well as advising on risk assessment and avoidance in accordance with the Child Safety and Protection Policy and procedure.

E. Creating a safe program

"Women's Center Užice" is dedicated to creating and implementing programs that are safe for children. Programs and projects will be assessed against risks to the safety and security of children.

F. Communications – use of images and information about children

"Women's Center Užice" will show children in a polite, appropriate and agreed manner at all times. Our guidelines for using images of children are:

- The child must always be portrayed in a dignified and respectful way, not in a way that portrays him as vulnerable and subordinate.
- Children must be properly dressed and must not be in poses that can be considered sexually suggestive
- The child and his/her family must always be asked for consent before the image is used, and given details of how and when the image will be used. (**Annex 6 Consent Form**)
- When publishing a picture, there must not be any information that can be used to identify the child's location
- Children must be shown as part of their community.



- Local cultural traditions related to restrictions on reproduction of personal images should be considered
- Images must be an honest representation of contexts and facts
- When images are sent electronically, file tags must not contain identifying information
- All photos must be checked for eligibility

In our use of information and visual materials, both photographs and videos, the overriding principle is to preserve respect and dignity in our portrayal of children, families and communities. For further information see **Annex 7 - Communication Procedure**.

G. Social media

The social media policy is attached as **Annex 4**.

H. Responsibilities

The policy and procedures of the "Women's Center of Užice" on the safety and protection of children are approved by the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors approved the mandate of the internal Team for the implementation of the Policy and Procedures on Child Safety and Protection (Vesna Bogdanović, Nevena Ostojić and Branka Virijević). Permanent member of the Policy and Procedure Implementation Team is the President of the Board of Directors of "Women's Center Užice", Radmila Gujaničić.

The child protection team is responsible for complying with reporting procedures, as well as for responding appropriately to reports of suspected child abuse or violations of the "Women's Center Užice" Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

3. Partners

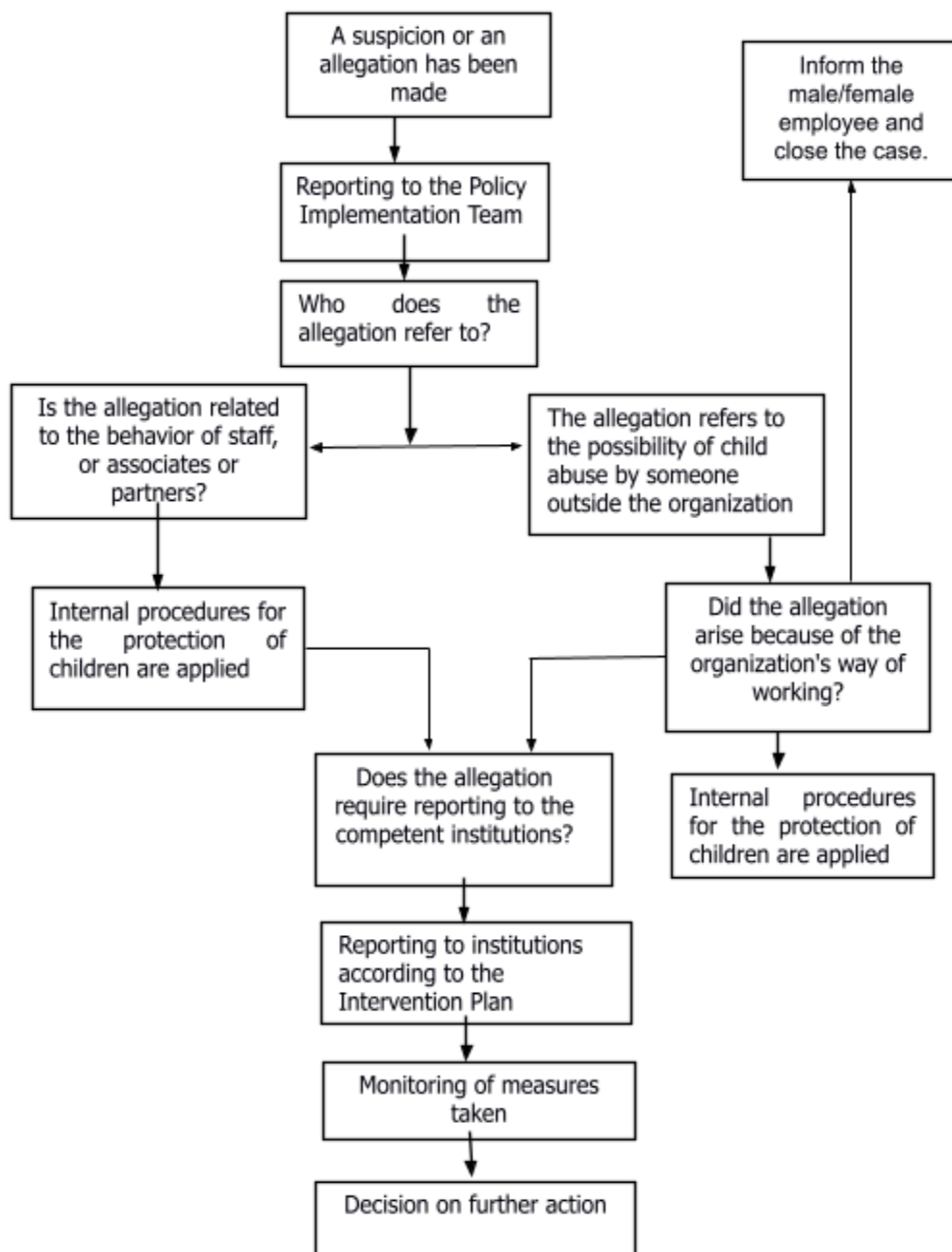
The contract with partners will include a statement by which partners who do not have a Child Protection Policy either accept the "Women's Center Užice" Child Safety and Protection Policy or develop their own child protection policy as a condition for partnership.

4. Reporting/responding to suspicions

The staff of the "Women's Center Užice", male and female consultants, members of the Board of Directors, partners/interns and volunteers are obliged to report any suspicion of child neglect and abuse to the appointed members of the "Women's Center Užice" Child Protection Policy Team.



The login diagram is on the next page.





"Women's Center Užice" will receive allegations from children with empathy and will try not to re-traumatize children when processing allegations. If a child or young person tells you that they are or have been abused:

- Listen and accept what the child or young person is saying, but do not press further for information.
- Let the child or young person know your next steps and that you will keep them informed of what is happening.
- Do not investigate, inform, question or confront the alleged perpetrator.
- Take the alleged abuse seriously.
- Carefully record everything you hear on the application form.

Every allegation will be treated seriously and in confidence. The priority will always be the safety and best interest of the child. (see **Annex 8 Referral Form**)

Identifiable information about children will be shared only on a strictly necessary basis. Any staff member who suspects serious abuse and reports it will be protected as far as possible from any victimization or threatening treatment, provided the suspicion is expressed in good faith. Intentionally false allegations are a serious disciplinary offense and will be investigated as such.

The subject of the allegation (alleged perpetrator) as well as all witnesses must fully and openly cooperate during internal and legally provided investigative actions and hearings. Their privacy will be protected and information about their identity will be shared only on a strictly necessary basis.

A quick and appropriate response will ensure that the situation does not repeat itself, as well as that all involved individuals know what it is about and what activities will be undertaken.

Allegations against a member of staff will result in the suspension of the person from the position and the immediate initiation of an investigation procedure. If the allegation is of a criminal nature, it must be reported to the appropriate service before measures are taken and the alleged perpetrator is informed.

Internal investigations should be carried out by a person or persons who have the appropriate skills. Investigative actions should include interviews with all parties involved including witnesses to gather relevant details related to the allegation.

Appropriate disciplinary action should be taken if the allegation is found to be true. If there is no basis for an allegation, appropriate steps should be taken to minimize damage to the accused person's reputation.

Internal investigative actions related to allegations of a criminal nature should be discussed with formal authorities before implementation, so that the organization does not jeopardize the official investigation.



Support and counseling should be provided to all involved in reporting and responding to a case.

"Women's Center Užice" has a list of organizations and professionals who can be quickly contacted to support the process of reporting and responding to suspicions (**Annex 5**).

5. Monitoring and auditing

The child protection policy team together with the president of the Board of Directors of the "Women's Center of Užice" will monitor and revise the policy and procedures every three years. The policy will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors of the "Užice Women's Center" every three years.

Document title	Date	Auditing	Changes	Person