



## Child Protection Policy

### PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- Provide Child Protection documentation that is appropriate to ISS and its context.
- Provide the necessary definitions and assessment tools for clear identification and recognition of abuse/neglect situations.
- Ensure an exemplary standard of child protection at ISS.
- Ensure that prompt and adequate assistance is provided to a child in need of special care and protection.
- Define procedures for staff members and establish clear reporting guidelines and mechanisms.
- Outline processes and protocols for ISS in connecting to its local community, and to agencies for child protection support.

This document outlines ISS's safeguarding and child protection policy. It applies to all adults, including volunteers, working in or on behalf of the school.

### Child Protection Philosophy

International School Suva is committed to providing safe, supportive and disciplined learning environments, to preventing reasonably foreseeable harm to students and to responding when an employee reasonably suspects harm or risk of harm to students.

Student protection involves:

- Working to make our school safe, supportive and disciplined for all students.
- Taking action to prevent students being harmed at school,
- Reporting any suspicion, you have that a student has been harmed, is likely to be harmed, or wants to harm themselves

All students have the right to be protected from harm.

Harm is defined as any detrimental effect of a **significant nature** on a student's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm can be caused by physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation, or self-harm and suicidal ideation.



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**Harm** includes:

**Physical** – physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by caretaker other than accidental means. Non-accidental acts on a child that results in physical harm. This includes but is not limited to, pinching, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse also involves the fabrication or inducing of illness.

**Sexual**- persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any minor to engage in any sexual act, including viewing obscene material.

**Emotional/Verbal** – verbal abuse, rejection, terrorizing, withholding physical/emotional contact, shameful punishments. 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. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorizing a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes the seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others, e.g. domestic violence.

**Neglect**- a pattern of inadequate food, clothing, shelter, medical attention, supervision. Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing long term serious harm to the child’s health or development. It may also include neglect of a child’s basic physical or emotional needs. Neglect is a lack of action, emotion or basic needs.

**Self-Harm and Suicidal Ideation**- Self-harm means any behavior which involves the deliberate causing of pain or injury to oneself – usually as an extreme way of trying to cope with distressing or painful feelings. Self-harm includes cutting, burning or hitting oneself, binge-eating or starvation, or repeatedly putting oneself in dangerous situations. **Suicidal ideation** is defined as the actions or thoughts one has about taking his or her life.

## Reporting Procedures

Everyone who works in an educational institution must look after the best interests of students. If a staff member **SUSPECTS** any child is being harmed or if the student **DISCLOSES** harm:

- You must first report to the school counselors and then to the heads of school, if they are not available.
- You must notify one of these people within 24 hours at the latest. Make personal contact with one of the counselors or administrators. Do not **ONLY** use email.
- Stay calm.
- Reassure the child they did the right thing by telling someone.
- Listen to the student indicating you are taking him or her seriously.
- Keep questions to a minimum and do not ask any questions that put words into a student’s mouth.
- Do not ask to see anything under clothing.
- Inform the student that you will get them help. Tell him or her you have to let someone know so that the student can be safe.
- Make a record of your conversation and observation immediately via the Child Abuse Reporting Form.
- Do respect the child’s need for confidentiality.



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When a counselor is available, he/she will meet with the student to further investigate the suspicion of abuse. When a counselor is unavailable, the head of school or principal will meet with the student. The counselor and head(s) of school will then meet along with the other members of the Response Team to discuss next steps depending on each student's individual situation. Outcomes may be to meet with parents to discuss reduction in harm and behavior management techniques and/or to inform the police, child protective services, or the family's respective embassy. Where necessary the Principal will seek legal consultation.

## **Response Team**

When a child protection issue is reported to a School Counselor, the School Counselor will inform the Head of School and the Principal, and convene the Response Team. This team will be led by the School Counselors and will include the School Nurse/ Medical Officer, the relevant Head of School (Division), the Deputy Principal/Principal, the reporting staff/faculty member (if applicable) and external resources or consultants as needed (i.e. community mental health professional).

After convening the Response Team and the necessary data gathered (i.e. Child Abuse Referral form, photos of bruising and written report) a School Counselor will, if deemed necessary, email the completed Child Welfare Decree Form to the Department of Social Welfare : Suva: 3315754 Nasinu: 3683395 Nausori: 3479449. A report is to be made whether there are physical signs of abuse or not.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

At ISS we recognize every staff person, regardless of their role, has a duty to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This policy applies to the whole school community: all teaching and non-teaching staff, board members, students, contractors, volunteers and visitors working in the school. The School Counselor, Heads of School, Principal, Medical Officer and other designated positions will have particular responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within the school. Roles and responsibilities are further outlined in the reporting procedures above.

## **Child Protection Training**

All staff, volunteers, contractors, and board members will undergo annual Child Protection training. The training will ensure that stakeholders who come in contact with ISS students are made aware of the local law pertaining to child protection as well as ISS's Child Protection Policy. Training will also ensure that ISS students and children who come in contact with ISS staff, volunteers, contractors, and board members are safeguarded.

## **Recruitment and Selection of Staff Pertaining to Child Protection**

ISS recognizes the value of, and seeks to achieve a diverse workforce which includes people from different backgrounds with different skills and abilities. The school is committed to ensuring that the recruitment and selection of all who work within the school is conducted in a manner that is conducive to ensuring the safety of ISS students and all children that the school staff comes in contact with. This document provides a framework for all departments and staff to follow with regards to best hiring practices and aims to ensure that candidates are treated fairly in the process whilst ensuring that applicants meet the requirements of the law and the school with regards to ensuring students' safety and wellbeing. The roles and responsibilities of all those who participate in the the process will be outlined and hiring procedures defined to ensure consistency in the process. ISS will:

- Ensure that more than one staff person is responsible for the hiring of any staff member
- Ensure that staff who are a part of the hiring process at the school have received training,



understand and are familiar with the safe recruitment practices adopted at ISS.

- Implement and follow the recruitment procedures, checking, before appointing staff to ensure that reasonable steps have been taken not to appoint a person who is unsuitable to work with children, or who is disqualified from working with children.

The following pre-employment checks will be conducted:

- An internet search regarding the candidates' on-line presence
- Receipt of three satisfactory references, one of which must be from the former or most recent employer obtained using the ISS reference format using the referees' professional email addresses.
- Verification from referees that the candidate, to the best of their knowledge, does not have a criminal record and is suitable to work with children
- Verification of relevant and required qualifications

The following documents will be collected directly after a conditional offer is made:

- A satisfactory Criminal Reference check
- Verification of the candidate's medical status
- Original transcripts, certificates and other documents required for visa processing
- Copy of valid and clean passport

Please refer to the ISS Policies & Procedures for Human Resources for more detailed information on hiring and Human Resource practices.

### **Managing Concerns and Allegations**

Through ISS' hiring measures and Child Protection efforts ISS seeks to hire the most qualified staff who are skilled and most appropriate to work with children. However, if there is an allegation of abuse levied against an ISS staff member the school will take the following measures:

- Call the Chair of the ISS School Board and seek legal council
- Call the embassy of the alleged offending staff member
- Gather the core members of the Crisis Team
- Gather the facts of the incident (i.e. who, what, where, when, why, how of the situation)
- Notify the Fiji Police and the Permanent Secretary's Office to file the necessary reports (See Reporting Procedures above)
- Notify the school's insurance company
- Determine the message in the school's official communications
- Monitor local and social media

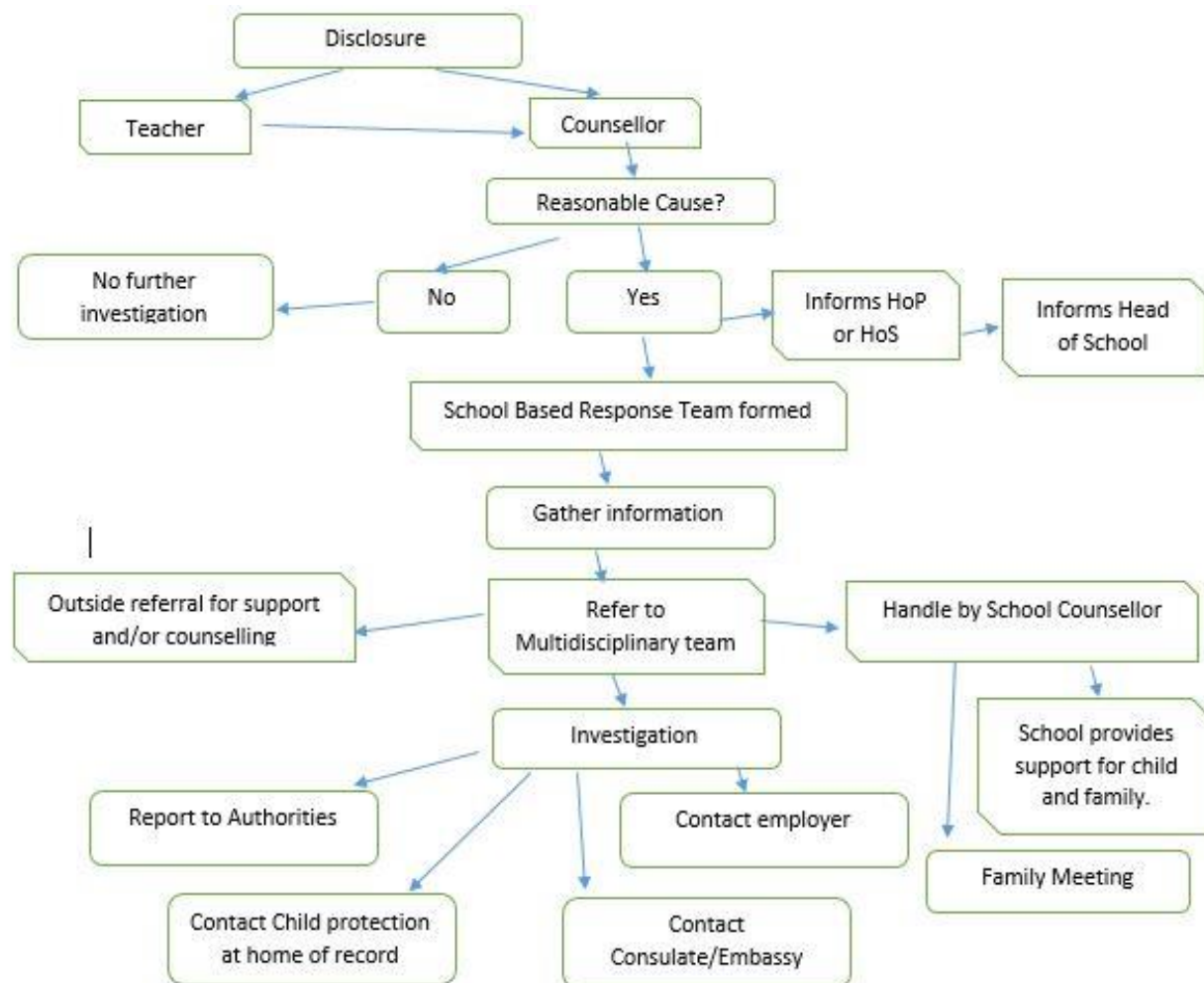
### **Flowchart for Reporting and Actions after Disclosure**

Where there is cause to suspect child abuse or neglect it is the responsibility of the staff member to report their suspicions to the counsellor in person or via the online form. Under no circumstances should this information be disclosed to a third party without further permission of the counselor.

Once the validity of the report has been established the Head of School will be notified.

All staff, faculty and administrators are mandated to report incidences of abuse and neglect. All International School Suva (ISS) employees are also required to report suspicion of abuse or

neglect. All reports of abuse and neglect must be made to the counselor within 24 hours for immediate response.



### Child Protection Team

In order to manage crisis situations that will have an impact on the overall school community such as abuse allegations against a staff member, the school will maintain a Crisis Team. The Crisis Team consists of core members and expanded members. The core members will consist of:

- The Principal/ Deputy Principal
- The Heads of School
- Crisis Deadline Manager
- IT Director/ Head of IT
- School Attorney
- Chair of the School Board (must be notified immediately)

The expanded members of the Crisis Team consist of:

- Department Heads
- School Counselors
- Security
- Business Manager
- Embassy



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## **Response to Media and Parent Inquiries**

If staff or board members are contacted by the media for comment regarding an abuse allegation, members must refer the media outlet to the Principal/Deputy Principal. When staff members are contacted by parents regarding news of an allegation against a staff member, staff members are to refer the parent to the Principal. The Crisis Team, led by the Principal and guided by the School Attorney will draft a Media Holding Statement, a letter to the community, Q&A for the Principal and School Board members, talking points for staff in regards to parent inquiries, for School Board members, and for Heads of Schools' response to alumni inquiries.

Staff and board members are to refer to ISS' media policy for further guidance on how to manage media inquiries. The appointed Crisis Deadline Manager will create a timeline with flexible dates in order to manage the allegation response. Outreach will be made to alumni as necessary. All talking points and communication must mirror the community letter drafted by the Crisis Team.