RIQL
Research Institute
for Quality of Life

Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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Research Institute for Quality of Life - presentation

The Research Institute for Quality of Life (RIQL) is a leading research institute in quality of life and social policy. The institute is part of the research network of the Romanian Academy of Science and a member of the National Institute for Economic Research "Costin C. Kirițescu". Founded in 1990, the Research Institute

for Quality of Life combines an already valuable tradition in social research with a modern outlook, conducting both fundamental and applied research.

Our institute focuses on two key areas: quality of life and social policy, along with related topics such as health, education, employment and working conditions, housing, family, poverty and living standards, public services, social development, and social economy. One of the primary research focuses of RIQL has been on transition analysis and long-term social change within Romania. More than 220 books and over 1000 articles have been published, many of which in prestigious publishing houses and high-impact journals. Moreover, we publish a series of social reports dedicated to policymakers and the general public.

Apart from undertaking fundamental research, RIQL actively contributes to the ongoing debate on contemporary social issues and provides valuable knowledge to aid in the development of improved policies. The institute's contribution in supporting policy making is visible in the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction, the Joint Inclusion Memorandum, as well as various legislative initiatives concerning employment, social benefits, social assistance, and education.

With a team of approximately 50 researchers and research assistants, RIQL has firmly established itself as a leading research institute in Romania. Our researchers have extensive expertise in social sciences and actively participate in significant national and international research networks and projects, including those funded by the European Union/European Commission, as well as numerous other local and international donors.

RIQL offers consulting services and expertise in institutional development and policy design within the social sector, alongside evaluating social policy measures at both national and European levels. Our extensive experience is evidenced by numerous partnerships with public institutions, including the Presidency, the Romanian Government, central and local administrative agencies, research institutes, and universities in Romania and abroad. Additionally, we collaborate with esteemed international organizations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, and ILO.

The purpose and scope of this policy statement

The purpose of the **Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (CPP)** is to establish guidelines for RIQL's interventions, ensuring the safeguarding and promotion of the well-being of children encountered, whether directly or indirectly. Its primary objective is to prevent harm to children by implementing projects and institutional activities, thereby promoting their safeguarding and welfare.

The Research Institute for Quality of Life's **Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (CPP)** aims:

- to protect children and young people who interact with the RIQL through its staff, including administrative staff, doctoral students, and volunteers, from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services.
- to provide staff, including administrative staff, doctoral students, and volunteers, as well as children, young people, and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

The Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy delineates measures aimed at ensuring:

- Prevention: All reasonable steps are taken across RIQL's interventions to prevent harm, abuse, and exploitation.

- Protection: All safeguarding concerns are treated seriously, prompting a robust response that prioritises the safety and well-being of children at risk.

RIQL is firmly convinced that:

- Children and young people should never be exposed to any form of abuse.
- We have a duty to promote the well-being of all children and young people, to keep them safe, and to carry out our duties in a way that protects them.

Legal framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with international, European, and Romanian legislation, policies, and guidelines aimed at protecting children. This includes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child[1], adopted and opened for signature by the UN General Assembly resolution 44/25 on 20 November 1989, and entered into force on 2 September 1990, as well as the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (ETS 160/1996[2]). Furthermore, it aligns with Romanian Law no. 272/2004[3] on the protection and promotion of children's rights and with Order No. 6886 of 23 December 2025 regarding the approval of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for personnel in research, development and innovation.

Supporting documents

This policy statement should be read alongside our organizational policies, procedures, guidance, and other related documents, including but not limited to:

- Role description for the designated safeguarding officer.
- Data protection and data management policy.
- Dealing with disclosures and concerns about a child or young person.
- Managing allegations/petitions against personnel, including administrative staff, doctoral students, and volunteers.
- Recording petitions and information sharing.
- Child protection records retention and storage.
- Code of conduct for personnel, including administrative staff, doctoral students, and volunteers.
- Photography and sharing images guidance, for children and young people.
- Safer recruitment.
- Training, supervision and support for personnel, including administrative staff, doctoral students, and volunteers.

[1] https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text
[2] https://rm.coe.int/european-convention-on-the-exercise-of-children-s-rights/1680a40f72
[3] https://copii.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/legea-nr-272-2004-privind-protectia-si-promovarea-drepturilor-copilului.pdf

Main concepts used

Child is any person younger than 18 years of age.

Child Safeguarding represents "the responsibility that organizations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organization has about children's safety within the communities in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities." (Keeping Children Safe Coalition 3[4])

Harm is the ill treatment or impairment of the health or development of a child. Safeguarding children covers actual or potential harm, harm posed by others and 'harm to self' posed by the child. Harm can occur over a series of repeated incidents or a one-off, they may form a pattern, or be sporadic, they may be happening currently, be historic and/or be potential future harm. Anyone may harm a child and harm may take place anywhere, including over the phone and online.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. A person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm.

There are four main categories of abuse and neglect of a child:

- **Physical abuse** is a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- **Emotional abuse** represents the persistent emotional maltreatment of children such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving children opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a children's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve the child seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another person. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.
- **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing children to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually

[4] www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk

inappropriate ways, or grooming children in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.

- **Neglect** represents the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development.

Other categories of abuse covered by child safeguarding include:

- Bullying
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child criminal exploitation
- Domestic abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Modern slavery
- Online abuse
- Radicalisation
- Harm to self (self-harm, suicidal behaviour or ideation, substance misuse, eating disorders)

Principles

RIQL states that, in applying the principles governing good conduct in RDI (research, development, and innovation) activities, as provided in Article 3 of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for research personnel, priority will be given to the principle of "the best interests of the child", as set out in Article 6(a) of Law No. 272/2004. In this regard, RIQL will consider the following measures to be of great importance for its interventions:

- Children must be protected from harm at all times.
- Working in partnership with parents and children is essential for the protection of children.
- The rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and their families will be respected and listened to.
- All children, regardless of their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief, and/or sexual identity, should be able to participate in RIQL's interventions in a fun and safe environment.
- RIQL will take all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination, and degrading treatment.
- Those in positions of responsibility within the organization (RIQL) will prioritize the interests of children and young people and adhere to the policy outlined below.
- Those in positions of responsibility within the organization (RIQL) will ensure that equal opportunities are available to everyone, and that all differences between individuals are treated with respect.

- All employees who work with children will be recruited based on their suitability for that responsibility and will receive guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures.

By stating this CPP, RIQL:

- Recognises the right of every child to stay safe.
- Aims to ensure that the organization fulfils its responsibilities regarding the protection of children and youth and will respond to concerns appropriately.
- Frames the principles and procedures to support the staff, doctoral students, associated researchers, partners, and volunteers in their practices and clarifies RIQL's expectations, ensuring that the actions of any adult in the context of the work carried out are transparent and safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people. Therefore, this policy ensures that procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities shall be followed.
- Promotes good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection and enabling staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child and youth protection issues.

RIQL acknowledges that:

- In our scientific research activities, the best interests of children and young people are an absolute priority, and our decisions should be guided by this.
- Close collaboration with children, young people, their parents, as well as with other institutions and organizations, is essential for promoting their rights.
- Every child or young person, regardless of age, level of abilities, gender, religion, or other characteristics, has the right to protection from any form of abuse or harm.
- Some children or young people may be additionally vulnerable due to past experiences, level of dependency, or other factors related to their personal context. In these cases, additional measures are necessary to protect them from abuse.

RIQL will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing, listening to, and respecting and considering their opinions, taking into account their age and level of maturity.
- Appointing a designated safeguarding lead for children and young people to oversee their protection.
- Implementing best practices in child protection and safety through our policies, procedures, and code of conduct for all personnel, including administrative staff, doctoral students, and volunteers.
- Developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures, including protocols for assessing and managing potential risks for children associated with their participation in research. This involves identifying and minimizing risks, as well as developing action plans for managing emergency or risky situations.

- Ensuring efficient management of personnel, including administrative staff, doctoral students, and volunteers through supervision, support, training, and quality assurance measures. This ensures that all staff and volunteers understand and adhere to our policies, procedures, and codes of conduct in a professional and competent manner.
- Recruiting and selecting personnel, including administrative staff, volunteers, safely, conducting all necessary checks such as presenting a criminal record certificate (document listing criminal sanctions from final court decisions) as well as a certificate of behavioral integrity (attesting to the absence of entries in the National Register Of Persons Who Have Committed Sexual Offenses).
- Recording, storing, and using information professionally and securely, in compliance with data protection legislation and guidelines (GDPR).
- Sharing information about child protection and good practices with children and their families through vaious channels such as the website, leaflets, posters, group or individual discussions.
- Ensuring that children, young people, and their families know where to seek help if they have concerns about their rights being violated, including by calling the child helpline 161111.
- Using our child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with the appropriate authorities and involving children, young people, parents, families, and legal representatives as necessary.
- Handling any allegations against personnel, including administrative staff, doctoral students, and volunteers properly, including by initiating disciplinary investigation procedures in accordance with the law.
- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and implementing policies and procedures to effectively address any instances of bullying.
- Implementing effective measures for handling complaints and safeguarding the identity of individuals reporting child abuse. The policy also outlines procedures for obtaining informed consent from parents or guardians before involving children in any research activity. This includes clear discussions about the purpose and nature of the research, as well as the associated rights and risks.
- Ensuring a safe physical environment for children, young people, and personnel, including administrative staff, doctoral students, and volunteers, by adhering to health and safety measures in accordance with specific laws and regulations pertaining to occupational health and safety and fire protection.
- Cultivating a culture of protection wherein personnel (including administrative staff, doctoral students, and volunteers), children, young people, and their families treat each other with respect and feel comfortable sharing concerns.

Roles and responsibilities

The child protection policy applies to all staff, doctoral students, associated researchers and volunteers. All individuals must sign RIQL's Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and adhere to the procedures outlined within it. All staff, including permanent staff, doctoral students, associated researchers, and

volunteers, are bound by the principles and guidance laid out in this policy and linked policies. They are expected:

- Follow the required procedures.
- Promote good practice and to contribute to discussions about safeguarding.
- Ensure that the voices of the beneficiaries, whether children, youth, or adults, to whom this policy peretains, are heard and taken into account.
- Respect the professional boundaries and professional code of conduct referenced in this document.

RIQL has a designated person to act as a liaison with outside organizations.

The Management is responsible for:

- Making sure that staff are fully aware of the Child Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.
- Allowing staff to attend training and letting them access guidance to help them identify abuse and the risk of abuse, and deal with it in the ways set out in this policy.
- Making sure staff know about, and follow, reporting systems.
- Planning performance objectives that support safeguarding policy for staff working in safeguarding roles.
- Making sure that in our scientific research activities, the best interests of children and young people are an absolute priority, and our decisions should be guided by this.

The designated safeguarding lead for children and young people has the following responsibilities:

- Keeping up to date with relevant safeguarding practice and legislation and updating the board accordingly.
- Assuming overall accountability for safeguarding practices within RIQL.
- Ensuring that the Management is consulted and updated regarding changes in policy and safeguarding concerns.
- Escalating any safeguarding concerns with external organizations.
- Serving as a source of advice on child protection matters for staff.
- Monitoring the implementation of the Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Ensuring that the CPP procedures are followed by all staff, doctoral students, associated researchers, and volunteers, and that appropriate information is available at the time of referral, which should be confirmed in writing under confidential cover.

Project Managers/ Coordinators are responsible for:

- Deciding whether to raise a safeguarding concern with the local authority.
- Making sure everyone in the organization is aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and knows how to respond to concerns.
- Deciding when to share information with other agencies or raise a concern with local authority and, if consent is not given, whether to override and on what basis.
- Providing appropriate direction and coaching to staff to ensure a best practice approach to child safeguarding is integrated into operational practice.

- Ensuring training undertaken and experiences of responding to child safeguarding incidents are discussed in supervision so staff and volunteers' understanding of safeguarding is clearly established and further support identified, if required.
- Ensuring lessons learnt from safeguarding issues are discussed with relevant teams and changes in practice, procedure and policy embedded, where appropriate.
- Ensuring staff and volunteers receive briefings on updates and changes to local authority procedures.

All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Keeping children safe from harm.
- Ensuring they are aware of this policy and how to access it.
- Promoting the safety and welfare of children involved at all times.
- Immediately alerting a senior staff member regarding any challenges finding or understanding this policy.
- Knowing what to do if they suspect potential or actual harm, abuse or neglect of a child.
- Undertaking any mandatory safeguarding training as required by RIQL.
- Familiarising themselves with any local authority child safeguarding policies, procedures and training, which may be available and relevant to their role.
- Taking immediate actions, wherever possible, to ensure children are safe from harm, abuse or neglect.

Safe recruitment procedures and requirements for vetting staff

RIQL ensures safe recruitment through the following processes:

- Recruitment adverts or application details shall state that the 'recruitment is done in line with safe recruitment practices'.
- Clear definition of jobs and role descriptions with clear reference to safeguarding responsibilities, and clear specifications of roles concerning child and youth protection.
- Shortlisting through a formal application process, which shall be based on criteria set in accordance with the job/role's specifications, required qualifications and principles of Safeguarding Policy.
- Interviews are conducted according to equal opportunity principles, and interview questions are based on the relevant job description and person specification. All interviews shall include a discussion on child safeguarding, the candidate's understanding of this and the organization's commitment.
- References from previous employees or others who have knowledge of the candidate's experience and suitability to work with children will be requested.
- All staff will be given a copy of this Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and will be asked to sign a declaration certifying that they have read the policy, agree to abide by its contents and that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable for working with children/young people.
- Where short-term contracts for staff are awarded for particular pieces of work, a clear job description is developed outlining the responsibilities of the job and the reporting procedure.

RIQL must ensure compliance with the National and international legal framework concerning vetting of personnel and other persons who undertake relevant work or activities with children or vulnerable persons.

RIQL must also be aware of the need for prudent practice from a child protection perspective.

Vetting should not, however, take the place of normal recruitment procedures, such as seeking and following up on references and ensuring that any unexplained gaps in employment records/curriculum vitae are satisfactorily accounted for. Whether a person is being considered for employment or other roles in the project activities, comprehensive procedures for checking of the person's suitability to work with children or vulnerable persons are an essential element of child protection practice.

RIQL develops effective induction, communications, and support mechanisms for all staff (including permanent staff, partners, etc) regarding the implementation of the Child Safeguarding and Chil Protection Policy.

The induction process includes:

- Discussion about the Child Safeguarding and Chil Protection Policy, followed by confirmation of reading and understanding it. A relevant statement ensuring that the individual has been fully informed of and understands the policy's contents should be provided. This discussion should also cover other relevant policies.
- Clear information and guidance provided to all staff (including partners) to ensure familiarity with reporting processes and hierarchical roles (e.g. senior managers etc. and their deputies).
- Initial training on safe working practices and child and youth protection, with a special focus on vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors and children in care.

Effective child protection depends on the skills, knowledge and values of personnel working with children and families, as well as cooperation between institutions and within institutions. Relevant training and education is an important means of achieving this. The management must ensure that all personnel have the necessary familiarity with these procedures to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities therein. It is envisaged that this will be achieved by developing a culture of awareness and knowledge of these procedures amongst all personnel and, where appropriate, ensuring that available training is undertaken.

Procedures

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PEOPLE WORKING WITH CHILDREN

This guidance document describes the standards of conduct and practices that all **RIQL** staff should follow when working with children through its activities.

Following this code will help to protect children from abuse and inappropriate behaviour from adults. It will also help staff and volunteers to maintain the standard of behaviour expected of them and will reduce the possibility of unfounded allegations of abuse being made against them.

When working with children and young people for **RIQL's** interventions all staff, doctoral students, associated researchers and volunteers are acting in a position of trust. Staff and volunteers must be aware that they may be seen as role models by children and young people and must act appropriately at all times. All of these adults have special responsibilities to the children and young people they work with; they should:

- Be professional and maintain high standards of personal behaviour at all times.

- Respect the children's and young adults' right to be heard and to participate in the procedures and decisions that concern them, inform, encourage and empower them towards the claiming and realization of their rights.
- Respect the principles of trust, confidentiality, and personal data protection. In conjunction with these principles, a safe information-sharing process among the competent involved professionals/ stakeholders shall be followed. It is noted that any information, data, photos concerning the beneficiary's personality and story shall be published only if it is strictly necessary for achieving project results, under his/her explicitly given permission, and if he/she is not exposed to any danger or risk of stigmatization. Special care shall be taken concerning the children's cases.
- Recognise the trust placed in adults by children and young people and recognise the power held over children by adults. Treat this trust of power with the highest responsibility.
- Try to always work in an open and accountable manner. Be willing to accept questions or criticism regarding good practice.
- Maintain a professional relationship with children. Any form of sexual relationship or activity with a child is unacceptable and is likely to lead to disciplinary or legal action.
- Not be under the influence of drink, drugs or illegal substances when working with children or young people.
- Use appropriate and respectful forms of discipline and communication. Physical aggression, intimidation, verbal abuse and persistent shouting are not acceptable. Any form of assault (e.g. hitting, kicking, pinching, slapping) should be regarded as a serious incident.
- Use appropriate language, do not swear and never make sexual or suggestive comments to a child. If a child makes such comments be ready to enforce these boundaries in your response.
- Do not appear to favour one child or show interest in one child more than another.
- Do not discriminate against a child because of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin or sexual identity.
- Use physical contact with children or young people only where necessary. If contact is necessary (e.g. for coaching or first aid) explain to the child what the contact is for and change your approach if he/she appears uncomfortable.
- Design and use training methods and programmes which are appropriate to the children or young people.
- Be aware of situations that can be misunderstood or manipulated by other adults (e.g. if an adult is alone with a child in a room or a car, he or she may be vulnerable to allegations of misconduct).
- Always be vigilant and aware of how actions can be misinterpreted by children. Adults should be aware of the impact of their action and should sensitively address any misunderstanding.

It is prohibited to:

- Use of abusive language or response to inappropriate behaviour / language and the use of punishment or chastisement, or any abusive behavior.
- Behave disrespectfully (for example using disrespectful vocabulary or bad manners toward anybody etc.) and work under the influence of drugs or alcohol. It is reminded that they must behave with modesty and dignity and serve as role- models of behavior for children and youth.

- Never watch, publish, produce, or share pornography showing children, and/or show pornographic material to children, during and outside work.
- Embarrass, humiliate, belittle or demean children or display any behavior bearing signs of emotional, physical or sexual abuse.
- Come into inappropriate physical contact with the child, violating the child's dignity; permissible physical contact is naturally associated with play, hygienic assistance, ensuring safety or the need to soothe the child.
- Serve children alcohol, medications or other psychoactive substances.
- Condone or participate in illegal activities involving a child.
- Establish sexual relations with children.
- Exhibit sexually provoking behavior.

Especially concerning children, it must be ensured that:

- No staff member or volunteer is ever left alone with a child for any reason.
- Never fondle, hold, hug, kiss or touch children improperly. Consider what the child deems inappropriate based on their cultural, ethnic, religious background, and gender.
- Never collaborate with any private actor who acts in any way against the best interest of the child.
- Never engage in any form of sexual relations with anyone under 18 years old, never touch children or use language or make suggestions in an inappropriate manner. Do not provoke, harass, degrade, or disrespect the child or their cultural practices. Always conduct yourself in a manner that uphods the child's confidence self-worth.
- Never exploit a child for labour (ex. through domestic work).
- Never show children's faces in presentations or publications and never publish a story or image that could endanger the child, their family or community, or stigmatize them.
- Never give or encourage others to give money directly to children, especially those in vulnerable situations.
- Never use any information or image of the children without written permission from their parents /guardians. Consider the children's will and opinion and avoid any form of public exposure without their consent. Ensure that any information or photo regarding a child's story does not pose a risk of danger or stigmatization.

A written declaration shall be provided confirming that the individual has read, understood, and agreed to comply with the current document and the mandatory code of conduct. This declaration will also acknowledge that any failure to adhere to these standards may result in the termination of their engagement with RIQL or further disciplinary or judicial proceedings, as mentioned above.

ACTION PLAN IN CASE OF NECESSITY

If RIQL discovers or suspects a child or young person is suffering harm it will act as follows.

Immediate Action to Ensure Safety

Immediate action must be necessary at any stage of involvement with children and families. If a child is in immediate danger, the police have to be contacted as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if protection is necessary, via Police Protection Order.

Recognition of Abuse or Neglect

Abuse or neglect of a child is caused by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or an institutional or community setting: by those known to them or more rarely by a stranger.

A concern has to be raised if any of the following circumstances have or are happening to a child: Physical Abuse; Emotional Abuse; Sexual Abuse; Neglect.

Individuals within the organization need to be alert to the potential abuse of children both within their families and from other sources including abuse by members of that organization.

The organization's staff must know how to recognise and act upon indicators of abuse or potential abuse involving children. There is an expected responsibility for all members of the organization to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a child in accordance with these procedures. It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parents/carers about any concerns. In case of recognizing child abuse, the Child Protection Department of the Public Social Assistance Service at the local level or the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection at the county level will be notified.

What to do if children talk to you about abuse or neglect

It is recognised that a child may seek you out to share information about abuse or neglect or talk spontaneously individually or in groups when you are present. In these situations, you must:

- Listen carefully to the child. DO NOT directly question the child.
- Give the child time and attention.
- Allow the child to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make an accurate record of the information you have been given taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the child's presentation as well as what was said. Do not throw this away as it may later be needed as evidence.
- Use the child's own words where possible.
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared.
- Reassure the child that: you are glad they have told you; they have not done anything wrong; what you are going to do next.
- Explain that you will need to get help to keep the child safe.
- Do NOT ask the child to repeat his or her account of events to anyone.

Consulting about your concern

The purpose of a consultation is to discuss your concerns about a child and decide what action is necessary. If you are concerned about a child, you must share your concerns. You have to talk to a representative of the

RIQL. If they are implicated in the concerns, you have to discuss your concerns directly with Social Services. You must consult externally with your local Public Social Assistance Service in the following circumstances:

- when you remain unsure after internal consultation as to whether child protection concerns exist
- when there is disagreement as to whether child protection concerns exist
- when you are unable to consult promptly or at all with your designated internal contact for child protection
- when the concerns relate to any member of the RIQL.

Making a referral

A referral entails providing the Public Social Assistance Service or the Police with information about concerns related to an individual or family, prompting inquiries by the appropriate agency followed by necessary action. In certain cases, the severity of concerns may necessitate an immediate referral without external consultation. Parents or carers must be notified of any referral being made, except in the aforementioned circumstances.

However, the inability to inform parents for any reason should not hinder the referral process. In such cases, a joint decision must be made with public institutions regarding how and when parents are to be approached and by whom.

If your concern involves abuse or the risk of abuse from a family member or someone known to the children, you should initiate a telephone referral to your local Public Social Assistance Service.

Confidentiality

Staff members must ensure that all records pertaining to a referral are kept confidential and stored securely. Information regarding child protection concerns should only be shared on a 'need-to-know' basis. While confidentiality is important, the paramount concern is the protection of the child. Failure to adhere to the policy and procedures will be promptly addressed and may lead to dismissal or exclusion from RIQL.

Steps to be taken by staff member who knows about or suspects child abuse

The following procedure must be followed if there are reasonable grounds to report suspected or actual child abuse:

- Any staff member with a child protection concern should promptly notify RIQL's Designated Officer. Staff should also facilitate direct access to the Designated Person upon request from a primary carer or the child/ young person.
- If a staff member knows or suspects that a child or young person has been or is at risk of being harmed, they must report this concern to the designated safeguarding lead for children and young people, who will then inform the Public Social Assistance Service.
- If the suspected abuser is another staff member, the matter must be reported to both the designated safeguarding lead for children and young people and the Management.
- All staff must understand that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for determining whether abuse has occurred. No staff member should attempt to address the issue of abuse alone under any circumstances.

- The staff member who initially raises concerns must complete a file report in consultation with the relevant designated safeguarding lead for children and young people. The report should detail the situation, including the date, time, and people involved. It should be factual, with any opinions clearly stated as such and supported by factual information.
- Any concerns about potential risks to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are not identifiable, must be communicated to the Public Social Assistance Service by the designated safeguarding lead for children and young people.
- Staff members reporting concerns to the Public Social Assistance Service can be assured that this action will not automatically initiate inappropriate child protection investigations.
- Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation exposing them to harm or to risk of harm while awaiting intervention.

Steps to be taken by the designated safeguarding lead for children and young people

When the designated safeguarding lead for children and young people receives a report about suspected or actual child abuse, they have to consider whether there are reasonable grounds for reporting it to the Public Social Assistance Service. It will be helpful to discuss the matter with a professional, such as a social worker, who can assist in deciding whether or not to formally report concerns to the Public Social Assistance Service. This may involve:

- Clarifying or obtaining more information about the matter and treating the information as confidential.
- Consulting informally initially with the Public Social Assistance Service if there is any doubt or uncertainty about the situation.
- Making a formal referral to the Public Social Assistance Service.
- Informing parents about the referral unless doing so would endanger the child. A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect would not constitute reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. However, these suspicions must be recorded or noted internally, as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report. In those circumstances, earlier suspicions may provide important information.

It is important to note that the ability of the Public Social Assistance Service to assess and investigate suspicions or allegations of child abuse or neglect depends on the quality and extent of the information reported to them.

MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The RIQL's designated safeguarding lead for children and young people, along with Management, have the following additional responsibilities:

- Ensuring the proper implementation and accessibility of this document to all concerned parties.
- Monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Providing access to appropriate training and information for all staff.
- Allocating sufficient resources to effectively implement the policy.

- Addressing and responding promptly and appropriately to concerns raised by staff and beneficiaries regarding safeguarding.
- Keeping abreast of local arrangements and establishing and maintaining effective links with relevant agencies.

Policy's main monitoring aspects

The main aspects of the Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy that require monitoring include:

- Safe recruitment process
- Staff training and support
- Compliance of the Child Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy with the current legal framework and norms
- Assessment of the reporting process for safeguarding concerns and follow-up on relevant cases
- Evaluation of the need to revise the current reporting process based on the aforementioned assessment
- Incorporation of staff and beneficiaries' views and opinions.

Contact details

Nominated child protection lead/ safeguarding officer

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We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on: March 31st, 2026

Signed by:

DIRECTOR,

CSI Dr. Sorin Cace