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PARTNERSHIPS FOR EVERY CHILD

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Director



Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

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PART ONE: ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS FOR EVERY CHILD

Vision

A world where every child contributes and enjoys their rights to a secure, caring and protective family.

Mission

We empower children, their families, communities and public authorities to provide better opportunities for every child to grow in a loving, caring, trustful, secure, protective and wealthy family environment

Core Strategic Objectives

P4EC dedicates its operations to the following systemic changes:

1) Preventing the separation of children from their parents by strengthening core family and community structures.
2) Ensuring that high-quality, family-type alternative care options are provided to children separated from their biological parents.
3) Facilitating the safe, sustainable return of children placed in alternative care back to their biological homes.
4) Protecting children from all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, both within the family unit and in external environments.
5) Ensuring that the voices of children are systematically heard, valued, and integrated into decision-making processes regarding their lives.
6) Learning from institutional experience, adopting innovative practices, improving operational efficiency, and proposing positive, sustainable legal and structural reforms to public authorities and local communities.
7) Changing the way society understands, communicates about, and reacts to the systemic problems encountered by vulnerable children

Operational Approaches

Targeted Support: Focusing resources directly on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children within the Republic of Moldova.

Rights-Based Framework: Utilizing a child rights-based approach to development that places the child at the core of our work, focuses on legal obligations and responsibilities, and promotes meaningful participation and community ownership**.**

Sustainability: Concentrating resources on communities whose rights are most severely violated, acting in a manner that empowers children, families, and communities to claim their rights independently.

Advocacy and Institutional Reform: Challenging and reforming structural policies and practices that perpetuate poverty and exclusion, while empowering local and national governments and civil society to implement policies in the best interests of the child.

PART TWO: P4EC'S CHILD PROTECTION POLICY GOALS AND PRINCIPLES

2.1 CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

Child protection is an absolute, primary focus in all P4EC programs, operational planning, and administrative frameworks. In alignment with Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), this policy mandates that all children have an absolute right to protection from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, abuse, neglect, negligent

treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation—including sexual abuse—while in the care of parents, legal guardians, or any other individual charged with their care.

P4EC commits to prioritizing the best interests of the child in every organizational interaction, maintaining proactive safety measures, and implementing strict disclosure protocols.

P4EC recognizes that child abuse can take place anywhere; it can be face-to-face and online; historical or current. P4EC have in place policies, procedures, training and support that enable all staff and affiliated parties to prevent, recognize, report and respond to complex safeguarding challenges.

IT IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL CHILDREN WHO P4EC COMES INTO CONTACT WITH ARE SAFE AND HAVE THEIR RIGHTS UPHELD, AS OUTLINED IN THE UNCRC.

P4EC considers that every employee, volunteer, consultant, partner, contractor working with us has a responsibility to safeguard children. Not responding is not an option.

Where concerns and disclosures of abuse against a child occur, we prioritize the well-being of children and act in accordance with national legislation and guidance. Poor practice will be taken extremely seriously and viewed as a breach of our safeguarding policies and procedures. We are committed to ensuring that P4EC representatives are kept up to date so that they know how to respond to a concern/disclosure in line with this policy.

2.2 Legislative and Statutory Framework

This policy is legally anchored in, and strictly complies with, the following international and national legal acts:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): Adopted by the UN in 1989 and ratified by the Republic of Moldova in 1993, serving as our foundational ethical and operational framework.

The Family Code of the Republic of Moldova: Safeguarding the right of every child to live in a secure, stable, and caring family environment.

The Code of Education of the Republic of Moldova: Guaranteeing the fundamental right of every child to accessible, safe education.

The Law Nr 140 on Special Protection of Children at Risk: Governing the identification, assessment, assistance, referral, monitoring, and record-keeping of children at risk or separated from their parents.

The Inter-Agency Cooperation Mechanism: Executing statutory protocols for the assistance and monitoring of child victims or potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking (VNET).

Instruction on the Inter-Agency Cooperation Mechanism for Primary Prevention: Managing early identification of risks to child wellbeing.

The National Child Protection Strategy (2022–2030): Guiding the national mandate to prevent family separation, accelerate deinstitutionalization, minimize the social risks of parental migration, combat child violence, and reintegrate parents into professional activities.

2.3 Policy Scope and Core Principles

The goal of this policy is to protect children from any form of abuse, neglect, or exploitation within P4EC's day-to-day activities and across all direct contact between children and P4EC representatives, including staff, consultants, volunteers, contractors, partners, and public service providers. This mandate applies during working hours and personal time.

Compliance is strictly driven by the following three fundamental principles:

Zero Tolerance for Child Abuse: P4EC prohibits all forms of child abuse, exploitation, and neglect. The possession, access, distribution, or creation of child sexual abuse material or any materials exploiting children is strictly prohibited. No individual shall be appointed or retained by P4EC without undergoing rigorous vetting to ensure they pose no direct or indirect threat to children.

Recognition of Heightened Vulnerability: P4EC recognizes that specific groups of children face elevated risks of abuse and requires heightened institutional vigilance for children without parental care, children in temporary placement services, children with disabilities, and children affected by humanitarian crises, natural disasters, or environmental emergencies.

Mandatory Shared Responsibility: P4EC requires all partner entities, contractors, and joint project state or non-state institutions to maintain identical safeguarding standards. If a partner organization does not possess an approved child protection policy, they must contractually adopt P4EC's Child Protection Policy for the duration of the joint activity. This requirement must be explicitly written into all signed collaboration agreements and contracts.

PART THREE: DEFINING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Most children are loved and cherished by parents, carers and professionals working with them. Similarly, most people working with children recognise they are in a special position with respect to the influence and power they wield. But P4EC recognises it needs to be vigilant as those who want to abuse and harm children exist in all societies, cultures and organisations.

Development organisations working in the field of Child protection provide possibilities for befriending and establishing relationships with vulnerable children and must therefore be vigilant to the possibility that a small minority of individuals may abuse their position of power and engage in harmful activities against children and/or adults they enter in contact with.

P4EC establishes explicit operational definitions for the following seven subtypes of child maltreatment:

Physical Abuse: Any actual or potential physical harm resulting from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or a person in a position of responsibility, power, or trust, whether occurring as a single incident or a repeated pattern.

Child Sexual Abuse: The involvement of a child in any sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, are developmentally unprepared for, or cannot give informed consent to, or that violates statutory law. This includes coercion into unlawful sexual conduct, exploitation via prostitution, and exploitation within pornographic materials, performances, or internet imagery. The utilization of digital technologies to entice, groom, or engage children in virtual sexual activity is strictly classified as sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse. The active failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can reach their full potential. There may also be acts toward the child that cause, or have a high probability of causing, harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, such as restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, scape-goating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing, or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment (WHO, 1999).

Sexual Exploitation. The abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for explicit sexual purposes, including profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from child prostitution or the trafficking of children.

Neglect and Negligent Treatment: The chronic failure or omission by a caregiver to provide for a child's fundamental developmental needs regarding health, education, emotional development,

nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, within the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers, which causes, or has a high probability of causing, harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm, as much as is feasible (WHO, 1999).

Commercial or other exploitation of a child. The exploitative utilization of a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development (WHO, 1999). Children being recruited into the army come under this category.

Bullying and Cyber-Bullying. Unwanted aggressive behavior by another child or group of children who are neither siblings nor in a romantic relationship with the victim. It involves repeated physical, psychological or social harm, and often takes place in schools and other settings where children gather, as well as online (WHO).

Online Child abuse &exploitation Abuse occurring over digital networks, including online grooming, cyberbullying, malicious sexting, trolling, threatening, and the creation of deceptive profiles to exploit minors.

PART FOUR: REPORTING AND MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

4.1. Referral Mandate

It is not the role of P4EC to determine or investigate whether child abuse has legally occurred, the organization's mandatory duty is to report all reasonable concerns and disclosures immediately to the appropriate statutory authorities. In the Republic of Moldova, all child protection concerns must be referred directly to the local territorial Social Assistance Departments and the Police Department.

P4EC recognises the International Standards for Child Protection[1] which provide a benchmark for agencies and organisations working with children. We affirm our belief in the right of all children to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence as set out in the UNCRC 1989.

It is essential that all P4EC staff, volunteers, consultants, contractors and any other representatives as well as other individuals coming into contact with the organization are aware of its central messages and any duties/responsibilities it places on them. The policy is publicised and promoted as a P4EC document to relevant audiences.

We support encourage our local public administration partners by sharing and supporting them to adopt their own Child Protection Policy.

4.2. Designated Safeguarding Contacts

Primary Child Protection Officer Viorica Postolaki, HR & Development Manager
Secure Email: vpostolaki@p4ec.md
Confidential Helpline: 069137461
Executive Oversight: Daniela Mămăligă, P4EC Director
Emergency Contact: dmamaliga@p4ec.md
Statutory Emergency Number: 112 (Police, Prosecutor, Emergency Medical)

4.3. Internal reporting Chain

1. Any safeguarding or child abuse concern regarding a P4EC representative, staff member, or program site must be immediately reported to the HR & Development Manager, who serves as the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO).

[1] The Standards for Child Protection form part of the Toolkit put together by the Keeping Children Safe Coalition.

2. The CPO must immediately register the incident or concern in the secure organizational incident log.
3. The CPO must complete and submit the official written Report Form (Fișa de sesizare) via secure email to the police, prosecutor, and local social assistance offices.
4. The registered incident must be submitted immediately to the Senior Management Team (SMT), which formulates immediate procedural recommendations for the Director.
5. The ultimate internal decision-making authority and execution of emergency procedures lie with the P4EC Director.
6. If an allegation involves immediate physical danger to a child, the emergency service line (112) must be contacted immediately prior to executing internal organizational reporting

4.4. Reporting Flow and Escalation Matrix

The organization operates under the standardized reporting flow authorized by *Keeping Children Safe (UK)*.

Escalation Matrix

Step	Action Item	Primary Responsibility	Timeline
1	**Immediate Emergency Care:** Address urgent medical and immediate safety needs of the child. **!!! If an allegation involves immediate physical danger to a child, the emergency service line (112) must be contacted immediately prior to executing internal organizational reporting.**	Witness / First Responder	Immediate (Hour 0)
2	**Internal Disclosure:** Document and report the concern to the Child Protection Officer (CPO).	Any P4EC Representative	Immediate (Hour 0)
3	**Registration & Assessment:** Securely log the incident and assess immediate programmatic risk.	Child Protection Officer (CPO)	Within 24 Hours
4	**Statutory External Referral:** Submit the official written Report Form via secure email to the police, prosecutor, and local social assistance offices.	P4EC Director & CPO	Statutory Mandate/Within 24 Hours
5	**Executive Review:** Present findings to the Senior Management Team and Director.	CPO / SMT	Within 48 Hours

4.5. Confidentiality and Review Standards

All complaints and safeguarding records are maintained under strict security controls at the P4EC central headquarters. Information regarding a child or an active case shall remain confidential; breaches of confidentiality are permitted only when strictly required to protect the best interests of the child or to comply with statutory criminal reporting laws. This policy undergoes mandatory revision every three years.

4.6. Ongoing Risk Monitoring, Internal Audits, and Quality Assurance

Safeguarding risks must be systematically integrated into P4EC's organizational Risk Register. The CPO and SMT are required to formally review and update safeguarding risks on a yearly basis, evaluating new programmatic context, field deployment, and digital activity risks.
P4EC shall conduct annual internal safeguarding audits and self-assessments. Audit findings, incident trends, and corrective action plans will be presented annually to the Board of Directors.

PART FIVE: PREVENTATIVE MEASURES AND VETTING PROTOCOLS

5.1 Recruitment and Background Screening

P4EC enforces a strict, mandatory vetting framework as outlined in the Employee Handbook and Code of Conduct. The recruitment process mandates the following protocols for all prospective employees, consultants, and volunteers:

1) **Identity Verification:** Explicit, independent check of official state identity documentation.
2) **Credential Authentication:** Verification of the authenticity of all educational and professional qualifications.
3) **Reference Checks:** A mandatory minimum requirement of two independent, verified professional references.
4) **Criminal Record Disclosures:** Mandatory submission of official state criminal record certificates and police checks. This screening is mandatory for all personnel, contractors, partners, donors, media representatives, and visitors seeking direct contact with children or accessing their personal data.

5.2 Media, Imaging, and Duty of Care

P4EC maintains a strict duty of care regarding the depiction of children in organizational materials:

1) **Informed Consent:** Prior to capturing any photograph, film, or digital media of a child, written informed consent must be obtained from the child and their parent or legal guardian, following an explicit explanation of how the media will be used.
2) **Dignity in Representation:** All visual and written materials must present children respectfully and securely. Portraying children in vulnerable, sexualized, demeaning, or humiliating conditions is strictly prohibited.
3) **Anonymity and Data Protection:** Media files, websites, and electronic transfers must not disclose metadata, specific locations, or the full names of children, ensuring full compliance with national data privacy legislation.

PART SIX: CODE OF CONDUCT AND PROHIBITED BEHAVIORS

6.1. All P4EC representatives—including staff, volunteers, consultants, contractors, and partners—are bound by this policy during working hours and personal time.
6.2. The following conducts are strictly prohibited:

1) Engaging in any action that actively violates the rights of the child as set out in the UNCRC.
2) Treating any child or family member with bias or disrespect based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political beliefs, nationality, ethnicity, social origin, property, or disability.
3) Utilizing abusive, harassing, sexually provocative, demeaning, or culturally insensitive language or behavior with children or their families.

4) Involving children or program beneficiaries in any activity of a sexual connotation. This includes offering or receiving payment, goods, services, or humanitarian assistance in exchange for sexual favors. (SEAH) Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child does not constitute a defense.

5) Unsupervised One-on-One Contact with a child, unless explicitly authorized under emergency care protocols.

6) Inviting unaccompanied children into a personal residence without written parental/guardian permission and explicit supervisor approval, except in cases of immediate physical danger to the child.

7) Utilizing, permitting, or condoning physical, corporal, or degrading punishment against children.

8) Engaging children in tasks that do not correspond to their developmental stage, impede their education, or risk their physical or psychological safety.

9) Failing to immediately report any safeguarding concern or suspicion of child abuse through the established organizational reporting mechanisms.

6.3. Any violation of the above rules constitutes gross misconduct, grounds for immediate dismissal, and immediate referral to law enforcement authorities for prosecution under the Penal Code of the Republic of Moldova.

PART SEVEN: SUPPORT, COMMUNICATION, TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 Personnel Support

P4EC recognizes that child protection and disclosure management are emotionally challenging. The organization provides comprehensive support systems, counseling references, and institutional protection for any staff member or representative who discloses abuse, alerts the organization to a concern, or handles a safeguarding incident.

7.2 Mandatory Training

All personnel must undergo mandatory child protection training upon onboarding, with refresher courses delivered annually. This training ensures that all representatives fully comprehend child abuse indicators, preventative strategies, and the legal protocols for reporting concerns.

7.3 Child-Friendly Materials, Public Transparency, and Community Feedback Channels

P4EC openly displays its commitment to child safety at all operating locations and program sites, ensuring that safeguarding resources and reporting contacts are widely available to children, parents, carers and community members.

P4EC shall maintain and distribute age-appropriate, child-friendly versions of this Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct across all project sites and community programs. These materials will use accessible language, visual aids, and clear graphics to inform children of their rights and how to seek help.

P4EC will establish clear, accessible, confidential, and safe reporting mechanisms in all communities served. These shall include secure physical feedback boxes at project sites, accessible child-friendly contact points, and dedicated digital reporting channels. Children, families, and community members will be actively informed about how to utilize these channels to submit feedback, concerns, or complaints safely and anonymously.

Annex: Operational Guidelines

A.1 Guidelines on Responding to Child Disclosures

When a child or young person reports an active case of abuse, personnel must act with absolute professionalism and strictly follow these rules:

- **Clarifying Questions Only:** Ask only open-ended questions necessary to clarify the immediate situation. Do not ask leading or suggestive questions.
- **Active Verification:** Verify statements by asking the child if you have accurately understood what they communicated, without paraphrasing or changing their words.
- **Objective Neutrality:** Do not express personal opinions, anger, or judgment regarding the alleged abuser.
- **Immediate Documentation:** Take detailed, verbatim notes of the conversation immediately following the disclosure. Sign, date, and securely log this documentation.
- **Process Transparency:** Ensure the child understands the supportive steps that will follow, explaining clearly who will be informed to ensure their safety.
- **No Independent Action:** Transmit the collected information directly to the CPO. Personnel are strictly prohibited from attempting to resolve safeguarding cases independently.

A.2 Guidelines on Child Safety During Travel and Overnight Activities

- **Parental Notification:** Parents and legal guardians must be informed of all aspects of programs involving their children. They must be notified immediately if an incident occurs, unless doing so poses a direct threat to the child's safety.
- **Transit Responsibility:** If a child is accompanied by a parent/guardian during transit, primary responsibility rests with the parent/guardian. If P4EC provides transit via taxi or organizational vehicles, written parental/guardian consent must be obtained in advance, specifying exact pick-up and drop-off points. International travel requires notarized parental consent.
- **Overnight Protocol:** For activities requiring overnight accommodation, organizers must secure safe, appropriate, and insured lodging. Children must be accommodated in secure rooms segregated by gender, and bedrooms must never be shared with adults or individuals outside the authorized participant group. A designated P4EC employee must be appointed as the primary contact person for the duration of the event, and their contact information must be provided to all parents and guardians.

A.3 Guidelines on Interviewing Children for Case Studies and Assessment

- **Preparation:** Pre-formulate age-appropriate questions tailored to the child's developmental stage. Utilize non-intimidating, participatory tools (such as visual timelines) for younger children.
- **Vetted Interpretation:** If a translator is required, utilize an external professional who has undergone background checks, preferably of the same gender as the child. Instruct the translator to provide exact, literal translations rather than paraphrasing.
- **Establishing Safety:** Begin with neutral, everyday questions to build rapport. Explicitly introduce every person in the room and clarify their role. Advise the child that notes are being taken, that they can request a break or stop the interview at any time, and that saying "I don't know" or "I don't remember" is completely acceptable.
- **Pacing and Responsiveness:** Speak slowly and clearly, allowing for pauses. Do not interrupt the child. If a child becomes distressed, stop the interview immediately, offer a break, provide objective sympathy, and maintain strict, appropriate physical boundaries. Thank the child at the conclusion for their effort and time.