

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Laboratory of Counseling, Psychosocial Support and Community Interventions
(PsySupLab)

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

AIM

The aim of the Child Protection Policy of the Laboratory of Counseling, Psychosocial Support and Community Interventions (PsySupLab) (<https://lab-socialwork.uniwa.gr/>) is to safeguard and protect the rights of children in the context of their participation in its research and scientific activities. It refers to obligations that bind all members, staff and others (students and volunteers) involved in its actions and programs, being an integral part of their work and employment contract. In addition, it binds PsySupLab to develop partnerships exclusively with agencies, organizations and institutions that accept and respect its basic principles.

In the context of this Child Protection Policy, the PsySupLab undertakes:

- protecting the safety, security and well-being of children
- safeguarding children's rights and preventing risks related to their participation in research activities (e.g. breach of anonymity in reports and publications, abuse of personal rights and dignity, etc.)
- raising awareness among all its members, staff and others (students and volunteers) involved in its actions and programs on children's rights, while providing relevant guidance
- the appropriate and transparent reporting of any suspicion of harm, violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children, appointing the persons who have the responsibility to ensure the implementation of this Child Protection Policy in the context of the PsySupLab.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes hereof, the following terms refer to:

A. CHILD:

As child is defined any person under the age of 18 years as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

B. CHILD'S PROTECTION:

The rules and commitments governing the operation of the PsySupLab in the development of its programs, activities and general scientific work undertaken with the aim of preventing and combating all forms of abuse of children and their exposure to relative risk.

C. STAFF:

All employees in the programs, activities and general scientific work of the PsySupLab.

D. CHILD ABUSE:

According to the World Health Organization, "Child abuse or maltreatment includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."

DOCUMENTATION

The Child Protection Policy of the PsySupLab is based on:

- the aims and objectives of its establishment, as described in the Government Gazette 1140 /05.04.2019 Issue B'
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the Law 2101/1992) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (ratified by the Law 3625/2007)
- the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (ratified by the Law 2502/1997)
- the Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography (ratified by the Law 4267/2014).
- the International Labour Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (ratified by the Law 2918/2001).

BASIC PRINCIPLES

The basic principles of the Child Protection Policy of the PsySupLab regarding the protection and well-being of children, which are mandatory for all members, persons in positions of responsibility, staff and others (students and volunteers) involved in its actions and programs, are the following:

- The well-being, interests and protection of children are of exceptional and major importance and concern for all members, staff and others (students and volunteers) involved in the actions and programs of the PsySupLab.
- All children, regardless of age, cultural background, disability, gender, language, race, socio-economic status, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from all forms of harm and abuse, and are also free to express their views on any matter affecting them (non-discrimination and right to be heard).
- All children have the right to life and protection from violence, with a consequent right to their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, psychological and social development (right to life and development).
- The PsySupLab adopts a policy of zero tolerance to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children and undertakes not to knowingly involve in its general scientific and research work - directly or indirectly - anyone who poses a risk to children.

- Children's participation in relevant research activities is aligned with the key requirements for effective and ethical participation (transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, safe and risk-sensitive), as outlined in the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027 (data protection, transparency and accountability).
- All persons in positions of responsibility of the PsySupLab must act promptly and accurately in the best interests of children if they become aware of anything that endangers their safety and well-being.

PROCEDURES

The procedures applied in order to ensure the Child Protection Policy of the PsySupLab concern the following three main areas: (a) Preparedness, (b) Prevention and (c) Response

A. PREPAREDNESS

- The PsySupLab undertakes the obligation to provide all its members, staff and others (students and volunteers) involved in its actions and programs, as well as to collaborating organizations that may have direct or indirect contact with children, and before their participation in any activity with children, all the relevant information material of the Child Protection Policy of the PsySupLab but also the relevant legislation.
- The PsySupLab maintains an exclusive space on its website, easily accessible to all, where all the relevant material of its Child Protection Policy is posted, which is informed and updated every three years.

B. PREVENTION

- The PsySupLab has adopted specific procedures for all its members, staff and others (students and volunteers) involved in its actions and programs when they are asked to work with children (safety check through criminal record / previous criminal convictions, specific questions / discussion about child protection during the recruitment interview, reference checks), thereby promoting their suitability to cooperate with them.
- The PsySupLab ensures that any direct or indirect participation of children in its relevant research and scientific activities and the subsequent processing of personal data is carried out in accordance with the relevant General Data Protection Regulation (EU Regulation 2016/679) and Greek Law 4624/2019.
- The PsySupLab is required to ensure that there are at least two investigators/employees in any face-to-face or online meetings with children and, if possible, another person with whom the child is familiar and trusting. These meetings, if they are in person, will occur in a place where the child feels safe. In addition, during these meetings, all adult participants will pay due attention to their appearance, language, actions and general behaviour, showing appropriate respect for children's rights.
- The PsySupLab undertakes the obligation to maintain a secure digital environment where all digital records of children's participation in research and other scientific programs are kept encrypted.

- The PsySupLab undertakes the obligation to ensure that the material produced under the auspices of the research carried out in the framework of the research and scientific programs it develops is free from any kind of discrimination.
- The PsySupLab undertakes the obligation to ensure that all images containing children, with explicit consent, will depict them with dignity and respect.

F. RESPONSE

The PsySupLab and specially the Scientific Coordinator per project is responsible to:

- monitor the proper implementation of this Child Protection Policy by ensuring that all its members, staff and others (students and volunteers) related to the respective project fully understand, respect and apply it.
- conduct an internal investigation in the event of an allegation of abuse in collaboration with the Director of the PsySupLab.
- inform the competent law enforcement authorities of any reports of misconduct or in case of accidental findings during research activities.
- propose the suspension of the status of member of the PsySupLab or member of the staff or partner (student, volunteer) who is suspected of any kind of abuse, also taking further disciplinary measures in case the legal investigation results in their guilt.
- keep written records (in a secure place) of all reported misconduct and/or incidental findings along with the exact procedure followed and the final conclusions.
- develop, maintain and review as appropriate a specific procedure for reporting concerns, suspicions or allegations regarding the protection of children and/or misconduct by members of the PsySupLab, staff members or other partners (students, volunteers) (Appendix A provides a general example of the actions to be followed).
- provide an incident report form (Appendix B), which should be posted on the website of the PsySupLab.

APPENDIX A'

ACTIONS IN THE EVENT OF POLICY VIOLATION

The Scientific Coordinator of the project undertakes all necessary actions on all reports of actual or alleged violations of the Child Protection Policy, regardless of the nature of the referral, the content of the allegations, the person making the referral or the place for which the report was made.

The procedure to be followed in the event of investigation of a report of violation of this Policy is the following:

1. Recording of the incident submitted, using the Report Form (Appendix B'), in the Child Protection Policy Violations File.
2. In case of sexual abuse or harassment of a child and/or violence towards a child, all procedures defined in the relevant legislation are activated.
3. Sending the Report Form to the Director of the PsySupLab immediately (no later than 12 hours after the incident).

4. Taking immediate measures by the Scientific Coordinator of the project to end possible harm to the child (e.g. termination of activity).
5. The person against whom the complaint was filed immediately ceases to be in the same area with children, until the complaint is investigated.
6. Establishment of a three-member committee (Director of the PsySupLab, Scientific Coordinator of the project, competent member of the PsySupLab) for the investigation of the complaint. The investigation should include:
 - Informing the child's guardian and the child themselves, as well as the adult who made the complaint about the investigation process.
 - The collection of information from the child and/or the adult who submitted the complaint, in conditions of safety for the child. These conditions include, among others:
 - ✓ Gathering information with a person with whom the child feels safe to express themselves.
 - ✓ Explaining to the child that they are not responsible for the event.
 - ✓ Explaining the investigation process to the child.
 - ✓ Informing the child about the level of confidentiality and any need to inform the relevant agencies in case this is required.
 - ✓ Maintaining contact with the child and recording the child's own views during a single interview, unless a second interview is deemed necessary.
 - If necessary, interpretation and/or translation services are provided for the child.
 - The description of the incident.
 - The identification of the person(s) who committed the violation, and who may be considered to have contributed to the violation or failed to apply any and/or all appropriate measures to prevent it.
 - The persons from whom further information about the event was obtained.
 - Any issues that could not be resolved/clarified and the reasons why this was not possible.
 - The assessment of all information and the recording of conclusions that will ensure the child's best interests.
7. Informing the Juvenile Prosecutor when required.
8. Notifying both the child or person who made the complaint as well as the person who violated the Policy of the outcome of the investigation.
9. Other actions, which may include:
 - Discussion with the child regarding the outcome of the investigation if the child does not agree with the outcome.
 - Referral of the child to other Services to remedy any harm caused to the child.
10. Updating the Child Protection Policy Violations File with the procedure followed (incident, investigation, recommendation, and other actions taken).

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

In any case where you suspect that a child may be involved in a risk situation, complete all of the following sections in as much detail as possible.

All information contained in this report will be kept strictly confidential and will be further evaluated by the appropriate body of the PsySupLab for further disciplinary action.

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

- First name and surname:
- Address:
- Telephone:
- Email address:

VICTIM'S PERSONAL INFORMATION (WITH STRICT CONSENT AND PERMISSION):

- First name and surname:
- Age:
- Contact details of the guardian:
- Additional information that may be relevant to the report:

COMPLAINT/INCIDENT INFORMATION:

1. Please indicate the nature of the complaint/incident:
2. When did it happen?
3. Where did it happen?
4. Is the victim in immediate danger/damage (now or in the future)?
5. Were there any other witnesses?
6. Record any further details that may be relevant to the report:

Date:

Signature:

Name and signature of the person receiving the report:

The director of the PsySupLab