



Public Utility Organization (HG 720/2018. Registered personal data operator under the no. 11554/2009.  
Fiscal Code: 16810410. Holds the no. 203/B/20 in the Register of Associations and Foundations.

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# Baylor Black Sea Foundation Child Protection Policy

## Background

Baylor Black Sea Foundation (BBSF), through this document lays down the policy and guidelines on children that engage directly or indirectly with the organization. The policy applies to all sectors of the organization and to all personnel working for BBSF.

Children and adolescents can be potentially subjected to exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect in their homes, at school, in the community, in private or public places, by various circumstances and by a variety of people, including staff, volunteers, visitors, other beneficiaries. In order to address and protect children and adolescents from potential harm while directly or indirectly involved in activities unfolded by BBSF this policy has been developed.

The implementation of this policy is coordinated and overviewed by the management team who is responsible for organizing trainings for staff, monitoring the behavior of personnel who work directly with children and introducing the regulations from this policy in all related internal documents: job description, Internal Order Regulation, procedures, recruitment policy, etc.

The foundation's child protection policy deals with the protection of children and adolescents as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and implements all existing applicable ethical provisions, as well as agreeing to widely recognized international codes of practices and texts, including, but not limited to:

- The United Nation Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU;
- The European Human Rights Convention;
- 272/2004 The Law about Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights;
- 95/2006 The Law on Health Reform;
- 58/2002 The Law on Measures to Prevent the Transmission of AIDS in Romania and to Protect the Rights of People Living with HIV and AIDS;
- 137/2000 The Government Ordinance on Prevention and Sanctioning all Forms of Discrimination;
- 448/2006 The Law on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of People with Disabilities;

- 1/2011 The Law on National Education;
- 679/2016 The Regulation on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regards to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data.

## Introduction

BBSF is a non-governmental organization, working in Constanta city and across Constanta County for a discrimination-free community that's capable of stopping communicable and chronic diseases.

Its mission is to help the community develop effective services for the prevention and care of infectious and chronic disease.

BBSF in all its activities is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. We believe that all children have the right to be protected from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

As an NGO active in the health area, BBSF is extremely vulnerable to accusation of child harm or mismanagement of sensitive information concerning children. Therefore, it is of high importance to:

- To create an environment where issues of child protection and safeguarding are prevented, closely monitored by all personnel directly working with children, and immediately reported internally and externally using the official channels available.
- To have explicit procedures in place in order to ensure that all staff members know their responsibilities, the communication lines both internal and external are clear.

More specifically, the activities of BBSF include:

- Training for professionals in medical and psychosocial field
- Psychosocial services with people affected by chronic diseases (HIV, viral hepatitis)
- Medical services for people living with HIV
- Scientific research in specific thematic fields
- Education activities in schools
- Other specific medical or psychosocial programs.

- Voluntary counseling and testing on HIV, viral hepatitis and syphilis.
- Volunteer activities for children.

The children do not represent the main category of beneficiaries of BBSF projects but they might be involved in a set of activities. These activities include:

- Education activities in schools;
- Beneficiaries of medical, psychosocial or testing activities as children affected by a chronic disease or a member of the community.

This policy outlines the ways in which BBSF safeguards the well-being and safety of all children coming in direct or indirect contact with BBSF's activities.

This document describes policies and relevant procedures that regulate the BBSF's operations, so that no harm is caused to children, regardless of age, gender, race, country of origin or religious belief.

## Definitions

1. **Child:** as anyone under the age of 18.
2. **Child safeguarding:** guidelines, procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the foundation's context means to make sure that its staff, programs do not harm children, do not expose them to risk of harm and abuse.
3. **Child protection:** actions taken to address a specific concern that a particular child is at risk of significant harm due to his/her contact with partners, products or services.
4. **Direct contact with children:** being in the physical or online presence of a child, whether the contact is occasional or regular, short or long-term: psychosocial services provided to children, medical services provided to children, education activities for children, working with child volunteers, etc.
5. **Indirect contact:** having access to sensitive data on children in the context of work: names, addresses, locations, photographs, etc.
6. **Child abuse:** all treatments resulting in actual or potential harm to child's health, development, dignity. The most common forms of child abuse are:

- a. **Physical abuse:** hitting, smacking, shaking, throwing, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to the child
- b. **Emotional abuse:** persistent emotional ill-treatment that causes severe and persistent effects on the child's development. It comes in the form of persistent put-downs, discrimination of treatment with other siblings, age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, exposure to dangerous/frightening situations. It is usually involved in all types of ill-treatment.
- c. **Neglect:** persistent failure to meet the child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, resulting in serious impairment of the child's physical or cognitive development.
- d. **Bullying:** deliberate hurtful behavior, repeated over a period of time: physical, verbal, emotional (hitting, kicking, theft, threats, name-calling, isolation). Those bullied do not have the resources to defend themselves.
- e. **Sexual abuse:** involvement of a child in sexual activities that are inappropriate for their age, developmental stage or understanding. It is either non-consensual or involves children that are not considered capable of giving consent.
- f. **Commercial sexual exploitation:** sexual abuse by an adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third party.
- g. **Negative discrimination:** a form of emotional abuse consisting in any treatment that is different from the other peers (colleagues, family members) and results in access denied to learning, having fun, progressing opportunities. It is usually caused by belonging to an ethnic group, social background, disease, etc.
- h. **Online abuse:** including grooming, online bullying, exposure to inappropriate content or contact through social media, inadequate data protection, etc.

## Principles guiding BBSF activities

- All children have equal rights to protection and to have their wellbeing and participation promoted.
- Any activity that results or may result in any kind of harm and/or abuse of children is strictly prohibited.

- All actions must be taking in the best interest of the children: all BBSF programs and activities must ensure that the children's rights are respected and do not cause harm.
- The policy applies to:
  - All staff, volunteers, interns;
  - All those participating in BBSF events, meetings involving children: sponsors, donors, etc.

## Child safety in direct medical activities

This section depicts the actions that need to be taken to ensure that children safeguarding is included in the provision of medical services to children. The medical services that children living with a chronic disease may receive at BBSF are: pneumology, dermatology, gynecology, dentistry.

- The provision of medical services will strictly follow all national laws about minors accessing medical services (the consent age, parent/guardian signature, etc) and is also under the ethic code of doctors and nurses.
- The children enrollment in the medical services program of BBSF is regulated by the contract signed between the beneficiary and the legal representative of BBSF. In children's case the contract is signed by one of the parents or by a legal guardian. In case of a legal guardian a copy of the legal document of guardianship is attached to the contract. The contract form is part of the ISO BBSF documentation: F 12 33. The agreement specifies the conditions of medical services delivery and the rights and responsibilities of both parties.
- The contract is accompanied by another document:
  - The beneficiary agreement on the medical services requested. In this agreement the parent/ guardian specifically states what medical services the children will receive at BBSF. There are 2 types of agreements:
    - F 12 34 – for beneficiaries affected by HIV
    - F 12 35 – for beneficiaries living with HIV
- Children will only receive medical services accompanied by a parent or tutor.

- The parent/tutor will be present at all times: in the waiting areas, in the medical office, at the testing lab, etc.
- The test results will be communicated only face-face in the presence of the parent/ tutor.
- The medical personnel (doctor and nurse) will communicate to the coordinator of the medical department all situations where children receiving medical care present a medical problem that raises questions about possible abuse/ harm situations.
- The same system is also applied for children receiving medical services within the Voluntary Counselling and Testing program. The documents used are:
  - F 10 14 – The testing and risk evaluation form that is signed by a parent/ guardian in case of children.
- Also the testing result is only communicated face to face and only in the presence of the parent/ guardian.

## **Child safety in psychosocial activities**

- The provision of psychosocial services is also regulated by the ethic code of psychologists and social workers that states their responsibilities of reporting to the authorities any suspicion of any type of abuse/harm done to children.
- The enrollment of children in psychosocial interventions is based on the agreement signed between the parent/guardian and the legal representative of BBSF. The document clearly specifies the conditions of the delivery of services and the rights and responsibilities of both parties: F 11 7. The agreement is signed after a specific request for a psychosocial intervention is made by parents: F 11 1.
- The objective of the interventions is limited to the ones provided by BBSF.
- Each intervention's objective is clearly communicated in easy to understand word to children and, if they do not want to participate, even if the parents request it, the intervention is not carried on.
- The presence or absence of the parent/guardian during the psychosocial intervention depends on the objective, on the request of the child and the child's age and capacity of expressing himself/herself.

- In case of possible abuse/ harm that the child might be subjected to in his/her family or in other circumstances another specialist from the team is called upon for another evaluation.
- In any suspicion of abuse/ harm formal reports are made to the competent authorities.

## Child safety in research type activities

This section depicts the actions needed to ensure that safeguarding is included in research activities.

- In case a research study will include the involvement of children, the entire process will be based on the approach of child participation.
- Children will be active social agents, not subject of research, the focus being on respecting children's abilities and autonomy.
- The approach will be child-centered.
- The research will actively seek heterogeneity, and will be based on the notion that children's situation (competence, independence, autonomy) might differ across cultures, ethnic groups, ages and that the research approach have to take this into consideration.
- The research agreement will be clear, using child friendly language. The child participation agreement is mandatory along to the one from the parents/guardians. It will be obtained after the child received information about the research in age appropriate terms and after his/her understanding is verified and it matches perfectly the objective of research.
- For both parents and children, the discussion will be especially focused on the research purpose, benefits and their rights during the process of research.
- If other institutions or organizations are involved the same information will also be provided to the third parties: objective, benefits, participants rights.

## Child safety in volunteer activities

This section depicts the actions aimed at ensuring safeguarding for children involved in volunteer activities at BBSF.

- All volunteer children are involved in activities that are specifically designed for their age and capacity and their involvement is participatory, based on the following steps:
  - Volunteer contract signed by the child – F622 32. The contract clearly states the objective of the volunteer activity and the types of activities the child will be involved

in. The documents annexed to the contract are: the agreement signed by a parent/guardian, the volunteer job description.

- The volunteers are specifically trained on the internal policies of BBSF and on how to report, signal or identify any type of abuse, harm that they might be subjected or they might identify during their volunteer activities.
- The personnel involved with volunteer children are highly scrutinized and heavily monitored. They are recruited following the steps

## **Child safety in school education activities**

This section specifies the measures put in place to ensure the safety of children involved in education activities unfolded by BBSF in schools.

- The school education BBSF curriculum is public and contains the minimum required conditions and the description of the topics that BBSF's educators can cover in class. Each topic clearly states the age of children, the objective of the activity, duration, benefit.
- The activities can take place in a school only after a direct request of a teacher, the request that clearly states: the children's age and the topic.
- For specific topics the activity only children that have agreements from their parents can participate.
- In all activities the children are free to chose if they want to participate or not.
- At the beginning of each activity the objective and benefits are stated again in order to give children the opportunity to choose if they want to participate or not.

## **Managing situations of breach in child protection policy**

This section of the policy summaries the content of :

- PG 11 5 – Procedure for the protection of beneficiaries and staff against abuse
- PG 11 6 - Procedure regarding notifications and complaints

## **Informing staff and beneficiaries**

- The procedure for combating and preventing the protection of any situations of abuse, neglect, discrimination, degrading treatment of beneficiaries and staff against is reassessed annually and presented at the staff meetings of the BBSF;

- Each new employee will be informed about this procedure and will sign an acknowledgement;
- Upon signing the contract for the provision of psychosocial services, each beneficiary will receive information on how to report these situations, regardless of whether they occurred within the day care center, in the family or in the community;
- As the beneficiaries of the services are vulnerable people (affected by a chronic disease) all beneficiaries in the process of information and psychosocial counseling receive information about their rights and the responsibilities so that they can identify and report situations in which they are subjected to abusive, discriminatory treatment due to their diagnosis.

**The methods that ensure the prevention and combating of any forms of abusive, negligent, degrading treatment of beneficiaries or staff, from other staff members, other beneficiaries or members of the family or community are the following:**

- The BBSF's Internal Regulations contain clear provisions known to all staff members regarding the professional conduct of Foundation employees, the management of both relationships with beneficiaries and other team members;
- Providing services based on the signing of a contracts makes it possible to monitor the type of services provided, the way in which interventions are carried out and the results obtained. It also clearly regulates the type of relationship and the appropriate way of relating between the professional and the beneficiary;
- Discussing difficult cases in weekly multidisciplinary meetings facilitates the rapid identification of possible cases of abuse or neglect and the establishment of steps to be taken in notifying the responsible institutions;
- The existence of a panic button at the center level, available to all employees to report situations of abuse that may pose a danger to a staff member or a beneficiary.
- Informing beneficiaries about their rights and responsibilities is part of the basic package of the delivered services.

## **Reporting, analyzing and resolving situations of abuse or neglect identified in the process of providing psychosocial services**

- Reporting of situations of abuse or neglect identified during the provision of any type of services to beneficiaries is carried out in writing, to the attention of the coordinator of the department. This is recorded in the Register of cases of abuse and special incidents. The identified situations may have occurred in the community, family, etc. and be identified during the provision of services.
- The coordinator of the department will establish the multidisciplinary team that will evaluate the case. If the situation of abuse or neglect is confirmed, the team will establish the steps to be followed and the institutions or persons to be notified with a view to resolving the case;
- Notification shall be made within a maximum of 24 hours of the identification of the possible situation of abuse or neglect;
- The result of the assessment as well as the steps taken shall be recorded in the Register regarding protection against abuse;
- The final results obtained following notification and collaboration with other competent persons or institutions will be recorded in the register;
- The results obtained will also be recorded in the beneficiary's file.

## **Safe recruitment**

Child-safe recruitment and screening procedures have been put in place and are regularly reviewed and updated. The main steps are:

1. Pre-selection procedure
  - a. If relevant the job post contains detailed description of tasks and level of contact with children.
  - b. It also clearly states BBSF's values and commitment to children rights safeguarding and non-discrimination policies.
  - c. References are asked for all candidates. They are kept in the HR files and destroyed in accordance to data protection policies.
  - d. All applications are verified to ensure they are complete.

- e. All applications are evaluated based on the history of employment with focus on gaps or changes without a clear motive.
  - f. For the jobs with tasks involving children directly the interviews will have specific questions to evaluate the candidate's suitability for the job and his/her attitudes towards child safeguarding.
  - g. Background checks will also be made to assess that the applicant has no previous record of offences against children and, in the past, has not been excluded from working with children.
2. Evaluation and selection
- a. Selection of staff members/ partners/ consultants/ external experts is based on interview procedures in which the candidates' abilities to work with children are also assessed.
  - b. All candidates are made aware of the BBSF's principles, values and policies.
  - c. When an offer is made the Child Safeguarding Policy is one of the documents that has to be agreed on, signed and returned to the HR department.
3. Training
- a. BBSF has a package of mandatory annual trainings for new employees that includes, among others, trainings on BBSF Child Protection Policy, Internal Order Regulation. These trainings are repeated each year for all employees.
  - b. The Child Protection Policy can be accessed all the time by all employees so they can check anytime what are their responsibilities in safeguarding children.

## Child information and consent

Depending on the activity and the age of competence of the child, each program implementation phase should be fully explained to children, before the activity starts. The language used should be plain, appropriate to the child's age and level of understanding. A child's refusal is above a parent/guardian's given consent for the participation.

The programs designed for children should be evidence-based, of high quality and with strict safety requirements.

## Communication through media

BBSF takes adequate security measures to protect the data of children involved in its activities. For all children data collected written consent is obtain from parents/guardian. The consent clear states the objective, the use of the data, how is disseminated, the period of time is kept, etc. The photo consent F 11 33 gives parents/guardians the option of choosing how the photo should be take: profile, face, from the back and to give other instructions about the content of the photo.

## Agreements with partners

In the case of activities with children developed in partnership, before collaboration, BBSF makes sure that there is a clear agreement on how the activities involving children will be implemented and how children's safeguarding will be protected.

## Data protection

BBSF has a Data Protection officer and a clear GDPR policy as all collected data is highly sensitive. All data bases used have multiple protection codes and limited access to specific people. All computers access is code-protected, codes are changed regularly.

## Policy review

This policy is reviewed annually by the management team or any time a:

- new regulation on child protection is approved at national or international level
- new direct activity with children is implemented by BBSF.

Ana - Maria Schweitzer

Executive Director

This policy was last time reviewed on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2025

Signature



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