

Kinderland

Child Protection Policy

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Table of Contents

Introduction	03
Protective Measures and Their Goals	04
Scope and Purpose of the Protective Measures	05
Prevention	06
Conduct Standards and Duty to Report	07
Response	08
Protection and Support fpr those affected	10
Monitoring, Learning, and Continuous Improvement	10
Glossary	11

INTRODUCTION

Contractors as well as members of the advisory boards at both Kinderland Moldau and Kinderland Austria.

This guideline sets the general direction. Implementation guidelines supplement this guideline as needed. The guideline will be evaluated for suitability after one year and adjusted where necessary. Thereafter, an evaluation will take place every three years.

This policy was developed taking into account relevant international and national policies and laws, as well as the current state of professional discourse in the sector (see the glossary for references to sources).

We are a young, dynamic, and dedicated nonprofit organization committed to supporting socially disadvantaged children, adolescents, and families in the Dubasari district of the Republic of Moldova.

Through targeted interventions, we protect children from neglect and violence, strengthen their families, and promote their long-term social integration. Our work is based on the conviction that a safe environment for children is crucial for their development into independent and self-determined young people.

We also believe that every person—regardless of age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnic origin—has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Kinderland does not tolerate any abuse or exploitation by employees or other personnel associated with the organization.

Guiding Principle:

We believe that every person has an equal right to protection from abuse and exploitation, and therefore we maintain a zero-tolerance policy toward violence, sexual abuse, harassment, and the exploitation of children, vulnerable adults, and members of our staff. Kinderland is therefore committed to taking all appropriate measures to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone involved in or associated with our work, especially children.

Call for a Shared Commitment:

Kinderland calls on all employees, volunteers, contributors, donors, and partners to actively contribute to creating a safe environment in which the rights of children and vulnerable individuals are respected and protected.

Implementing this policy is not only an organizational obligation but also a moral obligation of everyone at Kinderland toward those we support. Only through a shared, vigilant, and responsible approach can we prevent risks and build relationships based on respect, safety, and trust.

Kinderland Foundaion, Austria

Richard Pichler
Managing Director

January 2026

Kinderland Molova

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President

PROTECTION MEASURES AND THEIR OBJECTIVES

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND OTHER VULNERABLE PERSONS

Our understanding is that people—including children and vulnerable adults—must be protected from harm that may result from contact with our staff or our programs. Child protection means that, as an organization, we ensure that we do not cause harm to children. This means that we take all reasonably possible measures to prevent all forms of exploitation, violence, and abuse, and, should such incidents occur, respond decisively and appropriately

OBJECTIVES OF CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES

- Prevention of Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation
- Fostering a culture of trust, respect, and accountability
- Establishing clear processes for reporting, responding, and providing appropriate support and follow-up in cases of suspected or actual incidents of violence, abuse, and exploitation
- Raising awareness and providing training for all stakeholders
- Developing safe spaces and procedures for children in all program areas.
- Ensuring transparency and accountability in all organizational measures related to protection.

PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE OUR WORK

- The best interests of the child always take precedence: The child's best interests are at the center of all actions, as set forth in the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Do no harm: All measures must ensure that no further harm occurs.
- Non-discrimination and inclusion: Those working for or on behalf of Kinderland must provide support and services without discrimination based on race, skin color, gender or sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, social, or ethnic origin, or any other status. Additional measures should be taken to ensure the protection of particularly vulnerable groups (e.g., children with disabilities).
- Right to Protection: Every child has the right to protection from violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect.
- Participation: Children and adolescents are consulted and have an age-appropriate say in decisions that affect them.
- Accountability and Transparency: All employees are required to report any incident, suspected incident, or concern through the established channels. The organization is responsible for investigating every report. The procedures and responsibilities for this within the organization are clearly defined.
- Collaboration: We work closely with local partners, government agencies, and, where necessary, law enforcement authorities.
- Active Prevention: We are committed to preventing abuse and exploitation through proactive measures, in particular through careful staff selection, regular training, and the creation of a safe organizational environment.
- Empowering Staff: Kinderland equips all employees with the tools, knowledge, and support necessary to act quickly and appropriately in high-risk situations.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE PROTECTION MEASURES

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- all employees of Kinderland;
- affiliated personnel associated with Kinderland, including board members, consultants, volunteers, contractors, program participants of any kind and background, suppliers, partners, donors, and all others who work for or on behalf of Kinderland.

You must comply with this policy at all times. Visitors will be informed about the policy by staff members.

This policy addresses:

- Physical abuse—any act involving physical violence or bodily harm.
- Sexual abuse and exploitation—any form of sexual advances or acts, including non-physical ones directed at a child or a vulnerable person.
- Neglect – the failure to provide care and support, resulting in health or psychosocial impairments.
- Psychological and emotional abuse – any form of intimidation, manipulation, humiliation, or other forms of emotional violence.
- Economic exploitation – any act of forced child labor, theft of relief supplies, or embezzlement of donations.
- Discrimination and structural violence – any act of exclusion, stigmatization, or disregard for the rights of specific groups.

This policy does not cover cases of abuse or neglect that occur outside of Kinderland's jurisdiction and are not caused by Kinderland staff—even if they take place in the same geographic or social environment

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect children, adolescents, and adult recipients of support within the framework of Kinderland programs from any harm caused by

- the conduct of Kinderland employees or authorized representatives,
- the design and implementation of Kinderland's programs and activities.

This policy does not cover the protection of concerns within the broader community in which Kinderland operates programs that are not conducted by Kinderland or its affiliated staff.

PREVENTIONS

We are committed to creating a safe and protective environment for children. The well-being, rights, and interests of children are at the center of everything we do. A central component of our work is education and prevention to minimize the risk of abuse or neglect in advance.

MEASURES TO PREVENT ABUSE, EXPLOITATION, AND VIOLENCE

- Human Resources Management and Development: Careful selection processes, mandatory and thorough background checks prior to hiring, regular feedback sessions, orientation training upon joining, and ongoing professional development and support for all staff members, volunteers, and counselors. Staff members who have direct contact with children are entitled to supervision. Taking annual leave for rest and recuperation is mandatory to prevent burnout.
- Code of Conduct: All staff members, volunteers, and consultants must be briefed on and agree to the binding Code of Conduct (see Appendix) before beginning their work.
- Child-Friendly Communication and Participation: Children are informed of their rights and involved in decision-making processes in an age-appropriate manner.
- Risk Management: Regular risk assessments regarding child protection for all projects, events, and partnerships, combined with mandatory measures to minimize risks.

Digital Safety and Safe Online Behavior: Training for children and staff on the safe use of IT devices and safe behavior on social media platforms

RISKASSESSMENT

We identify and assess potential protection risks throughout the organization and develop measures to minimize these risks. To this end, we maintain a risk register, which we review at least once a year together with our staff and adjust as needed



BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

COMMITMENT BY ALL PERSONS ACTING ON BEHALF OF KINDERLAND

- All employees, partners, consultants, contractors, volunteers, and all other individuals acting on behalf of Kinderland are committed to this Code of Conduct
- I protect children, adolescents, and vulnerable adults from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect—including physical, emotional, digital, economic, and sexual violence.
- I maintain the professional balance between closeness and distance, especially when interacting with people who belong to vulnerable groups.
- I respect every child's right to privacy and personal dignity.
- I do not exploit power imbalances, whether emotional, financial, or physical.
- I do not enter into relationships based on dependency or imbalance, especially not with service recipients.
- I communicate respectfully and non-discriminatorily at all times, both online and offline.

REPORTING OBLIGATIONS AND COOPERATION

All individuals in Kinderland are obligated to do the following:

- To report any form of observed, expressed, or suspected violence or abuse—even without evidence—in accordance with the principle: "When in doubt, report it."
- To submit reports within a maximum of 48 hours via one of the designated channels (child protection officer, anonymous mailbox, email, phone).
- To report honestly and cooperate fully with the investigation.

REPORTING CHANNELS

Kinderland ensures that reports can be made in various secure and accessible ways:

- In person (child protection officer or supervisor)
Anonymously (e.g., suggestion box, whistleblower email)
- In writing (via email, by filling out a report form)

All reporting channels are clearly visible to employees, program beneficiaries, and external partners (e.g., bulletin boards, employee announcements, websites, information folders).

HANDLING OF REPORTS / INVESTIGATIONS

- All reports are documented and receive a reasoned decision regarding further action, regardless of their plausibility.
- The decision is based on an initial risk assessment by the child protection officer.
- Cases involving adults as accused and presenting a significant risk or credible evidence will always lead to a formal investigation. Other cases are handled through regular HR processes and documented accordingly.
- Cases involving children as alleged perpetrators are investigated and addressed by the responsible educators and social workers as part of the program's work.
- The investigation or review process is conducted in a fair and independent manner.
- Confidentiality applies without restriction—information is shared only on a need-to-know basis (only with individuals who truly need it to perform their duties).

COOPERATION WITH THE AUTHORITIES

Kinderland is committed to cooperating openly, promptly, and responsibly with the relevant authorities in all cases where this is required by law or is in the best interest of the child or the person involved.

Specifically, this means:

- We actively collaborate with local child protection agencies, the police, the district attorney's office, social services, or other relevant institutions to investigate, clarify, and take appropriate action regarding suspected or actual cases of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- We ensure that all reported cases are handled professionally and, where necessary, referred to the appropriate authorities as quickly as possible.
- We take legal and other steps, as required by law or as necessary, to protect the individuals involved.
- In all measures taken, the principles of data protection and the well-being and best interests of the child are always upheld.

REACTION

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Managers, child protection officers, and other authorized individuals are responsible for ensuring a prompt, respectful, and victim-centered response to reported incidents and suspected cases. Kinderland management is specifically responsible for:

- Ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and protection-oriented communication and procedures throughout the entire process of responding to a protection incident or concern;
- Ensuring the human, financial, and technical resources necessary for the proper implementation of the entire protection policy;
- Establishing and communicating a standardized procedure for reporting, response, and investigation;
- Notifying the relevant local child protection authorities and law enforcement agencies of incidents, as required by national legislation;
- Conducting internal investigations or assisting with investigations by national law enforcement agencies if the incident requires their investigation.
- Reviewing the investigation reports and, if necessary, immediately
- adjust organizational processes, risk registers, and training materials
- Correcting and providing follow-up training in cases of procedural errors

CONSEQUENCES

- Any proven case of violence or abuse will result in internal disciplinary measures, up to and including termination. Criminal charges may follow on the part of the authorities.
- Failure to report an incident may also be sanctioned as a breach of duty.
- Knowingly false reports also result in disciplinary consequences.

PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

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We ensure that those affected (both the victim of the offense and the alleged perpetrator), especially children and adolescents:

- Have access to medical, psychological, or legal support, including assistance from external specialists
- are not pressured to make statements, but are given time to decide,
- are protected from retaliation (e.g., through transfer or other protective measures),

When incidents involve children, their best interests always take precedence.

The support provided must be available for a sufficient period of time, not just immediately after the incident comes to light.

MONITORING, LEARNING AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

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- Kinderland's management is obligated to continuously monitor the implementation of this policy and to use internal and external insights to improve it.
- Annual internal reviews of the content and implementation of this policy are conducted by management and the child protection officer, and the effectiveness of interventions is evaluated. If necessary, the policy, the risk register, and the measures are adjusted.
- A review is conducted to ensure that all reported incidents have been systematically documented (anonymized, confidentially).
- If new program interventions, changes in the characteristics of the beneficiaries, or new developments in the community or legislation require adjustments, these are made as needed.
- Every three years, an external evaluation of the child protection measures is conducted for quality assurance and further development, incorporating feedback from the beneficiaries.

GLOSSARY

TERMS

- **Vulnerable Adults**

Sometimes also referred to as a vulnerable adult. A person who, due to a mental or other disability, age, or illness, needs or may need care; and someone who is unable to care for themselves or protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation.

- **Recipient of Support**

Someone who receives direct support or services from the Kinderland program. Note that abuse of power can also apply to the broader community that Kinderland serves and may involve exploitation by creating the impression of a position of power.

- **Child**

A person under the age of 18

- **Child Abuse**

Child abuse refers to the abuse and neglect suffered by children under the age of 18. It encompasses all forms of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence, and commercial or other forms of exploitation that cause actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity within the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power. (WHO)

- **Child Protection**

Preventing and responding to all forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse against children.

- **Child Safeguarding (Institutional)**

An organization's responsibility to ensure that its staff, programs, partners, and activities do not harm children.

- **Child Protection Policy, Child Protection Guidelines**

A child protection policy is a written document that outlines an organization's commitment to preventing and responding to child abuse. The policy should reflect children's rights to protection from abuse and exploitation, as set forth in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

- **Code of Conduct**

A Code of Conduct defines acceptable and unacceptable behavior toward children and other adults, as well as the consequences for non-compliance. All staff members and volunteers should sign the Code of Conduct and receive training on it.

TERMS

- Emotional Abuse

Ongoing emotional mistreatment that impairs a child's emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts include restrictions on movement, humiliation, bullying (including cyberbullying), as well as threats, fear, discrimination, ridicule, or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

- Neglect

Taking into account context, resources, and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refer to a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in a serious impairment of the child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral, and mental development. This includes the failure to adequately supervise children and protect them from harm, as well as to provide for their nutrition, shelter, and safe living and working conditions. It may also include maternal neglect during pregnancy resulting from drug or alcohol abuse, as well as the neglect and abuse of a child with a disability.

- (Harm) Endangerment

Psychological, physical, or any other violation of an individual's rights.

- Physical Abuse

Actual or potential physical harm caused by another person, whether an adult or a child. It can include hitting, shaking, poisoning, drowning, and burning. Physical harm can also occur when a parent or caregiver fabricates a child's symptoms or intentionally causes an illness in a child.

- Psychological Harm

Emotional or psychological abuse, including (but not limited to) humiliating and degrading treatment such as verbal abuse, constant criticism, belittlement, persistent shaming, solitary confinement, and isolation.

- Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

(Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse → in German: Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse)

A term used by the humanitarian and development community to refer to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable populations by staff or associated personnel. The term originates from the United Nations Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

GLOSSARY

TERMS

- Risk

A child protection risk is the possibility that a child could be harmed as a result of an organization's staff programs, partners, or operations.

- Sexual Abuse

Forcing or enticing a child to participate in sexual activities. This may include, among other things, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching. It may also include involving children in viewing or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities, and encouraging children to engage in sexually inappropriate behavior.

- Sexual Exploitation

The term "sexual exploitation" refers to any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power imbalance, or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, deriving financial gain from the sexual exploitation of another person. This definition encompasses human trafficking and modern slavery.

- Survivor

The person who has been abused or exploited. The term "survivor" is often preferred over "victim" because it implies strength, resilience, and the ability to survive; however, it is up to the individual to decide how they wish to identify themselves.

REFERENCEMATERIALIALS

- Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, ratified by the Republic of Austria in 1992 and by the Republic of Moldova in 1993, and thus binding.
- The UN Guidelines on Quality in Out-of-Home Care for Children—welcomed by the UN General Assembly in 2009—aim to improve the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for children without parental care or at risk of losing it;
- The UN resolution on children without parental care, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 2019, based on the third report (A/74/395, 74/133). This document reaffirms the importance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for children without parental care and sets forth minimum standards for the quality of care;
- Law of the Republic of Moldova No. 370/2023 on the Rights of the Child—adopted in 2023—which aims to establish a legal framework to safeguard children’s rights in the Republic of Moldova;
- Law of the Republic of Moldova No. 140/2013 on the Special Protection of Vulnerable Children and Children Separated from Their Parents, which regulates the legal framework for child protection and defines the responsibilities of guardianship authorities at the local and district levels, child protection measures, and the modalities of intersectoral cooperation in child protection. Among other things, it also establishes the procedures for the identification, assessment, support, referral, monitoring, and registration of children at risk and children separated from their parents, as well as the authorities and structures responsible for implementing these procedures;
- The Republic of Moldova’s National Program for Child Protection 2022–2026 is a policy document in the areas of child protection, prevention, and combating violence and human trafficking. The main priorities are preventing the separation of children from their families, continuing the deinstitutionalization of children in out-of-home care, reducing the social risks to children posed by parental migration, preventing and combating violence, neglect, and exploitation of children, facilitating parents’ reintegration into the workforce, and revitalizing the role of every individual in child-rearing.



Donation Account:
IBAN: AT774300045098689040
Reference: „Geborgenheit für Moldau“

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